

An Analysis of Jordanian EFL Learners' Figurative Competence of Color-Based Idioms

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Abstract

This study utilizes two translation tasks to investigate the competence of color idiomatic expressions of Jordanian EFL learners. It also analyzes their errors and strategies when rendering color idioms into English or Arabic. The two tasks include 26 sentences, each of which has an English or Arabic color idiomatic expression. The sample of the study consists of 62 Jordanian graduate students who are MA and PhD students of English. The results of the study reveal that graduate students do not have a very good idiomatic competence of color expressions. The results also display that similarities and differences of color connotations may negatively interfere or positively transfer the meaning from one language into another. EFL graduate students easily acquire English color-based idioms which have absolute or relative equivalents in Arabic. However, they rely on their knowledge of L2 and L1 as well as the context to approach the meaning of English color idioms with no Arabic equivalent. The study concludes that graduate students usually translate English color idioms using the strategies of paraphrasing or giving Arabic equivalents. However, they tend to apply the strategies of paraphrasing, literal translation, or avoidance when dealing with Arabic color idioms.

Keywords: Color idiomatic expressions, Contrastive Linguistics, Translating Idioms, Error Analysis, Translation Strategies, Foreign Language Learning.

1. Introduction

Colors play a vital role in the culture of any community. The dictionary of any language is filled with color expressions that denote or connote a verity of meanings which are generally culture-specific (Kress and Leeuwen, 2013). For example, only in English, a person may use the color blue to express sadness as *to feel blue*. In German, on the other hand, *blau sein* (literally: to be blue) refers to being drunk. Nevertheless, in Russian *голубой* (literally: light blue) means to be homosexual (Bortoli and Maroto, 2001). Thus, Larson (1984) stresses on the issue of understanding the cultural meaning of colors before translating color-based expressions into a different language.

Another difficulty in acquiring color expressions is that they are not always used literally. Many color expressions are idioms; they convey something different from the meanings of its individual units (Littlemore & Law, 2006). For example, *white elephant* means “a possession that costs a lot of money but has no useful purpose”. Following Grant and Buaer’s (2004) classification of fixed expressions, color expressions can be divided into categories based on two criteria, figurativeness, and compositionality: Fixed expressions can be compositional or literal as *green garden*, figurative as *white as a sheet*, ONCE (one element is non-compositional) as *black eye*, and CORE (non-compositional and non-figurative) as *yellow-belly*.

Color idiomatic expression can also be classified in terms of equivalence (Kvetko, 2009): (1) Absolute equivalence refers to color idioms that are similar in form and meaning. For instance, the Arabic idiom ضوء أحمر “the red light” and the English idiom *red light* are absolute equivalents. (2) Relative equivalence includes idioms that have similar or very close meaning but different lexical items. The English idiom *saw red* has a relative equivalent in Arabic احمرت عينه “his eye became red” And (3) non-equivalence refers to idioms that do not have idiomatic equivalent as *yellow-belly* which does not have an equivalent in Arabic. Another feature that makes color idioms difficult to acquire is that they have a fixed form. We cannot change the word order of an idiom, omit or replace one of its words, or change its grammatical structure (Salim & Mehawesh, 2013). For instance, in English, we say *see red* to express anger but not *become or turn red*.

Based on the above mentioned discussion, having cultural and linguistic knowledge is very important in acquiring color-based idioms. Students not only have to know the symbolic meanings of L2 color terms, but also they have to know the appropriate way to use or say them. Therefore, this study examines how figurativeness, compositionality, and equivalence influence graduate EFL student’s acquisition of color idiomatic expressions. It also investigates their translation strategies and errors.

2. Literature Review

Color expressions of English and Arabic have been investigated in different linguistic fields. Some research focuses on the meanings of color terms and the influence of culture in shaping their meanings. For example, Hasan, Al-Sammerai, and Kadir (2011) conduct a semantic study on the meanings of six colors in Arabic and English. To show how colors are used in these two languages, the study uses cognitive cultural categorization of each color term. It also identifies three different meanings: 1- ‘Basic meaning’ which refers the original meaning of the color term, 2- ‘Extended meaning’ which refers to the meaning extended from the basic meaning throughout human experience, and 3- ‘Additional meaning’ which refers to the meaning which has been further abstracted from the extended meaning. The results of the study find out that Arabic and English color terms have more common functions than differences. They also indicate that the extension of colors is completely cognitive and created based on people’s experiences and culture. Furthermore,

the original meaning of the color terms can be extended into several meanings and these extended meanings can be further expanded into several abstract additional meanings.

Rabab'ah and Al-Saidat (2014), on the other hand, study the conceptual and connotative meanings of *black* and *white* in Jordanian culture. Their main goal is to identify the influence of culture in shaping the meanings of *black* and *white* idiomatic expressions. To achieve these goals, 100 participants are asked to give the meanings of 31 expressions of the colors *black* and *white*. The findings reveal that people usually interpret the target expressions according to their connotative meanings rather than their denotative ones. The study also finds that *white* usually has a positive meaning, whereas *black* indicates negative meaning with few exceptions such as, 'His eye is white', and 'black horse'. Moreover, the participants usually use color expressions instead of using adjectives directly. For example, instead of saying he/she is a bad person they say /ʃafhtu sɔ:da/ 'His page is black'.

