

الرد الاصطلاحي والعامي في العربية والإنجليزية: دراسة مقارنة

أ.م.د. قاسم عباس ضايف زهراء راضي حنون

جامعة بابل - كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية - قسم اللغة الانكليزية

**Idiomatic and Colloquial Response in English and Arabic:
A Contrastive Study****Asst.Prof.Qasim Abbas Dhayef Ph.D Zahraa Radhi Hanoon****University of Babylon- College of Education for Human Sciences-Dept. of English**qasimabbas@uobabylon.edu.iqzahraa.saad@student.uobabylon.edu.iq**Abstract**

Language plays an essential role in correspondence. It causes individuals to pass on and expound their viewpoint. At the point when we approach learning a new language, we will certainly encounter some difficulties such as pronunciation, collocation, lack of vocabulary, phrasal verb, etc. Fortunately, it is easy to overcome these barriers if we are perfectly willing to spend time reading books, enhancing our academic knowledge. However, there is a bridge between social and academic English that most learners admit they are unable to grasp how to comprehend the speaker's meaning appropriately in daily talks. They might be met with befuddled expressions from foreigners requiring more explanations. Idioms, which are used in different types of situations, are one of the most important aspects of the English language. It is fundamental to remember that the meaning of an idiomatic expression cannot be arrived at by defining each word separately. Thus, the present study has chosen to pick this much difficulty as this topic so as, to enable the students to have attention to idiomatic and colloquial responses. This study aims at studying the similarities and differences in English and Arabic idioms from aspects such as cultural appropriateness, situational usage, and literary imagery. This study uses an analytical descriptive method to answer the pertinent questions. This investigation simply centered around spoken expressions (some of them are formal, but most of them are informal) that can be used in response to things that individuals say. The result of this study provides English Language learners with an accessible and easy-to-use reference for understanding and using English idioms, and colloquial responses in stressing essential facts regarding their translation and usage.

Keywords: idiom, colloquialism, culture, equivalent, English, Arabic**ملخص البحث**

تلعب اللغة دوراً أساسياً في التوافق والتشابه. حيث تساعد الأفراد في شرح وجهة نظرهم وميولهم. وفي الوقت الذي نقرب فيه من تعلم لغة جديدة ، سنواجه بالتأكيد بعض الصعوبات مثل: النطق ، التجميع ، عدم وجود مفردات كافية ، الفعل المركب ، إلخ. و لحسن الحظ ، من السهل التغلب على هذه الصعوبات إذا كنا على استعداد تام لقضاء الوقت لقراءة الكتب وتعزيز معرفتنا الأكاديمية. ومع ذلك ، هناك جسر بين اللغة الإنجليزية الاجتماعية والأكاديمية يعترف معظم المتعلمين على أنهم غير قادرين على كيفية فهم معنى المتحدث بشكل مناسب في المحادثات اليومية (العامية). قد تقابلهم تعبيرات مشوشة او غير مفهومه من الأجانب تتطلب المزيد من التفسيرات. تعد التعبيرات الاصطلاحية ، التي تستخدم في أنواع مختلفة من المواقف، واحدة من أهم جوانب فهم اللغة الإنجليزية لمتعلميها. ومن المهم أن نتذكر أنه لا يمكن الوصول إلى معنى التعبير الاصطلاحى بتعريف كل كلمة على حدة ولكن يجب ان نعرف المعنى المتعارف عليه في تلك اللغة. ولهذا السبب ، اختارت الدراسة الحالية هذه الصعوبة كموضوع للدراسة ، لتمكين الطلاب من الانتباه إلى الردود الاصطلاحية والعامية. حيث يهدف البحث الحالي إلى دراسة أوجه التشابه والاختلاف في التعبيرات الإنجليزية والعربية من جوانب مثل الملاءمة الثقافية ، واستخدام الظواهر والصور الأدبية. تستخدم هذه الدراسة طريقة وصفية

