

**OPEN ACCESS****Received: 22-05-2025****Accepted: 28-07-2025****الآداب****للدراسات اللغوية والأدبية****Analyzing the errors of EFL Learners in Translating Idiomatic Expressions into Arabic****Dr. Ebtisam Ezzi Alwan Talib**  \*[ebtissamizzy04@gmail.com](mailto:ebtissamizzy04@gmail.com)**Abstract**

This study aimed to present an empirical investigation into the types, frequency, and linguistic characteristics of errors occurring in the translation of English idiomatic expressions into Arabic by EFL learners. A quantitative descriptive methodology was employed, with data collected from a random sample of 80 undergraduate English majors at the Faculty of Education, University of Hodeidah, Yemen, via a multiple-choice assessment questionnaire. The analysis revealed a high error incidence of 67.8%, predominantly characterized by inappropriate literal rather than idiomatic translation. These findings indicate significant deficits in learners' idiomatic competence, attributed to insufficient lexical knowledge, limited exposure to authentic language use, and a failure to process meaning in context. The study concludes by advocating for pedagogical interventions that incorporate authentic materials, visual aids, contextualized instruction, and communicative exercises to enhance the acquisition and accurate application of idiomatic language.

**Keywords:** EFL learners, Translation difficulties, Idiomatic expressions, Error analysis, Pedagogical implications.

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**Cite this article as:** Talib, E. E. A. (2025). Analyzing the errors of EFL Learners in Translating Idiomatic Expressions into Arabic, *Arts for Linguistic & Literary Studies*, 7(3): 574-593. <https://doi.org/10.53286/arts.v7i3.2709>

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## تحليل أخطاء متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية باعتبارها لغة أجنبية في ترجمة التعبيرات الاصطلاحية إلى اللغة العربية

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ملخص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على أنواع الأخطاء وتكرارها، وخصائصها اللغوية في ترجمة التعبيرات الاصطلاحية الإنجليزية إلى العربية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية باعتبارها لغة أجنبية. وتم اعتماد المنهج الوصفي الكمي في هذه الدراسة، إذ تم جمع البيانات من عينة عشوائية قوامها 80 طالباً وطالبة، من طلاب المرحلة الجامعية المتخصصين في اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية، جامعة الحديدة في اليمن، من خلال استبيان تقييم متعدد الخيارات. وكشفت نتائج التحليل عن نسبة أخطاء مرتفعة بلغت 67.8%， تمثلت في الغالب في اعتماد الترجمة الحرافية غير الملائمة بدلاً من الترجمة الاصطلاحية. وتشير هذه النتائج إلى وجود قصور كبير في الكفاءة الاصطلاحية لدى المتعلمين، يعزى إلى ضعف المعرفة المعجمية، ومحدودية التعلم لاستخدام اللغوي الأصيل، وضعف القدرة على معالجة المعنى ضمن السياق. وخلصت الدراسة إلى التوصية باعتماد تدخلات تربوية تدمج المادة العلمية المفيدة والوسائل البصرية والتعليم السياقي والتمارين التواصيلية؛ لتعزيز اكتساب التعبيرات الاصطلاحية وتطبيقاتها تطبيقاً دقيقاً.

الكلمات المفتاحية: متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية، صعوبات الترجمة، التعبيرات الاصطلاحية، تحليل الأخطاء، الدلالات التربوية.

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للاقتباس: طالب، إ. ع. ع. (2025). تحليل أخطاء متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية باعتبارها لغة أجنبية في ترجمة التعبيرات

الاصطلاحية إلى اللغة العربية، الآداب للدراسات اللغوية والأدبية، 7(3): 574-593. <https://doi.org/10.53286/arts.v7i3.2709>

© نشر هذا البحث وفقاً لشروط الرخصة (CC BY 4.0) Attribution 4.0 International، التي تسمح بنسخ البحث وتوزيعه ونقله باي شكل من الأشكال، كما تسمح بتكييف البحث أو تحويله أو الإضافة إليه لأي غرض كان، بما في ذلك الأغراض التجارية، شريطة نسبية العمل إلى صاحبه مع بيان أي تعديلات أجريت عليه.



## 1. Introduction

All languages, including Arabic and English, employ spoken and written formats to convey common meaning and content used in literature (Bores, 2008). For example, a "slice of cake" frame conveys the command directly. There are no difficult-to-use native languages that receive spoken messages and conversations, as well as many other signs and letters. Developing and understanding idioms is essential for common and effective communication, and there is a language that is used by mothers (Cieslicka, 2006). Using idioms in a well-developed vocabulary that incorporates colloquial terminology carries great weight for improving your English proficiency (Ahmadi, Sahragard, & Babaie-Shalmani, 2017). It becomes idioms which are a form of nothing less than linguistic treasure; and itself it embodies cultural specific meanings, and facilitates free interpretations of different incidents. As a result, they add to the quality and directness of their English writing (Abdel Latif, 2021). Frequent acquisition of idioms perhaps results in fluency, which gives language distinctiveness and dynamism. Researchers have extensively highlighted the importance of teaching idiomatic expressions to enrich communicative competence. In this context, educators play a vital role in facilitating learning environments that effectively introduce students to English idioms while providing extensive practice opportunities. The integration of idiomatic language instruction is usually connected to enhancements in both receptive and productive language abilities across diverse contexts. Therefore, the inclusion of idiomatic phrases, collocations, and formulaic expressions within educational curricula is deemed essential for optimal language acquisition outcomes.