Another study investigating the meanings of color terms is Al-Adaileh (2012). The study mainly focuses on the figurative uses of six color terms in Jordanian Arabic and examines whether color-based phrases have orthophemistic, euphemistic, or dysphemistic connotations. The data of the study are gathered from newspapers, TV-series, and dictionaries and then their connotative meanings are determined and checked by the participants in face-to-face interviews. The findings of the study reveal that most colors have euphemistic and dysphemistic connotations. However, the colors *black*, *yellow*, *red* and *blue* are mainly dysphemistic and often have negative connotations. The color *white* is used euphemistically and has positive connotations more than negative ones. *Green*, on the other hand, has both euphemistic and dysphemistic connotations.

Other studies, on the other hand, investigate the translatability of color-based idioms from one language into another. For instance, Salim and Mehawesh (2013) analyze the translation of color expressions from Arabic into English in Nagib Mahfouz's novel "*The Thief and the Dogs*". The study examines the different translation strategies applied in translating color-based idiomatic expressions and explores the similarities and differences between their meanings in the two languages. As for the study methods, the study provides a contrastive study of 13 Arabic color idiomatic expressions in the novel and their English translation. The findings of the study reveal that color expressions are language-specific and evoke different associations and emotions in different languages. The study also displays four strategies that are used to translate Arabic color idioms, including: using an English idiom of similar meaning and form, translation by cultural substitution, translation by paraphrasing, and translation by omission.

Finally, there are few studies analyzing EFL learners' awareness of the differences and the similarities of color terms between English and Arabic. For example, Rakhieh et al. (2014) examine undergraduate students' performance in translating English color idioms which may not have equivalents in Jordanian culture. As for their methods, 40 undergraduate Jordanian students of

English enrolled in AlHussein Bin Talal University are asked to translate 20 culture-bound color idioms within its contextual meaning. The findings of the study show that undergraduate English students perform poorly in the translation task as reflected by their scores on CBTT. Moreover, the study relates this poor performance to the insufficient knowledge of English cultural bound color idioms, the absence of Jordanian Arabic equivalence, and the inappropriate selection of translation methods.

Another study is Ababneh (2020) who analyzes the performance of EFL students in a multiple-choice test to investigate the acquisition of color term collocations. The sample of the study consists of 94 Jordanian undergraduate students taking an English Course. The findings of the study display that undergraduate students perform poorly in the English color collocation test and they do not often understand English color terms with no Arabic equivalents. Black color terms are acquired more easily than other color terms, whereas yellow color terms are the most difficult to learn. Furthermore, the study indicates that gender differences and academic degree level do not influence students' performance in the test. The study recommends teachers to put more emphasis on color terms collocations as a part of vocabulary teaching.

In conclusion, a number of researchers have studied color idiomatic expressions. Nevertheless, there are very few studies investigating the influence of cultural differences on the competence of understanding and producing color terms of advanced EFL learners. Much of the existing research examining color terms focuses on the meanings of color terms in different cultures, the translation of color terms in literary works, or undergraduate students' comprehension of English color idioms. This study, on the other hand, examines the competence of color idioms of MA and PhD students of English. Moreover, this study is different in that it compares between the students' abilities in translating English color idioms and their abilities in translating Arabic idioms. The study also explores the translation strategies applied by graduate students of English to translate color-based idioms.

4. Method

4.1. Sample of the Study

The sample of the study includes 62 graduate students of English attending two Jordanian universities, the Hashemite University and the University of Jordan. The sample is divided into two groups: The first group consists of 32 MA students, while the second consists of 30 PhD students. All the participants are native speakers of Arabic and have achieved a high level in English.

4.2. Data Collection

Two translation tasks are administered to the participants to shed some lights on graduate EFL students' ability to translate and use seven color terms (*black, white, red, green, yellow, blue, and pink*). The first task consists of 13 English sentences, whereas the second task consists of 13

Arabic sentences. Each of the 26 sentences includes a color-based idiom from English or Arabic. English color idioms are selected from two well-established English dictionaries: Oxford Dictionary (Oxford University Press, 2016), and Cambridge Online Dictionary (Cambridge University Press, 2016). Arabic color idioms, on the other hand, are chosen from two well-known Arabic dictionaries: Muṣṣam Alluyah Alṣarabiyah Alḥadeeḥ (Omar, 2008) and Alwasiit (Majma9 Alluyah Al9arabiyah, 1998).

4.3. Data Analysis

The percentage of the correct answers of each color idiomatic expression is calculated. The study then analyzes the best and worst translated color expressions in terms of errors and strategies following Kvetko (2009), and Grant and Buaer’s (2004) classifications. It is worth mentioning that in our analysis and calculation of correct answers, we accept any adequate answer that provides the correct meaning of a given color idiom. This is because our main goal is to test the acquisition of advanced EFL learners of color idioms and not their translation ability. Moreover, the analysis considers explaining the meaning or giving non-idiomatic expression as a paraphrasing strategy, but not answering the question as an avoidance strategy.