تحليلية للإجابة على الأسئلة ذات الصلة. ويتمحور هذا التحقيق ببساطة حول التعبيرات المنطوقة (بعضها رسمي ، ولكن معظمها غير رسمي) يمكن استخدامه كرد على ما يقوله الأفراد. النتائج المرجوة من هذه الدراسة هي تزويد متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بمرجع يمكن الوصول إليه وسهل الاستخدام لفهم واستخدام التعبيرات الإنجليزية ، والردود العامة في التأكيد على الحقائق الأساسية المتعلقة بترجمتها واستخدامها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعبيرات الاصطلاحية ، اللغة العامية ، الثقافة ، التطابق . اللغة العربية . اللغة الإنكليزية

1. Introduction

Idioms are the colourful and attractive aspects of any language and are so universal. It is difficult to speak spontaneously without lapsing into idiomatic usage. They are commonly used in all types of contexts, informal and formal, spoken and written. In spoken language students face problems in understanding the real meaning of idioms, they confuse with the literal meaning of them. It is fundamental to remember that the meaning of an idiomatic expression cannot be arrived at by defining each word separately. The present study stands on this point and comes with some suggestions to have a student's attention to idiomatic and colloquial responses. Some of the idioms and colloquial responses are analyzed in English and Arabic in the Iraqi informal dialect to show the differences and similarities in their usage and the impact of the culture and different situations on the meaning of these expressions between the two languages. This study aims at studying the similarities and differences in English and Arabic idioms from aspects such as cultural appropriateness, situational usage, and literary imagery. It also aims at showing the differences and similarities in colloquial responses between English and Arabic especially the Iraqi dialect. In relation to the aim of the study mentioned above, this work will check the hypotheses that (1) English idioms do not apply to Arabic culture and vice-versa, (2) English and Arabic idioms are not used in similar situations, and (3) English and Arabic (informal Iraqi Dialect) do not use the same terms of colloquial responses.

To reach the aims, this study uses an analytical descriptive method to answer the pertinent questions of this study, based on comparisons made through tables, situational dialogues, and concrete examples in which several selected idioms were used. This investigation simply centered around spoken expressions (some of them are formal, but most of them are informal) that can be used in response to things that individuals say.

Idiom and colloquialism, on one hand, are unavoidable no matter what language people are speaking. The present study, therefore, establishes its importance to society in its participation in understanding the features of the language. Mastering a language is not only good at four basic skills but also comprehend idiomatic and colloquial responses as a native speaker. The importance of the study to the discipline, on the other hand, lies in its contribution to show the comparison of the two languages and shed the light on the culture and habits of the society of target language.

1.2 The Problem

Idioms are the colorful and attractive aspects of any language and are so universal. It is difficult to speak spontaneously without lapsing into idiomatic usage. They are commonly used in all types of contexts, informal and formal, spoken and written. In spoken language students face problems in understanding the real meaning of idioms, they confuse with the literal meaning of them. It is fundamental to remember that the meaning of an idiomatic expression cannot be arrived at by defining each word separately. The present study stands on this point and comes with some suggestions to have a student's attention to idiomatic and colloquial responses. Some of the idioms and colloquial responses are analyzed in English and Arabic in the Iraqi informal dialect to show the differences and similarities in their usage and the impact of the culture and different situations on the meaning of these expressions between the two languages.

1.3 Hypotheses

H01: English idioms do not apply to Arabic culture and vice-versa.

H02: English and Arabic idioms are not used in similar situations.

H03: English and Arabic (informal Iraqi Dialect) do not use the same terms of colloquial responses.

1.4 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to analyze idiomatic expressions in English and Arabic namely in (Iraqi informal dialect and slang English)

1.5 Aims of the Study

This study aims at studying the similarities and differences in English and Arabic idioms from aspects such as cultural appropriateness, situational usage, and literary imagery. It also aims at showing the differences and similarities in colloquial responses between English and Arabic especially the Iraqi dialect.

1.6 Value of the Study

Each study has to establish its importance to the world of society and the discipline. Idiom and colloquialism, on one hand, are unavoidable no matter what language people are speaking. The present study, therefore, establishes its importance to society in its participation in understanding the features of the language. Mastering a language is not only good at four basic skills but also comprehend idiomatic and colloquial responses as a native speaker. The importance of the study to the discipline, on the other hand, lies in its contribution to show the comparison of the two languages and shed the light on the culture and habits of the society of target language.