In this regard, teachers help students learn English idioms by providing warm-up exercises, as well as going deeper into practice. Integration of idioms is usually associated with improvements in both language comprehension and language production across various domains. Consequently, the integration of formulaic language, including idioms and collocations, is critically regarded as essential for attaining advanced levels of language proficiency. Within this domain, opaque idiomatic expressions (e.g., 'feeling under the weather') and fixed collocations (e.g., 'commit suicide') present considerable difficulty for L2 learners due to their non-compositional nature. This study focuses specifically on the challenges posed by the pragmatic force, semantic opacity, and cross-linguistic variability of English idioms—a focus justified by their persistent identification as a locus of learner errors. This recurring finding in the literature underscores the imperative to address the pedagogical treatment of idioms systematically.

A consensus emerging from contemporary research indicates that exposure to idioms in authentic contexts, such as film or native speaker interaction, correlates strongly with improved comprehension and translation accuracy (Abdel Latif, 2021; Alotaibi, 2023; Alshokhada, 2025). Conversely, unfamiliar idioms significantly increase cognitive load, which adversely impacts processing speed and compromises



translational precision (Chen, Liu, 2022), highlighting that comprehension is a prerequisite for successful output. Pedagogical interventions have therefore been recommended, including direct instruction embedded within cultural and pragmatic contexts (Al-Qahtani, 2023) and contrastive analysis to mitigate the prevalent tendency toward erroneous literal translation (Hussein, 2022). Furthermore, empirical investigations into technological solutions, such as dedicated E-Learning environments and data-driven, corpus-based approaches to provide authentic contextual examples (Al-ward et al., 2024; Hamad, 2024), have demonstrated positive outcomes.

Synthesizing these theoretical and empirical strands, the most recent scholarship advocates for an integrated pedagogical framework. This approach synergizes explicit cognitive instruction, enhanced cultural awareness, and sustained contextual exposure to effectively address the multifaceted challenges of idiom acquisition and translation.

Tergui (2024) studies the challenges faced by final-year translation students when translating Arabic proverbs and idioms into English. The author states that the students struggled to realize the deeper semantic layers of the original text and find the nearest English equivalent. The study supports a methodology which aims to create equivalent idiomatic expressions in the target language that, while differing in lexicon and structure, convey the same impact and meaning as in the source language. It underscores the importance of understanding the cultural differences that exist between the two languages.

### 1.1. Aim and objectives of the Study

This study mainly aims at

Analyzing the translations errors of Arabic idioms into English by EFL Yemeni students at Hodeidah University

1- Assessing and quantifying the percentage and frequency of errors, these errors are made by Hodeidah University, English Education Program students in translating colloquial expressions from English into Arabic.

2- Classifying the types of errors (interlingual and intralingual), and the cognitive, linguistic, and instructional factors are classified that contribute to them.

### 1.2. Questions of the Study

The present investigation is guided by the following research questions:

1. What specific challenges do students at Hodeidah university encounter when translating idiomatic English expressions into Arabic?

2. What types of intra- and inter-language errors are predominantly associated with EFL learners in the context of translating idiomatic expressions?

3. What underlying factors contribute to the translation errors identified among students?

### 1.3. Problem Statement

Based on classroom observations and student performance at Hodeidah University, it is evident that Yemeni learners of English in higher education, exactly who enrolled in the Faculty of Education Translation department, translating spoken English into Arabic poses significant difficulties. The students enrolled in the Translation Department at Hodeidah University are expected to acquire strong translation skills. But, they continue to face persistent obstacles, despite having completed multiple translation-related courses focused on general translation, literary translation, and specialized courses on idiomatic and figurative language. However, despite all these translation courses, they still struggle to convey the meaning of idiomatic expression accurately. It indicates a need for further examination into the complexities of translation within idiomatic translation in the Yemeni context this linguistic context.

The scope of this research aims to explain the systematic lack of pedagogical semi-pragmatic imaginations and cross-cultural awareness, which leads to idiomatic misinterpretation and misrepresentation. There is negative language transfer from Arabic, a low-utility lexicon, a lack of exposure to spoken English in everyday contexts, and the “grammar-translation method” prevalent in traditional pedagogical approaches. This research aims to identify, classify, and analyze the types of errors that are committed by the learners in translating idiomatic expressions to improve the students’ translation proficiency in the semantics, cultural, and the aesthetics of English idioms.