5. Results and Discussion

This chapter studies the performance of graduate English students in the translation tasks and observes their errors and strategies when translating English and Arabic color idiomatic expressions. Table (1) shows how MA and PhD students perform in the translation tasks:

Table (1): The percentage of the participant’s correct responses in the English and the Arabic translation tasks

The task	PhD students	MA students	All groups
The task of English color idioms	53 %	39%	46%
The task of Arabic color idioms	48%	49%	49%
Total percentage	51 %	44%	48%

Table (1) displays that student’s translation abilities of Arabic color idioms are slightly better than their translation abilities of English color idioms. Furthermore, Table (1) demonstrates that when translating English color idioms, the percentage of the correct translation given by PhD students (53%) is higher than that given by MA students (39%). However, with Arabic color idioms, the percentage of the correct translation given by PhD students (48 %) is lower than that given by MA students (49%). Nevertheless, these differences are not that significant, and the two groups have a poor performance in the two tasks.

The results suggest that graduate students who have achieved a high level of English

development have a relatively poor knowledge of English color terms. This could be attributed to the fact that English color idioms have been neglected in the teaching of EFL students (Ababneh, 2020; Rakhieh et al., 2014). This could also be related to the differences in the connotative meanings of color terms between English and Arabic as indicated in previous studies, viz., Salim and Mehawesh (2013).

5.1 English Color-based Idioms

Table (2) displays the performance of the participants in the task of English color idiomatic expressions.

Table (2): The percentage of the participants' correct responses in the task of English color expressions.

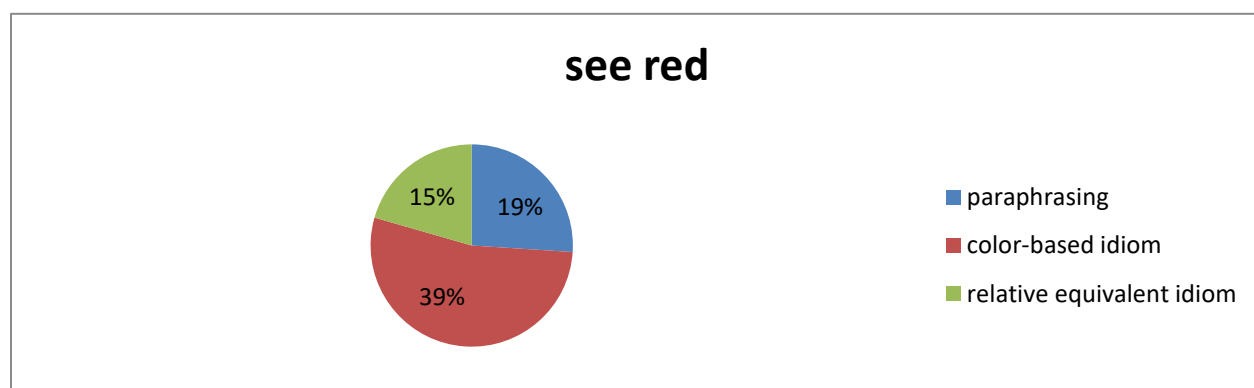
No.	The figurative expression	PhD students	MA students	All groups
1.	Black eye (bruised skin around the eye resulting from a blow)	80%	50%	65%
2.	Black out (undergo a sudden and temporary loss of consciousness)	25 %	30%	28%
3.	See red (to become very angry)	95%	50%	73%
4.	Be in the red (be in debt) (owe money to the bank)	10%	12.5%	11%
5.	As white as a sheet (very pale, especially from shock, illness, or fear)	65%	56%	61%
6.	White elephant (useless possession)	35%	19%	27%
7.	Blue blood (a person of noble birth)	30%	44%	37%
8.	Once in a blue moon (not very often)	80%	56%	68%
9.	Be green (not experienced or trained)	70%	38%	54%
10.	Green fingers	70%	50%	60%

No.	The figurative expression	PhD students	MA students	All groups
	(skillful in gardening)			
11.	Yellow-belly (coward)	20%	25%	23%
12.	Yellow press (the journalism that exaggerates or is unnecessarily sensational)	70%	63%	67%
13.	In the pink (in good health physically or mentally)	40%	13%	27%

Table (2) displays that PhD students perform better than MA students when rendering every English color idiom into Arabic. Nevertheless, there are exceptions with the color idioms *black out*, *blue blood*, and *yellow-belly*. This is because MA students achieve (30%), (44%), and (25%) with these idioms respectively, whereas PhD students score lower percentages (25%), (30%), and (20%), respectively. According to Table (2), color idioms do not have the same level of difficulty. The discussion below provides an analysis of the easiest and the most difficult color idiomatic expressions.

The color idiomatic expression *see red* has the highest number of correct responses (73%). Our explanation to this is that students may have used the Arabic connotative meaning (anger) of the color *red* as well as the context to know the answer. This is because most of the correct answers provide the idiom (من الغضب) احمر وجهه/عيناه “His face turned red because of anger”. Concerning the translation strategies, Graph (1) shows the percentages of the successful strategies followed in the translation of *see red*:

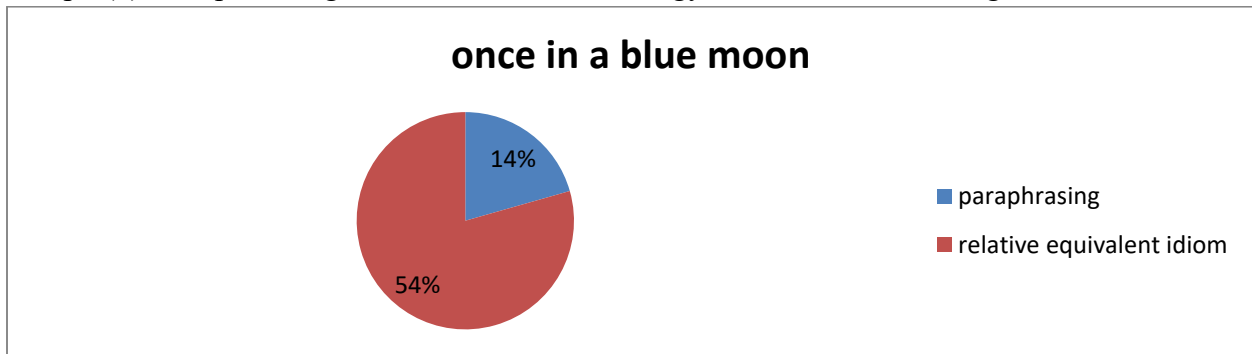
Graph (1): The percentage of each successful strategy followed in translating *see red*



As Graph (1) shows, the majority of the answers given for this idiom range between providing a color-based idiom (39%) as *احمر وجهه/عيناه* (His face/eyes turned red), giving a relative equivalent (15%) (i.e., *مش شايف الفضا* (not to see the sky) meaning “to become angry”), and paraphrasing (19%) (i.e., *استشاط غضبا/ غضب غضبا شديدا/عصب*, “to get very angry”). As for the reduction strategies, the study detects incorrect paraphrasing *لم يتحمل ان يصرخ احد في وجهه* (He did not tolerate that somebody screaming in his face), giving an Arabic idiom *شاف الموت بعيونه* (to see death with one’s eyes) “to be in great danger”, and avoidance of translation.

Despite it does not have an absolute equivalent in Arabic, the figurative expression *once in a blue moon* gets the second highest percentage (68%). Nevertheless, about (54%) of the participants provide the near-identical Arabic equivalents *مرة بالسنة/مرة بالعمر* “once in a lifetime/once a year” which look similar in form to the English expression *once in a blue moon*. This may indicate that knowledge of L1 positively transfer the meaning when there is a near-equivalent in L1. The data analysis shows a number of successful strategies. These strategies are paraphrasing as *نادرا جدا* “very rarely”, and *بشكل قليل جدا* “very scarcely”; and giving a relative equivalent from L1 as *مرة بالعمر / بالسنة* “once in a lifetime/ once every year”, and *كل وين ووين* (every where and where) meaning “rarely”.

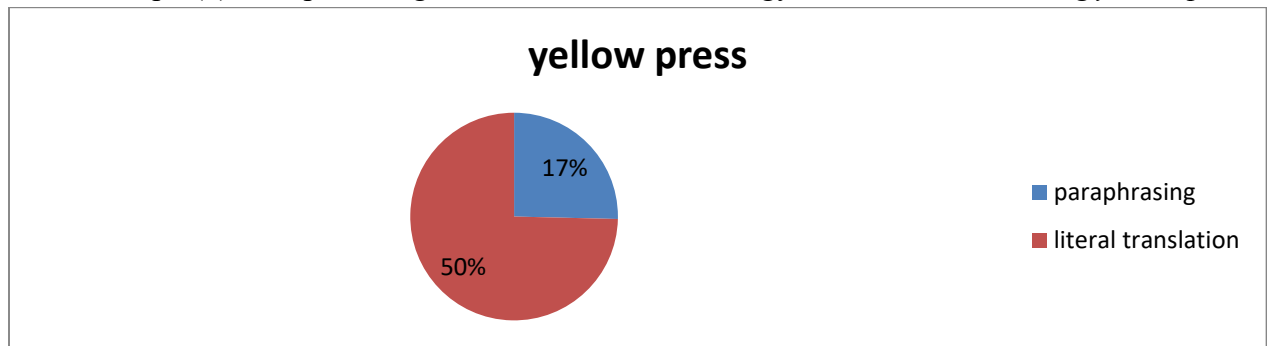
Graph (2): The percentage of each successful strategy followed in translating *once in a blue moon*



Graph (2) shows the percentages of the successful strategies followed in the translation of *once in a blue moon*. While fifty-four percent (54%) of the participants provide a relative equivalent, only fourteen percent (14%) paraphrase the English idiom. As for the reduction strategies, some participants give a non-equivalent idiom (i.e., *صعب المنال* “hard to get”), avoid translation, or provide literal translation.

The expression *yellow press* (67%) is one of the best translated color idioms in the task. About (50%) of the answers provide the absolute equivalent *الصحافة الصفراء*. This indicates that the similarities between the two languages positively transfer the meaning and facilitate the acquisition of color-based idioms. Furthermore, *yellow press* is ONCE idiom, the word *press* is literally translated. Graph (3) demonstrates the percentages of the successful strategies of *yellow press*:

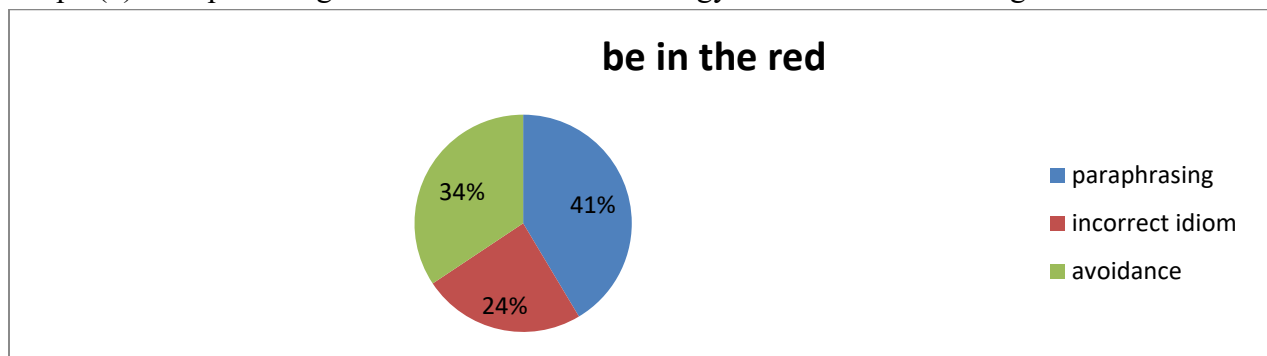
Graph (3): The percentage of each successful strategy followed in translating *yellow press*



Based on Graph (3), the participants display few successful translation strategies, including: literal translation (50%) *الصحافة الصفراء* “yellow press”, and paraphrasing (17%) *جرائد الشائعات/صحافة الفضائح* “journalism publishing scandals and gossips”. However, the study finds few unsuccessful strategies as paraphrasing as *الصحافة الورقية* (printed journalism) and avoiding the translation.

Graduate EFL students, however, fail to translate a number of English color idiomatic expressions. For example, they are very bad at giving the meaning of *be in the red*. Only (11%) of the participants give the correct answer using the strategy of paraphrasing *مديون للبنك* “to be in debt”. This could be related to the lack of an equivalent color idiom in Arabic. Furthermore, this is a CORE idiom which is non-compositional and non-figurative. Because of these reasons, the majority of the students use different unsuccessful translation strategies, as shown in Graph 4:

Graph (4): The percentage of each unsuccessful strategy followed in translating *be in the red*:

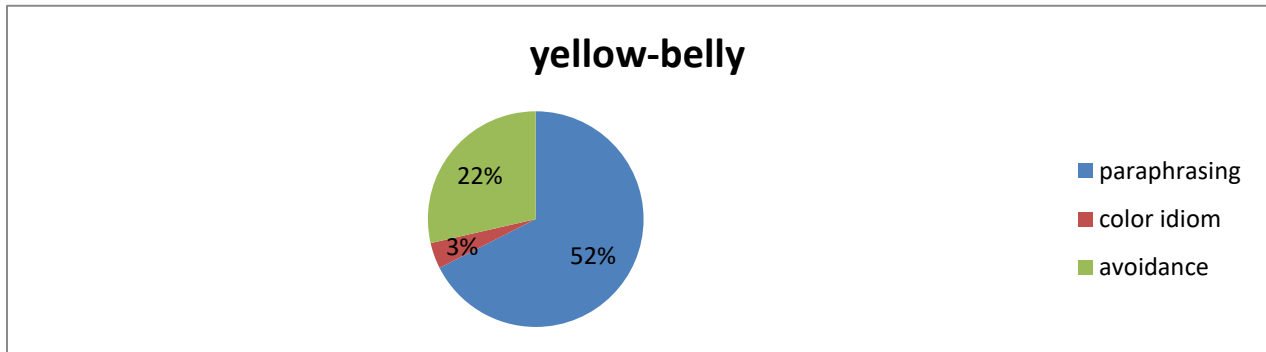


According to Graph (4), forty-one percent (41%) of the participants incorrectly paraphrase the idiom (i.e., *مضغوط/تحت الضغط* “be under pressure”), twenty-four percent (24%) provide an incorrect Arabic idiom (i.e., *اصفي على الحديدية* (to stay on iron) “to become poor”), and thirty-four percent (34%) avoid the question.

The color idiom *yellow-belly* (23%) is difficult to comprehend by graduate students. The reason behind student’s bad performance could be related to the differences of *yellow* connotations

between the two languages; The color yellow is not associated with cowardice in Arabic as it is in English. Another reason behind this could be the lack of an Arabic equivalent. Furthermore, this is a CORE idiom whose meaning cannot be predicted from its individual parts. Graph (5) displays the percentages of the unsuccessful strategies of *yellow-belly*:

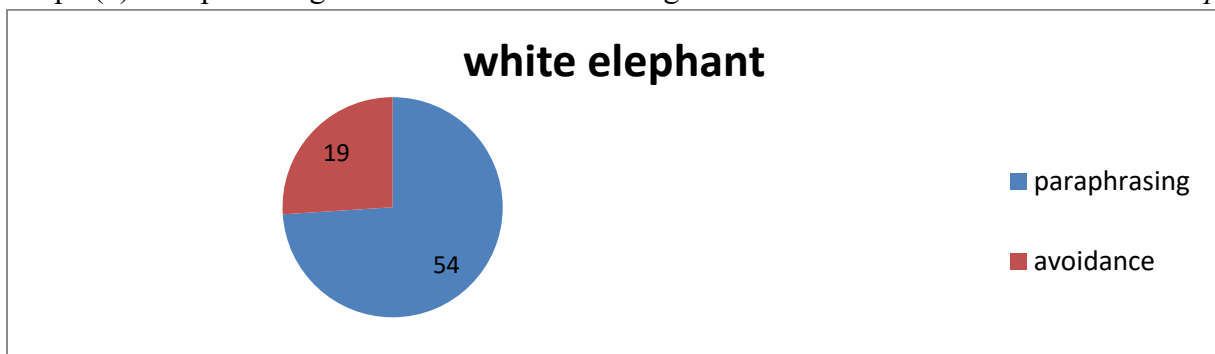
Graph (5): The percentage of the unsuccessful strategies followed in the translation of *yellow-belly*