2. What do Idioms Mean?

Many scholars define idioms from a different point of view, according to Lengacher (1968: 79), “ an idiom is a kind of complex lexical item. It is a phrase whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meaning of the morphemes it comprises ”. This definition shows two basic characteristics of the idiom: It is a complex lexical item, and its meaning cannot be inferred from its parts.

In his turn, Carter (1987: 65) defines idioms as “special combinations with restricted forms and meanings that cannot be deduced from the literal meanings of the words which make them up”. Accordingly, an idiom is learned and used as a single unit. It should not be analyzed into its constituents. It is unchangeable and always carries a figurative meaning.

Jarvice (1993: 148), on the other hand, writes: “An idiom is an expression whose meaning cannot easily be worked out from the words it contains”. Idioms have the potential to cause foreign learners of a language some difficulties. If you say to a native speaker visiting a place for the first time, “How did you find Stratford ?” you will get the response “Great–I loved it or I did not like the place at all”. But if you ask a nonnative speaker the same question, the response may be “How did I find Stratford? the train took me there.” Here “find” is used idiomatically.

Palmer (1996: 80) states that “an idiom is semantically like a single word, it does not function like one. A large number of idioms contain a verb and a noun, but although the verb may be placed in the past tense, the number of the noun can never be changed” , for instance, , the expressions “kick the bucket” and “kicked the bucket” (someone who dies) is largely used in English, in contrast to “kick the buckets” which never occurs.

The Longman Pocket Dictionary(2001) defines an idiom as a group of words that has, as a whole, a different meaning from the meaning of its constituents. In other words, the meaning of the idiomatic expression is not the sum of the words taken individually.

3. What do Colloquialisms Mean?

The word colloquialism comes from the Latin word colloquium, which means speaking together. Colloquialism occurs frequently in everyday speech and is also used frequently in poetry, prose, and

drama. A colloquialism can relate to words, expressions, or phrases that are used with speech rather than writing, though this can vary across different regions or fall into a popular style based on a variety of factors. It cannot be considered that it is rude to utter a colloquial term even though they are quite close to informal.

For this study, the colloquial speech will be defined only as an informal conversational speech. For example the phrase “What’s up?” can be understood as informal greetings which is equivalent to “Hi” or “Hello” (Hornby,1995).

4. Arabic Idioms

An idiom is an artistic expression of the language. Usually, the individual meanings of its components are different from their literal meaning. Idiomatic expressions are colorful, dramatic, lively, closer to the way people feel, and closer to the local culture.

Generally, spoken Arabic uses idioms more often than written, and therefore, sixty to seventy percent of the idioms are more commonly associated with the spoken language. At the same time, within written Arabic itself, there are noticeable differences in usage: news commentary and analysis, novels and society, arts and sports reports tend to use more spoken idioms than news or scientific reports and religious writing.

4. Comparison Between English and Arabic Responses

4.1 Idiomatic Responses in English and Arabic

Idioms have some notably characteristic. It will be mentioned in the two most important ones: semantic and structural characteristics.

4.1.1 Semantic Feature

Vinogradov (1977) likened the meaning of an idiom to “the special chemical mixture” of the meaning of all the components. Taking an example to explain his point:

- “Close your eyes” is a common phrase as an action. It is not an idiom because words are used in its standard meaning. Nevertheless, the phrase “Pop into my head” is an idiom that does not mean “hit into my head” – it means “Thought of a new idea”.

Arabic like using idioms in their daily talks to show intimacy or drop a hint. Idioms have figurative and metaphorical meanings. Therefore, it’s too difficult to comprehend although the meanings of all their components can be known. It is better to focus on the figurative meaning which is the most important characteristic. A person sometimes cannot guess the meaning of a particular idiom due to “semantic opaqueness, syntactic restrictions, and structural stability”.

The Arabic idiom “اقلع الضرس وارتاح منه” / Pull out the tooth and relax from it” (To pull out the (bad) tooth and relax” means to take off your pain (the source of trouble) thoroughly and immediately.) is also a good example. Its meaning cannot be made out if one just bases on the component words. For certain, the real meaning of the idiom is much more different from that of the set phrase. Therefore, one should interpret idiomatic responses figuratively and metaphorically. It may be quite confusing for non-native speakers to comprehend every idiom although one can get the meanings of all their components.