### 1.4. The significance of the study:

It is stated by students, teachers, and curriculum developers for English language pedagogy that this study will be useful, particularly on the problem of idiomatic translation. During idiomatic expression, metaphorical and cultural-specific meanings enrich the language that often diverge from the literal interpretation of constituent words. Command over English as a second language entails embodying these idioms and phrases, and more importantly, using and applying them precisely within the contexts that require them. Undergraduate students in Hodeidah University’s Translation Department, Faculty of Education are expected to get competence in different courses of translation. The curriculum of the departments involves courses such as General Translation, Literary Translation, Scientific and Technical Translation, and specialized courses dealing with figurative or idiomatic language. Nevertheless, formally in the practice, the learners required to study only two main courses—Translation I and Translation II—offered in the third and fourth years of study. Due to this limited experience, students are not likely to cultivate advanced translation skills, such as dealing with culturally and linguistically complex idioms. This illustrates an inadequacy in the educational framework of the institute, which, in fact, may contribute to the persistent idiomatic translation problems.



This Translation Department's lack of a specialized translation program raises an important question: how can students' translation abilities be reliably assessed when their training is so narrowly confined? This particular research focuses on the evaluation of translation competencies through idiomatic translation in a context-relevant manner. This research methods include error analysis and contextual translation evaluation, which in combination with various quantitative methods, accurately demonstrate the level of students' idiomatic translation skills. The results obtained not only help teachers identify specific gaps in their students' language and culture comprehension, explaining common error patterns, but also help students strengthen particular competencies. Therefore, these findings can inform more tailored instructional strategies and motivate curriculum changes to improve translation instruction in routine English classes.

## 2. The concept of the study:

### 2.1. Idiomatic English Words:

Every language uses idiomatic terminology. When employed in a sentence, they provide connotative meaning rather than directly explaining the words' exterior meaning. The meaning of each word is distinct from the actual meaning of idiomatic words. Idioms have distinct grammatical structures and meanings.

Idioms are instances of figurative language that frequently have a lengthy history. Idiomaticity is a characteristic of idioms. Figurative language includes idioms as a subset. They have a nonliteral meaning and are formulaic terms. For instance, "to kick the bucket" is an expression that meaning "to die." Since idioms deviate from the literal meaning of words, they are regarded as a subset of figurative language.

### 2.3. Types of Errors

Making errors is a normal aspect of learning a language. Examining these errors might reveal important information about the difficulties and methods used by second language learners.

**2.3.1. Interlingual errors** are caused by the learner's native language having an impact on how they utilize the target language. They happen when students apply patterns or rules from their first language (L1) to the second, even when those norms differ. When a learner applies the word order of their original language to English, for instance, the sentence structure becomes inappropriate.

**2.3.2. Intralingual errors** are mistakes that originate in the target language. They are a result of the learner's insufficient comprehension of the L2 system rather than L1 interference. Examples include simplifying difficult grammatical structures or overgeneralizing L2 norms (e.g., applying the "-ed" past tense ending to irregular verbs).

### 2.4. The Reasons for Errors

#### Language learners make errors for a variety of reasons:

**2.4.1. Language Interference:** As was already established, a major cause of errors, especially in the early phases of language learning, is the effect of the learner's native tongue.



**2.4.2. Poor Instruction:** Confusion and errors can result from poor instruction or unclear explanations.

**2.4.3. Ignorance of the Rules by Learners:** Learners may make errors just because they are still unfamiliar with a certain rule or pattern in the target language.

**2.4.4. Complexity of the Target Language:** With its many rules, exceptions, and quirks, the target language's inherent complexity can also lead to errors.

### 3. Limitation of the Study:

**The study limitations are as follows:**

1. English Department students, faculty of Education, Hodeidah University, Yemen.
2. The challenges encountered by students while translating colloquial English terms into Arabic.
3. The research is limited to the 2024–2025 academic year.

### 4. Literature Review

It is the metaphorical nature and cultural specific features of idioms that make translating them from English to Arabic difficult for EFL learners. The Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students tend to interpret things literally because idioms are not taken to them at face value or word approach. Also, to some students, idiomatic expressions such as “feeling under the weather” as well as “commit suicide” pose a challenge. Understanding communicative strategies such as pragmatics, transparency, and cross-linguistic overlap allows learners to grasp English idioms, which some contexts may focus only on English idioms. This stresses the need for a deeper understanding of foreign idioms.

Cognitive and cultural aspects of idioms pose challenges, which is shown in the work of Boers,2 (2008), or Cieslicka (2006, for example, emphasizes the need to understand idioms at a deeper level as well as the challenges foreign learners face when translating idioms due to their abundance in literature and everyday conversations. Ahmadi, Sahragard, and Babaie-Shalmani (2017) discussed the impact of idioms on learners, arguing that students face greater problems because idioms are more widely used in literature and speech. In other words, the need for anthropomorphism is yet to be discussed.

According to research by Hussein, K. (2022), which focuses especially on Arabic-speaking students, interlingual transfer—the impact of Arabic idioms—causes pupils to translate using native patterns improperly. Chen, Liu,<sup>2</sup> (2022) concurred, finding that foreign idioms result in a significant cognitive burden that slows understanding and decreases accuracy. Furthermore, academics like Al-Qahtani (2023) and Abdel Latif (2021) support the use of contextualized and real resources while teaching idioms. Students' understanding and retention of idioms are improved and translation errors are decreased when they are exposed to them in authentic contexts, such as movies, discussions, and cultural materials.