Based on Graph (5), most participants (52%) give incorrect paraphrasing depending on the context as غير متفهم “inconsiderate” and متردد “hesitant”, whereas some participants (22%) avoid the question. As for the successful strategies, the study observes correct paraphrasing as جبان “coward”.

The expression *white elephant* (27%) is one of the worst translated color idioms. Very few students provide correct paraphrasing as هدية غير مفيدة “useless gift” or ملكية مكلفة “a possession costing money”. The majority of the participants incorrectly give positive meanings to *white elephant* as هدية رائعة (great gift), هدية غالية (expensive gift), or هدية كبيرة (big gift). This poor performance could be related to the fact that the color *white* usually has positive connotations in Arabic and English (Rabab'ah & Al-Saidat, 2014; Rakhieh et al., 2014). Also, the idiom *white elephant* is a CORE idiom whose meaning cannot be predicted from its individual parts.

Graph (6): The percentage of the unsuccessful strategies followed in the translation of *white elephant*



Graph (6) displays the participants' unsuccessful translation strategies. Most participants

(54%) incorrectly paraphrase *white elephant* (i.e., هدية رائعة “great gift”). Moreover, there are some participants (19%) who avoid translation.

5.2. Arabic color-based idioms

Table (3) displays the participant’s performance in the task of translating Arabic color idioms.

Table (3): The percentages of participants’ correct responses for Arabic color expressions.

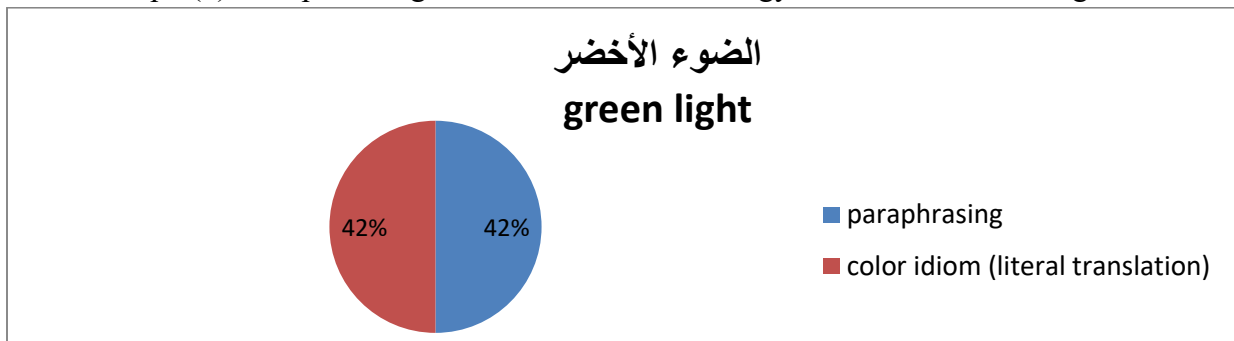
No.	The figurative expression	PhD students	MA students	All groups
1.	احمرت عيناه his eyes turned red (become very angry)	25%	25%	25%
2.	احمر وجهي my face red (blushed)	65%	50%	58%
3.	سودت وجهي my face black (disgraced me, embarrassed)	40%	63%	52%
4.	يوم اسود black day (black or bad day)	60%	31%	46%
5.	قلبه ابيض white heart (good-hearted, kind-hearted)	50%	75%	63%
6.	الايادي البيضاء white hands (philanthropist, or benefactor)	30%	25%	28%
7.	نابه أزرق blue tooth (malicious or revengeful)	15%	19%	17%
8.	خضر الأرض land greening (planted the land)	50%	38%	44%
9.	عوده أخضر green stick (not experienced or trained)	70%	50%	60%
10.	وجهك أصفر yellow face (pale because of shock, illness, or fear)	75%	88%	82%
11.	الضوء الأخضر	80%	87%	84%

No.	The figurative expression	PhD students	MA students	All groups
	green light (the green light, permission)			
12.	ضحكه صفراء yellow smile (fake, sarcastic, or ironic smile)	25%	44%	35%
13.	أحلام وردية pinky dreams (happy unattainable dreams)	35%	38%	37%

According to Table (3), MA students perform better than PhD students with the majority of Arabic color expressions in the task. However, sometimes PhD students are more accurate in providing the correct meaning of color-based idioms. For instance, PhD students (70%) translate the Arabic idiom *عوده أخضر* (green stick) better than MA students (50%). Furthermore, Table (3) reveals that some Arabic color idiomatic expressions are not always successfully translated into English. The following discussion analyzes the Arabic color idioms which are easily translated into English and these which are difficult to translate by Jordanian graduate students.