Similarly, American English is also full of idioms that one needs to learn if he/she wants to be able to speak like a native. However, these casual expressions or idioms cannot be found in a standard textbook. But it will be met in everyday life throughout conversations, newspapers, magazines, TV shows or on the Internet.

However, there are lots of idioms whose literal meaning and figurative ones easily guess. This point was bolstered by Kunin, A.V (2006) when he said that “the meaning of an idiom is either partly or completely different from the meaning of all components”.

For example, “pain in the neck” (someone who is very annoying), “first come, first served”, “shove off“(go away)...one can more or less conjecture their meanings. This case is also true in Arabic one

can take “اكل رأسي / he eat my head) means (He was overly insistent) or “امسك اعصابك / take hold of your nerves” means (calm down or take it easy) as examples. They cannot be interpreted literally but perceive them as separate semantic units. They have figurative meanings that reveal the reflections of things and concepts. However, there are also some idiomatic responses in Arabic having literal sense and their meanings can be deduced totally from the components. Just take some examples to elucidate this point, there are “اشكال الوان” (shapes and colours), “اخذ و عطا” (give and take), “كلي أذان” (I’m all ears)...

4.1.2 Structural Feature:

Idioms are said to be the “set expressions”, one cannot add, omit or replace the component in an idiom without influencing its metaphorical meaning. In other words, the components of idioms cannot be changed or varied as the way people often do with literal expressions. This point is applied both in speaking or writing, both in English and Arabic. For example: “hit the hay” (go to bed). “my lips are sealed” (keep secret), “in for a penny, in for a pound” (want to get more), “to eat like a horse”, or “a little bird told me” (which mean that you are not going to say a thing you mentioned)...Once people simply change these idioms to “hit the grass”, or “to eat like a buffalo”, they are not idioms at all. Furthermore, it is unable that an idiom can be transformed into a passive form, especially when it is in a full sentence. Idiomatic responses can be different when it comes to being length. That is certainly right, especially in English idioms. There are many idiomatic responses which just have one or two words, for example: “hands off” (do not touch), “night night” (good night), “cheerio” (goodbye)...there are also some quite long idioms, such as “to keep my fingers crossed for you” (to hope the listeners to be successful), “to let the cat out of the bag” (to reveal a secret)...

4.2 Contrastive Analysis between English and Arabic in Terms of Idiomatic Responses

4.2.1 Structure

It is putative that idioms can take many forms and structures as well. Both English and Arabic idioms are fixed in two typical structures: noun phrase and verb phrase. The whole sentence is also considered a structure in English idioms, however, this type is called “proverbs” in Arabic. For example: “a lie has no legs” is supposed an idiom in English but “حبل الكذب قصير” (the rope of lie is short) is considered as a proverb in Arabic.

Here is the table of similarities in the structure of idiomatic responses in two languages.

- Idiomatic responses in two languages closely appear in two main structures: verb phrase and whole sentence; while the other two are vice versa.
- Idioms in English responses can flexibly abridge:
 - “Mind your own business “ = “Mind your own”.
 - “How typical!” = “Typical!”
- There is a variety of different idioms can express the same meaning:
 - “You are welcome” = “Not at all/ My pleasure/ No problem/ OK”.
 - “Stop blowing your own trumpet” = “Don’t boast/ Stop showing off/ Toot your own horn”.
 - “My lips are sealed” = “I won’t breathe a word/ Your secret’s safe with me”.

In general, even though English and Arabic idiomatic responses may not similar in total, the common point is that they can almost fix, their figurative meanings and semantic units are unchangeable in English language, whereas in Arabic language, semantic units can be changeable. To make it concise, they are remarkably special because of their structural stability, semantic unity, and metaphorical meanings.

4.2.2 What is a Proverb?

Moreover, it should be important to take some time to distinguish idioms from proverbs. It is believed that the gap between them is quite weak and unclear, there should be some reasonable and significant points that can somehow tell them apart.

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, a proverb is "a well-known phrase or sentence that gives advice or say something that is generally true".

For example: "Waste not, want not", "when in Rome, do as a Romans"...