Research indicates that Arabic-speaking learners frequently exhibit interlingual transfer, where the influence of their first language (L1) leads to the application of inappropriate native patterns during translation (Hussein, 2022). This phenomenon is compounded by the significant cognitive load that unfamiliar idiomatic expressions impose, which impedes comprehension and adversely affects translational precision (Chen, Liu, 2022; Al-Moushaki, 2024). In response to these challenges, scholars have advocated for pedagogical approaches grounded in authentic context. For instance, Abdel Latif (2021) and Al-Qahtani (2023) posit that instruction utilizing empirically grounded resources—such as films, conversations, and cultural materials—enhances the understanding and retention of idioms, thereby reducing translation errors. Similarly, Al-Ward et al. (2024) propose a corpus-driven approach, wherein learners analyze idioms in genuine texts to better appreciate their pragmatic use, a method shown to reduce errors at syntactic and semantic levels. Further illuminating these issues, Harmon, (2021) examined the psycholinguistic factors behind lexical errors among Yemeni Arabic-speaking learners of English, identifying L1 transfer and L2 influence as primary contributors (Shormani, 2020). Expanding on this, Shormani (2015) integrates syntactic and semantic perspectives to propose a streamlined method for collocation acquisition, arguing that proficiency in formulaic language is essential for L2 learners.

In conclusion, the research emphasizes that teaching idiomatic terms requires deliberate, contextually rich, and culturally sensitive education. Additionally, it highlights how translation errors are influenced by both intralingual (target language difficulty) and interlingual (native language interference), particularly for Arabic-speaking learners.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1. Research Design

To examine the errors Yemeni EFL learners commit when translating English idioms into Arabic, this study used a quantitative descriptive research approach. This approach is justified by its capacity to measure the kinds and prevalence of translation errors as well as offer quantifiable insights into the challenges faced by students. Pattern recognition, error classification (interlingual and intralingual), and empirically supported instructional solutions are all viable uses for this architecture. A random sample of 80 students enrolled in Hodeidah University's, Faculty of Education, English Department were given a standardized exam by the researchers that included 10 idiomatic idioms. The frequency and kinds of errors were ascertained by statistical analysis of the replies.

### 5.2. Research Location

The research was conducted at the English Department Faculty of Education, , Hodeidah University, Yemen.



### 5.3. Population and Sample

The study sample consisted of **eighty (80) undergraduate EFL students** enrolled in the Translation Department at the Faculty of Education Hodeidah University, Yemen, during the academic year 2024–2025. The sample was selected using **simple random sampling** to ensure unbiased representation of the student population. All participants had completed Translation I and were either enrolled in or had completed Translation II, the only two translation-focused courses offered by the department.

These students represent typical EFL learners in Yemeni higher education, with approximately **six to seven years** of English study prior to university enrollment. However, their exposure to idiomatic expressions was limited due to a lack of contextual instruction, insufficient authentic materials, and minimal curriculum focus on idiomatic translation. The selected sample was appropriate for investigating common translation errors and identifying interlingual and intralingual difficulties in idiom comprehension and usage.

### 5.4. Research Instrument

A multiple-choice exam with 10 English idiomatic idioms often used in everyday conversation served as the study's primary tool. There were four answers to each question. Assessing students' comprehension and accuracy in translating these idioms into Arabic was the aim. (The exam is included in the appendix.)

### 5.5. Data Collection and Analysis

To improve reliability, the exam was given in both pretest and posttest formats. The responses were divided into two categories: accurate and inaccurate translations. The inaccuracies were then further classified as intralingual or interlingual. With the use of statistical counts and the principles of qualitative analysis, frequencies and percentages were calculated, and mistake kinds were determined.

### 5.6. Validity and Reliability

Three linguists at the university level provided professional assessment to guarantee the content's correctness. The Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r = 1.664$ ), which was used to confirm dependability, showed a high degree of reliability at the 0.01 significance level. These metrics confirm that the tool accurately represented the trainees' real translating abilities.

## 6. Results and Discussion of Data

Students at Hodeidah University do have difficulty translating idiomatic English words into Arabic. Idiomatic expressions should be given priority in language instruction and learning since they are among the hardest to acquire (Belousova, 2015) (Khonbi and Sadeghi, 2017). The study aims to determine how many students make errors while translating idioms of English words during the learning process. To substantiate the arguments, the researchers have tested eighty students of Dept. of English, Hodeidah University, Yemen, to find out their errors regarding idiomatic English words. The survey's findings are as follows:



**Do Yemeni learners at the University level face any difficulty translating idiomatic English words into the Arabic language?**

The primary purpose of the data analysis was to respond to the difficulties' phrasing, which indicated that the study's objective was to determine whether the errors of students in translating the text-based idiomatic translation were noteworthy. When students make errors when translating English texts into Arabic utilizing idiomatic translation techniques, the computation is compared to the ability criterion.