The color idiom *الضوء الأخضر* (the green light) is easily translated into English. It has the highest percentage of correct responses (84%). This can be related to the existence of an absolute equivalent in English *the green light*. Graph (7) shows the participant's successful translation strategies of the idiom *الضوء الأخضر*:

Graph (7): The percentage of each successful strategy followed in translating *الضوء الأخضر*



Based on Graph (7), the majority of the participants follow two successful strategies which are paraphrasing (42%) (i.e. *permission* and *approval*) and literal translation (42%) (*the green light*). The findings of the study point that there are few participants who avoid translating the Arabic idiom.

Despite of the lack of an absolute equivalent in English, the color idiom *وجهك أصفر* (yellow

face) (82%) is easily translated into English. Graph (8) shows the percentages of all the strategies followed in the translation of *وجهك أصفر*.

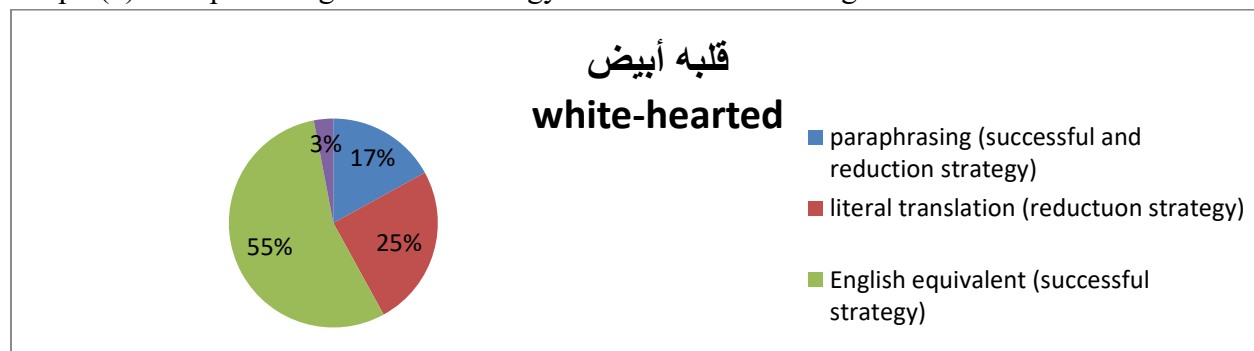
Graph (8): The percentage of each strategy followed in translating *وجهك أصفر*



As Graph (8) shows, (82%) of the participants give correct paraphrasing as *pale, look tired, sick, and unusual*. Nevertheless, some participants provide unsuccessful translation strategies as literal translation (13%) *yellow face* and avoidance of translation (5%). Interestingly, none of the participants provide the relative equivalent color idiom *as white as a sheet*.

The color idiom *قلبه أبيض* (white-hearted) is correctly translated into English by (63%) of the participants. The majority of the participants provide the English idioms *good-hearted, kind-hearted, and warm-hearted*. These correct responses could be related to a number of reasons. First, these expressions are near-equivalents to the Arabic idiom; they are similar in form to the idiom *قلبه أبيض* (white-hearted). Second, they are ONCE idioms (one element is non-compositional), so they are easily learned and acquired. Third, they are frequently used in everyday interaction. Graph (9) demonstrates the percentages of all the strategies used in translating *قلبه أبيض*.

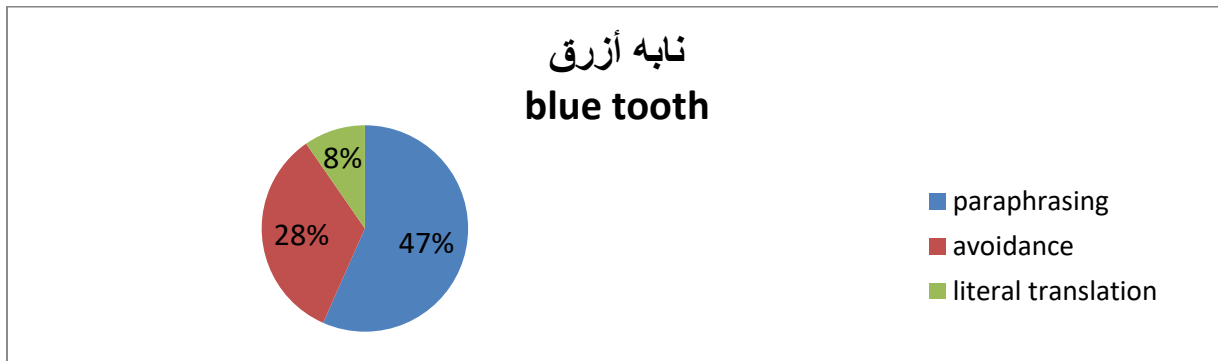
Graph (9): The percentage of each strategy followed in translating *قلبه أبيض*



Based on Graph (9), most of the participants (55%) provide relative equivalents. The study detects few cases of literal translation *white-hearted* (25%), correct and incorrect paraphrasing (17%), and avoidance of translation (3%).