Proverbs manifest themselves in many different forms and can be applied to many different circumstances. They are varied in content, age, form, structure, kind, and origin. Some proverbs can

Structures of idioms	English idiomatic responses	Arabic idiomatic responses
Noun phrase	Piece of cake Crocodile tears A weirdo Wolf in sheep's clothing Big mouth Troublemaker	ما شاء الله "Mashallah" يلا "yallah" دموع التماسيح "dumu'ul tamaseeh" تمبل "tambl" أبو فليس "abu flais" شكو ماكو "shakumaku" مشاغب "Mushaghib"
Verb phrase	Spit it out Dont come the innocent with me	تدلل "tidalal" نزل من عيني "nizal min ayni" طول بالك "tawil balak"
Preposition phrase	In season At death's door On top of the world On cloud nine In a black mood Up to one's ears in debt	بالمشمش "bilmishmish" على عيني "ala ayni" لخاطرک "alkhatrak" فيها الخير "fiha-alkhair"
Full sentence	Pig may fly You were done	"altu your ala ashkaliha taka'a" الطيور على اشكالها تقع "yad wahida latusafuk" يد واحدة لاتصفق

apply to many people and many places; they are thus common to many cultures and have endured for a long time. Others that deal with aspects of daily life apply only to a given region or to a given situation or time. Since there are many popular proverbs, it is not unreasonable that some are mutually contradictory (Isleem, 2009). Though a pair of proverbs might essentially contradict each other, however, either can be reliable when applied to a specific situation. While proverbs makeup and reflect the cultural identity of a specific society, and despite the uniqueness of languages and the

profound differences between cultures, some proverbs shed light on universal truths of human life, common traditions and beliefs, and such shared values like ambition, virtue, generosity, patience, friendship, loyalty, and family ties (Bakalla, 1984; Schuster, 1998). Such proverbs have bridged linguistic and cultural barriers throughout human history. For example, the idea that the words a person chooses to articulate his or her thoughts can be crucial to his or her well-being. This idea is shared by different cultures and is expressed through proverbs using different culturally-based metaphors. Consider this Arabic proverb that compares the tongue to a horse:

—Your tongue is your horse. If you keep it, it keeps you, and if you betray it, it betrays you.

In no doubt, there are some similarities between idioms and proverbs:

- 1) They are understood metaphorically. That is responsible for being difficult to discover their literal meanings just by looking up all the individual words in a dictionary.
- 2) It is not possible to add, omit, or change any components of an idiom or proverb because that will lead to losing their figurative meaning.
- 3) Idioms and proverbs are passed along from generation to generation. They symbolize human culture, thinking, and experiences from the labourious working, discovering, and learning.

4.2.3 Culture

There is an intimate connection between language and culture. Culture plays a crucial part in forming a language and vice versa, language reflects the culture in general. English and Arabic cultures are not relatively the same.

Images compared are different but the same meanings. There are lots of English and Arabic idiomatic responses that have similar meanings but using dissimilar images. The major explanation for this point is the different cultures. The connection between proverbs and idioms and culture is difficult to ignore. Proverbs and idioms reflect and are indicative of the culture that created them, and they bring that culture to life in a concise manner. They offer a great deal of information about moral norms, traditional wisdom, beliefs, everyday experiences, and worldviews of the people who use them (Mieder, 2004, 2008) in the ways that language textbooks or language courses do not.

4.3 Comparison Between Colloquial Responses in English and Arabic

4.3.1 The Difference Between Slang and Colloquialism

There is an argument between two categories of language which are slang and colloquialism. Both of them can do overlap to a certain extent, but they are two distinct forms of language.

Colloquial language is the informal language used by people in everyday speech and understood only in the particular region or location where it is spoken.

For example:

*Describing a carbonated soft drink:

-Canada: “pop”

-Northeastern and extreme Western United States, it is referred to as “soda”.

-The Southern United States, it is commonly called “Coke” regardless of brand.

-Some southerners even refer to soft drinks as “dope”.

-In New England, it is occasionally called “tonic”.

-In some areas of Scotland, it is referred to as “ginger”.

Slang is even less formal and uses words and expressions that are not considered part of the standard language. Slang is especially used by a particular group of people such as teenagers, or members of certain ethnic groups or criminals.