**Table (1).** The analysis of samples errors in translating the test

**Table (1)**

*Description of the errors of Idiomatic English words committed by EFL learners*

No.	Idiomatic English Words	The Number and percentage of Correct and Incorrect Answers of Students		Total
		Correct Answers	Incorrect Answers	
1.	<b>The Ball is in your court.</b>	20 students, (25%)	60 students, (75%)	80 students, (100%)
2.	<b>Cross that bridge when you come to it.</b>	10 student, (12%)	70 students, (88%)	80 students, (100%)
3.	<b>It costs an arm and a leg.</b>	44 students, (55%)	36 students, (45%)	80 students, (100%)
4.	<b>Actions speak louder than words.</b>	35 students, (43%)	45 students, (57%)	80 students, (100%)
5.	<b>Best of both worlds.</b>	29 students, (36%)	51 students, (64%)	80 students, (100%)
6.	<b>You can't judge a book by its cover.</b>	38 students, (47%)	42 students, (53%)	80 students, (100%)
7.	<b>Best thing since sliced bread.</b>	46 students, (57%)	34 students, (43%)	80 students, (100%)
8.	<b>Beat around the bush.</b>	13students, (16%)	67 students, (84%)	80 students, (100%)
9.	<b>At the drop of a hat.</b>	11 students, (13%)	69 students, (87%)	80 students, (100%)
10.	<b>The sky rains cats and dogs.</b>	15 students, (18%)	65 students, (82%)	80 students, (100%)
Total		261 students, (322%)	539 students, (678%)	800 students, (1000%)

A discussion on idioms would remain incomplete without reference to English words that have multiple meanings. A large number of students do not have sufficient knowledge about the background and importance of the terms. Therefore, they more often than not commit errors while translating these idioms. For example, the idiom "Ball is in your court" means "It is up to you to make the next decision or step." Due to the students' lack of knowledge, they translate it wrong such as "It is playing."

It is evident from the study findings that students struggle to translate colloquial English terms into Arabic. This result aligns with research by Boers,2 (2008)and Cieslicka (2006) that highlights the cognitive and cultural difficulties idioms provide, especially for non-native speakers, where literal blunders like "it's raining cats and dogs" may occur or straight translation may not be feasible. Chen and Liu's (2022) conclusion that novel idioms increase cognitive load and decrease accuracy is further supported by the large percentages of wrong answers for particular idioms.



The analysis of translation performance across the ten idiomatic items reveals a pronounced and consistent pattern of difficulty among participants. As detailed in Table 1, the overall success rate was markedly low, with a considerable majority of learners failing to provide an accurate translation for most items.

A clear hierarchy of difficulty can be discerned from the results. Items 8, 9, 10, 2, and 1 proved to be the most challenging, with success rates ranging merely from 12% to 25%. This indicates that a significant majority of the cohort (75% to 88%) lacked the requisite knowledge to translate these specific idioms. In contrast, Items 3 and 7 were translated successfully by a slim majority of students (55% and 57%, respectively), suggesting these expressions were more accessible, though still problematic for a large portion of the sample. The remaining items (4, 5, and 6) presented a moderate challenge, with failure rates between 53% and 64%.

Generalizing from these findings, it is evident that the accurate translation of idiomatic expressions constitutes a substantial hurdle for the majority of EFL learners in this context. The exceptionally low success rates for over half of the items suggest that the challenges are not isolated but rather systemic, potentially stemming from factors such as semantic opacity (the inability to decipher non-literal meaning), lack of cross-linguistic awareness (failure to recognize that a direct literal translation is often inappropriate) and insufficient exposure (a gap in familiarity with high-frequency, yet complex, formulaic language).

This pattern underscores a critical deficit in idiomatic competence, which extends beyond individual lexical items to reflect a broader struggle with the conceptual and pragmatic aspects of the target language.

In the table (1) mentioned above, the number of students who have made incorrect answers is (539), i.e., (678%). This number is more than that of the students who have completed correct answers, i.e., (261), which come to (322%). As a result, it can be stated that the students struggle to translate Idiomatic English words. This problem highlights the difficulties that L2 learners face in acquiring and processing idioms, as highlighted by Boers,1 (2008),and Cieslicka (2006).

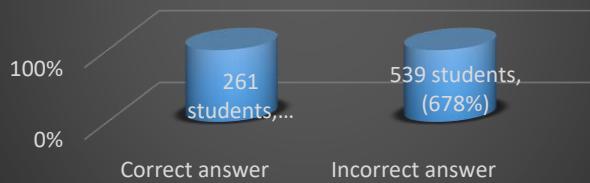
In the table mentioned above, the number of students who have made incorrect answers is (539), i.e., (678%). This number is more than that of the students who have completed correct answers, i.e., (261), which come to (322%). As a result, it can be stated that the students struggle to translate Idiomatic English words.

Figure1

*Description of the number and percentage of EFL learners' correct and incorrect answers of the students of Hodeidah University while translating Idiomatic English words.*



## The number and percentage of the students at Hodeidah University in translating Idiomatic English words



The above graph shows that the number and percentage of incorrect answers is 539 students, (678%). The number of correct answers is less than that of wrong answers. Hence, it can be said that the students' performance studying in the university needs to improve. To improve the performance of students, it is necessary to pay serious attention to developed points.

### In the second question analysis:

What types of intra- and inter-language errors are predominantly associated with EFL learners in the context of translating idiomatic expressions?