Regarding Arabic expressions which are difficult to translate into English, the participants provide their worst performance with the color expression *نابه أزرق* (blue tooth). Very few students (17%) give the correct answer using the strategy of paraphrasing as *vengeful*. This could be related to the lack of a similar color connotation in English. Moreover, the color expression *نابه أزرق* (blue tooth) is a CORE idiom whose meaning cannot be literally translated. Graph (10) displays the reduction strategies that are observed in the translation of graduate students:

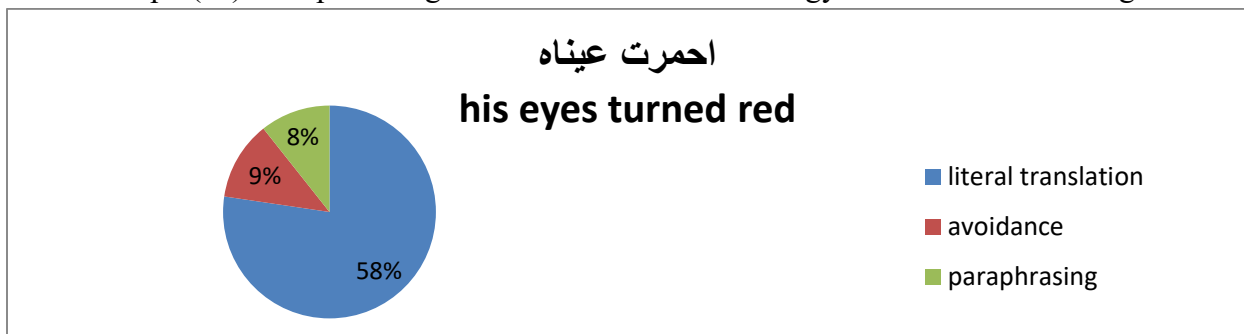
Graph (10): The percentage of each unsuccessful strategy followed in translating *نابه أزرق*



As Graph (10) shows, there are a number of unsuccessful translation strategies, viz., paraphrasing (47%) (i.e. *strong, well-experienced, and dangerous*), not answering the question (28%), and literal translation (8%) *blue tooth*.

The color idiom *احمرت عيناه* (His eyes turned red) has the second worst score (25%) achieved by the participants. The majority of the students literally translate *احمرت عيناه* to *his eyes turned/ became/ or got red*. In our explanation, similarities between the two languages in the connotative meaning (anger) of the color red negatively interfere. Only one participant provides the English color equivalent *saw red*, most students paraphrase this idiom to *became or got angry*. This indicates that students mostly do not acquire the idiom *see red* (discussed in Section 5.1), but they depend on the context and the similarities between English and Arabic in their translation. Furthermore, this shows that advanced EFL learners understand color idioms better than they produce them.

Graph (11): The percentage of each unsuccessful strategy followed in translating *احمرت عيناه*



Graph (11) shows the reduction strategies applied by graduate students to translate احمرت عيناه. The majority of the participants (58%) use literal translation, while very few paraphrase the idiom (8%) and avoid translation (9%).

The color idiom الأيدي البيضاء (white hands) has a very low percentage of correct responses. Few participants (28%) correctly translate this Arabic idiom to *benefactor*, *philanthropist*, or *having great favors*. This poor performance could be attributed to the differences in the color connotation of *white* between the English and Arabic and the lack of a similar English equivalent to الأيدي البيضاء. Moreover, the participants follow a number of unsuccessful strategies in their translation of the idiom الأيدي البيضاء, as seen in Graph (12):

Graph (12): The percentage of each unsuccessful strategy followed in translating الأيدي البيضاء:



According to Graph (12), about (22%) of the participants incorrectly paraphrase the Arabic idiom (i.e. *sponsor*, and *helper*), while (20%) of the participants literally translate this idiom to *white hands*. Other participants, on the other hand, avoid translation (19%) or give incorrect idiom (11%) (i.e. *helpful hands*, and *working hands*).

6. Conclusion

This study observes the performance of Jordanian graduate EFL students in two translation tasks to investigate their comprehension and production of color idiomatic expressions. The analysis of the data reveals that M.A. and Ph.D. students have a poor idiomatic competence regarding color expressions. Graduate students often depend on their knowledge of the color connotation in Arabic and English as well as the context to determine the meanings of English color idioms. However, differences in color connotations between English and Arabic make the acquisition of color idioms more difficult, whereas similarities between the two languages facilitate the acquisition of color idioms. Negative interference occurs when there is no match between color idioms in the two languages. In spite of this, similarities may also cause negative interference when rendering Arabic color idioms into English as the case with the Arabic idiom احمرت عيناه “His eyes turned red”. Students’ idiomatic competence of color expressions is also influenced by the degree of figurativeness and compositionality. The participants usually translate ONCE color idioms better

than CORE color idioms.

The participants apply a number of successful translation strategies of color idiomatic expressions, including: paraphrasing the color idiom, providing a relevant equivalent, or giving an absolute equivalent. They also apply some reduction strategies such as message avoidance, and literal translation. Nevertheless, these strategies may differ depending on the language of the idiom, the differences in the connotative meaning between the two languages, and the existence of an idiomatic equivalent. The findings of the study point that paraphrasing and literal translation are more common when translating Arabic color idioms into English, whereas giving an Arabic idiomatic equivalent and paraphrasing are more frequent when translating English color idioms. It seems that graduate student's comprehension competence of color idiom is better than their production competence. This is because they give color idioms when translating from English to Arabic more than they do when translating from Arabic to English.

Finally, teachers are advised to increase students' awareness of the differences and the similarities of color connotations between English and Arabic to facilitate the acquisition of English color idioms. Also, researchers are recommended to examine possible solutions for the difficulties of learning color idiomatic expressions.

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