4.4 Contrastive Analysis between English Slang and Arabic (Iraqi Informal Dialect) an Example in Terms of Colloquial Responses

Below is the table of similarities and differences of colloquial responses in two languages in terms of a word:

	Colloquial responses in English	Colloquial responses in Arabic (Iraqi dialect)
Similarity	Dream on!	‘tihlam’ تحلم
	Touch wood	Duk alkhshab’ دك الخشب
Difference	Baby “ my love”	Child / za’atoot / jahil

Moreover, colloquialisms change from location to location so the same thing can have different names around the country.

For example:

■ In English

- Wishing someone well after they sneeze:

A: Acchhhooooo!

B: Bless you!

North Americans usually say “Gesundheit” (however, this exclamation comes from German).

- Sandwich: butty, piece, barm, roll, sarnie, breadcake.
- Fiver/Tenner:

These terms are used for British money whose currency is a pound. If you stay in Britain for a long time, you will be aware that most banknotes are worth 5, 10, 20. If someone asks you for a “fiver”, this indicates 5. A “tenner” is 10. However, you should pay attention, this is not as far as this rule goes, 20 is not a “twentier”.

■ In Arabic(Iraqi dialect)

If one wants to show a feeling of sympathy or sadness on someone else, s/he may say:

Khatiya (خطية), ya haram (ياحرام), ya magrood (يامكروود), maskeen (مسكين).

Many second foreign language learners are confident listening to native speakers yet they admit that what they learned in school was quite different from real life because the foreigners spoke too fast. And their best solution is to learn to hear the colloquial contractions such as “wanna, gotta and gonna”. They are three of the most common English colloquialism when it comes to morphs. Rarely do teachers instruct these, but they are really important for the fluency of communication. Usually, we use these in any spoken English conversation. Native speakers even use them in their informal writing (online chat, text messages, chat to friends, etc.)

The first one which is to talk about is “wanna,” which people use instead of “want to.”

The “nt” sound is completely lost and pronounced as a flat “n” when someone is speaking to English speakers. It will be followed by a vowel sound. Similarly, “t” of “want” is lost as “want to” becomes “wanna”.

Secondly, it is very common that “gotta” appears in both informal and formal spoken English, and informal writing as well.

And the last one is “gonna” which comes from the structure “BE + GOING TO + VERB”. people use this to talk about what you intend to do in the future, English foreigners always say “gonna” instead of “going to”. This is a little bit about colloquial contractions or sound morphing, the researcher would like to encourage the learners to pay attention to how native speakers use them. They’ll start to notice them everywhere.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, using idioms and colloquialisms is a common means of communication in Arabic responses as well as English. Especially, people can have awareness of the culture related to their country, evaluate their knowledge of academic standards or the community’s civilization. Contrastive analysis in this area between English and Arabic shows many similarities as well as differences in structures, cultures, or even regions. It shows that Arabic has a wider range of idiomatic and colloquial responses, which makes it an interesting, amazing language.

Regarding the first research question, because the researcher tries to find if English idioms apply to Arabic culture and vice-versa, the first null research hypothesis was approved. In the case of the second research question, are English and Arabic idioms used in similar situations, the second null research hypothesis was confirmed. Concerning the third research question, do English and Arabic use the same terms of colloquial responses, the third null research hypothesis was could not be rejected.

The findings of this study also demonstrated that Arabic and English strongly show their similarities and differences in using idiomatic expressions.

5.1 Implications of the Study

Idiom and colloquialism are unavoidable no matter what language people are speaking. Exploring this study and finding out a suitable teaching method that can inspire the learners are the target of this study. It is being piled up by lots of course books having academic lessons. It is vital to take a closer look at the beauty of each country's culture which leads to its features of the language.

Mastering a language is not only good at four basic skills but also comprehend idiomatic and colloquial responses as a native speaker. What teachers should do is introduce another aspect of learning a foreign language through spoken expressions which are quite informal. Many learners concentrate too much on the English coursebook. Teachers ought to teach them something different or even more interesting like idioms, colloquialism, slang, or proverbs. It will be curious for them to investigate and be active in learning the language. Also, one of the easiest ways to grasp a particular foreign language is by making a comparison between them. They will learn faster and remember for a long time. It is not hard so far to get one more language.

5.2 Suggestions for Further Research

The studies also suggest some socio-pragmatic failures and implications for teaching methods. Hoping that this paper, to some extent, will provide useful knowledge about informal English spoken and improve language teaching in a classroom.

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