The findings show the following types of errors:

### Interlingual Errors as the following:

- 1) Incompetent teachers who use inappropriate methods and techniques of Teaching and Learning.
- 2) Ignorance of the learners is towards the restrictions of the rules of the language.
- 3) Learners have inadequate knowledge of translating idiomatic English words, as they do not get more opportunities to recognize the correct meaning of idioms of English words.

### Interlingual Errors as the following:

- 1) Owing to the negative transfer of mother tongue.
- 2) The complexity of idiomatic English words.
- 3) The different translating to the meanings of idiomatic English words depends on the literary translation.

### Table (2)

Description of the types of errors of English words vocabulary committed by EFL learners

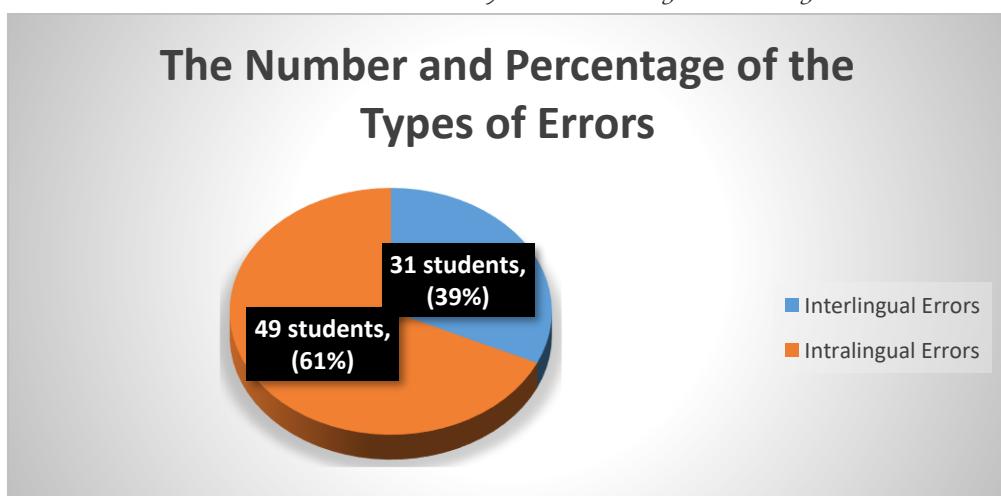
The Number and Percentage of Errors of the Students of Faculty of Education at Hodeidah University		Total
Interlingual Errors	Intralingual Errors	
31 students, (39%)	49 students, (61%)	80 students, (100%)



Students had difficulty distinguishing idiomatic English words. It is due to interlingual and intralingual errors, as shown in the table above. The number of students who made errors owing to Interlingual errors is (31 students), as shown in the table above (39%). Owing to Intralingual errors is (49 students), i.e., (61%). It indicates that the number of Interlingual errors is less than that of intralingual errors. As a result of intralingual errors, it is possible to conclude that students have difficulty translating and understanding the meaning of idiomatic English words and terminology correctly. This result is very consistent with the literature review's focus on the intralingual (L2 complexity) and interlingual (L1 interference) elements that lead to translation errors. In particular, as Ahmadi, Sahragard, and Babaie-Shalmani (2017) point out, the difficulties associated with the abstract character and intrinsic complexity of English idioms are reflected in the frequency of intralingual errors. The effects of negative transfer from the mother language (interlingual errors) are also in line with studies on lexical choice issues brought on by L1 transfer conducted by Harmon, (2021) and Hussein, K. (2022) on Arabic-speaking learners.

#### Figure2

*Description of the Number and Percentage of the Interlingual and Intralingual Errors. Regarding the Answers of EFL Learners of the students of Hodeidah University While translating Idiomatic English Words.*



Regarding the Answers of EFL Learners of the students of Hodeidah University While translating Idiomatic English Words. The above graph shows the number and percentage regarding Interlingual and Intralingual Errors, respectively 31students, (39%) & 49 students, (61%). The number of interlingual errors is less than that of intralingual errors. Hence, it can be said that the students at Hodeidah University commit



errors due to intralingual errors. In order to accelerate the improvement of the students' performance, it is necessary to pay serious attention to developed points.

In summary, the study's findings indicate that 322% of samples successfully translated sentences using idiomatic translation, whereas 678% of samples failed to translate texts using idiomatic translation. The majority of students still struggle with English practice, particularly with grammar. When interpreting an idiomatic text, students occasionally make blunders. The idiomatic translation of English to Arabic left them unsure on how to translate the material.

According to the results, a context is a crucial tool for teaching idioms since it helps students experience the environment more like that of native speakers. The subjects have been studying English for the last seven years, i.e., three years in preparatory school, three years in secondary school, and four years in the university. What is important to note here is that the students still commit several idioms in English words despite studying for such an extended period. The researcher has included only fresh students and not repeaters to ensure that all those undergoing tests have the same exposure to the target language (English).

**Table (3).** The finding of the study:

The table (3) shows the following: The ability status of the students that are poor, good, very good, or excellent in column I. Column II contains a frequency in the distribution of marks indicating the marks obtained by counting the number of the correct answers in the test script given to 80 students merit-wise. A total of ten items have been included in the test. Column III provides the percentage of a frequency in the distribution of scores of the students according to merit.

### Frequency in the distribution of marks

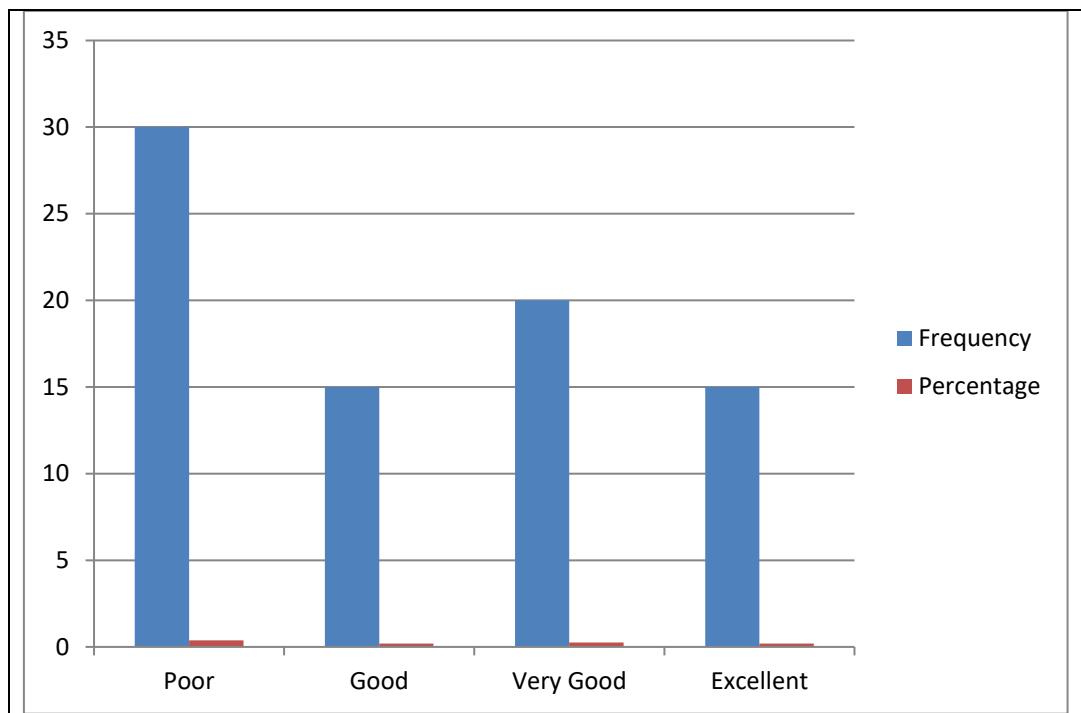
**Table (3).** The finding of the study:

*The Students' Ability in Translation*

The Students' Ability in Translation No.	Ability Status	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Poor	30	37.5%
2	Good	15	18.75%
3	Very Good	20	25%
4	Excellent	15	18.75%
Total		80	100

**Figure3**

*Description of the Number and Percentage of the Ability of Hodeidah University while Translating Idiomatic English Words*



The above graph shows that the highest number and percentage of the Ability of Hodeidah University in Translation Idiomatic English Words is poor, which is (30), (37.5%) respectively. Hence, it can be said that the students at Hodeidah University commit errors and face difficulties in translating Idiomatic English words. It is vital to pay close attention to developed points to speed the improvement of students' abilities.

Regardless, the current study focuses on analyzing students' responses to translating idiomatic English words, critical for learning and teaching English. Without this, we will not achieve our long-held goal of teaching and learning correct and meaningful English.

The study found out the number of correct answers is less than that of incorrect answers for many reasons that we cannot turn a blind eye towards the factors that come in the students' way while translating idiomatic English words. To discuss the results obtained from the study that the students commit errors in translating idiomatic English expressions. Consequently, we cannot turn blind eyes towards the errors of translation of idiomatic English words that may be happened to the mentioned reasons as bellow:

One of the main reasons for this is the adverse impact of regional dialects. Among other factors, mention may be made of the inappropriate methods and techniques of teaching and learning or ignorance of the learners towards restrictions of the rules of the language. Also, the problem translation's aggravation may be that the learners have inadequate knowledge of the idiomatic English words as they do not get more



opportunities to listen to English words from TV channels or radio, Cinema, etc. Also, due to negative transfer, the complexity of understanding the meaning of idiomatic English words, or the different translations depending on their literary translation. The literature review frequently discusses these elements as the main obstacles faced by L2 learners, including linguistic interference and the intrinsic difficulty of the target language. In line with recommendations from Al-ward et al. (2024) for corpus-based approaches and contextualized learning, the issue statement's mention of a lack of exposure to real materials and conventional teaching techniques further supports the reasons why these challenges continue.

Yemeni students find it challenging to appropriately translate idiomatic English words because English is a foreign language.

The present paper pinpoints that the students have difficulties while translating idiomatic English words. The number of correct answers is less than that of incorrect answers. The researchers hope that the present paper will systematically shed light on the nature and strategies of learning/teaching. The arguments presented in this paper are likely to go a long way toward assisting teachers and students in Yemeni universities in education and learning the correct translation of idiomatic English words.

#### 7. Findings:

There are some difficulties in translating idiomatic English words into Arabic, regarding this study that has done at Hodeidah University, Faculty of Education, with approximately 80 students in the Translation Department. It shows the significant conclusions as following:

**Idiomatic Translation Difficulty:** A significant 67.8% of students showed that they were unable to translate texts that contained idiomatic terms accurately, suggesting that this is a common problem. This is consistent with research by Boers,2 (2008) and Cieslicka (2006) that highlights the cultural and cognitive difficulties that non-native speakers have while using idioms. The findings of Chen and Liu (2022), who came to the conclusion that foreign idioms increase cognitive burden and diminish accuracy, are also supported by this.

**Particular Translation Errors:** Some idioms were difficult for the students to understand. Just 25% of respondents accurately translated "The ball is in your court," while 12% correctly translated "Cross that bridge when you come to it." This draws attention to the problem of semantic opacity and the absence of clear cultural parallels, which has been mentioned often in the literature as a problem, especially for learners who speak Arabic.

**Types of Errors:** According to error analysis, intralingual errors (61%), that are caused by the complexity of idiomatic English and mother tongue interference, and interlingual errors (39%), which are ascribed to variables such as inadequate instruction and learners' ignorance, were found. This result is in line



with the literature review, which highlights how translation errors are influenced by both intralingual (target language difficulty) and interlingual (native language interference) variables. The frequency of intralingual errors corroborates the assertion made by Ahmadi, Sahragard, and Babaie-Shalmani (2017) that idioms' abstract character makes it difficult to understand their metaphorical meaning. The interlingual errors are also consistent with studies on the detrimental effects of the local language by Harmon, (2021) and Hussein, K. (2022).

**Impact of Errors:** Students' inability to comprehend and translate idiomatic English words is shown by the high percentage of errors, which impedes their ability to communicate effectively in English. This emphasizes the value of purposeful, contextually rich, and culturally sensitive training, which is what Abdel Latif (2021) and Al-Qahtani (2023) support. The study's findings support Al-ward et al.'s (2024) assertion that improving pragmatic comprehension requires exposure to idioms in real-world situations.

#### 8. Pedagogical Implications:

The study's conclusions have several educational ramifications for teaching English idioms to EFL students, especially in an Arabic-speaking setting:

**Explicit Instruction and Contextualization:** To explain the meaning and use of idioms in everyday communication, they should be explicitly taught within context through the use of real-world resources such as dialogues, stories, movies, or books.

**Contrastive Analysis and Intralingual Difficulties:** To avoid literal translations, educators should use contrastive analysis, which compares English idioms with their Arabic counterparts. In order to assist students in navigating the complexities of English idioms, they need also address intralingual challenges including polysemy, variability, and register.

**Technology Integration and Active Learning:** To deliver interesting and successful idiom training, technology should be used in conjunction with active learning techniques like role-playing, games, and creative writing.

**Error Correction and Cultural Awareness:** To help students better comprehend idioms, teachers must offer helpful criticism on how they are used and take cultural sensitivity into account.

#### 9. Conclusion

Idiomatic expressions are integral to English proficiency, pervasive in both spoken and written discourse. Their non-literal nature necessitates that mastery extends beyond lexical knowledge to encompass cultural awareness and an understanding of pragmatic application. Accurate interpretation and translation thus depend on contextual comprehension and linguistic intuition.



This study has elucidated the significant difficulties faced by EFL learners at the University of Hodeidah in translating idiomatic expressions, particularly colloquial forms. The analysis identifies a confluence of factors contributing to these challenges, including limited authentic language exposure, inadequate pedagogical techniques, a deficit in metalinguistic knowledge, first language interference, and the inherent semantic opacity of idioms.

In response, this study contributes to the field of error analysis by highlighting the need for a paradigm shift in pedagogical approach. It emphasizes that idioms must be taught not as isolated lexical items, but as vital cultural and communicative artifacts. Consequently, it advocates for the implementation of targeted instructional strategies designed to raise awareness of idiomatic meaning and usage. The findings serve to motivate curriculum developers and instructors at Yemeni institutions to adopt remedial, context-rich teaching methods. Ultimately, such interventions are essential to equipping students with the skills necessary to accurately decode and employ idiomatic language, thereby enhancing their overall communicative competence.

#### 10. Suggestion & Recommendations:

The following suggestions are offered to enhance the instruction and acquisition of English idioms in light of the study's findings:

##### For Teachers of English:

- Use grammatical error analysis to identify the unique learning difficulties of each student.
- Encourage EFL learners to take an active role in their English language education.
- Give thorough grammar education in English.
- To remedy identified inadequacies, use remedial teaching strategies including drills and activities.
- Give concise, unambiguous explanations of the meanings of common English words.

##### For Students:

- Students should actively increase their vocabulary of colloquial English terms.
- Prioritize mastering grammatical terminology, particularly when translating colloquial idioms.

##### For the Department Administration:

To better serve students' linguistic needs, think about upgrading the syllabus and converting from traditional teaching methods to communicative approaches.

##### Acknowledgment

The author would like to acknowledge all those who helped her out, in one way or another, to finish the research article.



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