Linguistic and Cultural Challenges in Translating Idioms with Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract

AI models, such as ChatGPT4, DeepSeek, and Reverso, have transformed the translation landscape. Although these models offer rapid and accessible solutions for bridging linguistic barriers, their efficacy in capturing the nuances and cultural intricacies of languages remains a subject of debate. This study focused on critical aspects, including translation accuracy, adequacy, cultural adaptation, and the handling of linguistic nuances, in the English-Arabic context through a comprehensive comparative analysis. A corpus (idioms) of the two languages' counterparts was analyzed to unveil the disparities that existed between AI and human translations of idiomatic expressions. Findings showed that while AI has made significant strides in quickly rendering large volumes of text, a nuanced understanding of linguistic and cultural aspects is still present, and that Reverso, ChatGPT4, and DeepSeek fall short in rendering idiomatic expressions from Arabic into English. With these findings, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the capabilities and challenges of AI tools in handling complex corpora, such as idioms, of English-Arabic language pairs, offering insights into potential improvements in AI models.

Keywords: *AI Translation, NMT, Capabilities, Challenges, Linguistics, Culture, Idioms*

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Introduction

As an independent and interdisciplinary field, translation studies emerged long ago, encompassing various disciplines, such as comparative literature, history, linguistics, philology, philosophy, semiotics, terminology, and computational linguistics. This is strong evidence of the vast interdisciplinarity of translation studies. Quite recently, new approaches have been introduced to the translation field, especially with the emergence of machine translation tools and AI models (Mohamed et al., 2024). AI is the revolutionizing era that explains how computers execute jobs that resemble human intellect, revolutionizing workplaces and institutions. AI models like ChatGPT are promising, but humans must watch, intervene, and judge. ChatGPT improves translation performance to match commercial translation products, even for remote languages (Jiao et al., 2023). Followed by ChatGPT came the DeepSeek R1, and it soon became a competitive AI model (Puspitasari et al., 2025). According to Albuhairy and Al-Garaady (2025), DeepSeek outperforms ChatGPT at context-driven error detection; however, both platforms require strong prompts for better outcomes. On the other hand, NMT is the most recent machine translation system (Bahdanau & Bengio, 2014). It depends on Deep Learning (DL), Neural Networks (NN), and Machine Learning (ML) in translating texts from one language into another. Reverso is one of the NMT systems renowned for its accuracy and natural-sounding translations that can translate text across multiple languages with impressive fluency and context retention (Benbada & Benaouda, 2023).

While several studies, e.g., Zakraoui et al. (2021), Obeidat and Jaradat (2024), Islam and Islam (2024), Dumitran et al. (2025), and Yuxiu (2024) examined the challenges in translating texts from one language into another, there is still a scarcity of studies that have taken into consideration the translation of idiomatic expressions. Previous research has either compared MT with human translation or AI translation with HT. However, the current study employed NMT (Reverso) and AI translation models (ChatGPT and DeepSeek), which are novel in the field of translation, and compared them with HT. In addition, previous research focused mainly on either semantic or syntactic disparities, while the current research scope is broader, which includes semantic, syntactic, literal, and cultural peculiarities that lead to disparities in translating idiomatic expressions by Reverso, ChatGPT4, and DeepSeek.

Though AI and NMT have visibly experienced many strides, accurate translation of fixed expressions, such as idioms, still needs to be handled because of linguistic subtleties and cultural intricacies compared to professional HT; consequently, translating them literally might change the intended meaning (Mounadil, 2023). Therefore, the present study sheds light on the critical challenges and attempts to investigate discrepancies that may exist between AI, NMT, and HT in the context of English-Arabic, particularly when rendering idioms, focusing on linguistic and cultural nuances that affect translation accuracy, quality, and naturalness.

Objectives

In the present study, there are three objectives:

- To investigate the linguistic and cultural peculiarities that may contribute to discrepancies in the quality of AI and NMT of idioms in English-Arabic language pairs.
- To analyze the linguistic and cultural nuances that might be captured by AI and NMT compared to HT when rendering idioms from English into Arabic through a systematic, comparative, and comprehensive analysis.
- To evaluate whether AI and neural machine-translated texts exhibit high accuracy, adequacy, and reliability compared to human-translated texts when rendering idioms.

Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the linguistic and cultural peculiarities that may contribute to discrepancies in the quality of AI and NMT of idioms in English-Arabic language pairs?
2. How does the source language (SL) affect the performance of AI and NMT of idiomatic expressions?

3. Can AI and/or neural machine-translated texts be considered reliable substitutes for human-translated texts in rendering idiomatic expressions from English into Arabic?

Literature Review

The rapid advancement of modern technology has significantly transformed the way language is produced, transmitted, and interpreted (Modhish & Al-Kadi, 2016). With the rise of digital communication, new writing styles have emerged, reshaping traditio nal norms of written expression (Al-Kadi, 2019). At the same time, technological tools have revolutionized language translation, enabling automated systems to convert texts across languages with increasing accuracy and speed. These developments suggest that language, when mediated by machines, is shaped in ways that differ fundamentally from human linguistic behavior, often aligning more closely with the logic and structure of technological systems than with natural human communication. Despite these, critical limitations remain in capturing the cultural depth and nuance embedded in idiomatic expressions. These dimensions often slip beyond the grasp of machine processing and require a more human-centered linguistic understanding.

Machine Translation System Analysis

Several studies have been conducted to analyze MT performance. Hannouna (2010) highlighted the inaccuracies of MT systems in rendering texts from English to Arabic regarding syntactic and semantic translation. Additionally, Haseeb et al. (2025) found that human translation outperformed machine translation in terms of accuracy, fluency, cultural sensitivity, and context intelligibility. Madsen (2009) discussed concerns about grammatical errors and semantic distortions in MT. The study showed an immense number of syntactic errors that MT failed to overcome. In addition, Al-Khresheh and Almaytah (2018) highlighted the limitations of MT systems in accurately rendering English proverbs into Arabic, emphasizing the significance of human intervention. Moreover, certain studies also made known the need for enhanced accuracy in English-Arabic MT systems to address these issues, such as a study conducted by Grami et al. (2019), which highlighted the need for more accuracy in MT systems when it comes to English-Arabic counterparts. Additionally, Zakraoui et al. (2021) comprehensively analyzed Automated Machine Translation (AMT) methods, compared NMT methods, and addressed language and technical challenges. They provided valuable insights into AMT development and a guide for future research efforts.

Neural Machine Translation (NMT)

Even though it is an advanced sort of MT, NMT may run into unique challenges when translating complicated data, such as language fixed expressions. According to Wu et al. (2018), NMT is a model that enhances translation quality and accuracy by reducing the gaps between the SL input and TL. In addition, Grami et al. (2019) highlighted that the hindrances confronted by NMT still need to be addressed in the process of rendition from English into Arabic, mainly at the level of complex corpora, such as idiomatic expressions. These inaccuracies are particularly prevalent in translating all sorts of phrases, proverbs, idioms, and colloquial expressions. Furthermore, several comparative studies, like the one carried out by Alkhawaja (2025), have been conducted on MT engines' performance using NMT engines that are accessible for commercial usage. When it comes to the use of English-Arabic translation, there has been a limited amount of investigation into the performance of NMT regarding these languages. Most research has been done to test these approaches using machine-based assessment techniques such as BLEU (Diab, 2021). He claimed that testing the accuracy and quality of translation by humans is crucial in establishing the disparities between NMT and HT in the English-Arabic context. Moreover, Shahnazaryan et al. (2025) and Mehmannavazan et al. (2018) provided technical insights, demonstrated the potential of NMT, and highlighted the need for a nuanced approach by incorporating the cultural contexts of technology together (Modhish & Al-Kadi, 2016). So, through the related works mentioned above, it can be summed up that NMT has much to offer to improve translation performance.

Nevertheless, gaps in NMT are still present for the English-Arabic counterparts, as observed in the previous studies.

Translating English-Arabic Texts

Hamdi et al. (2023) and Al-Khresheh and Almaytah (2018) highlighted the crucial function of linguistic and cultural elements in translating English idioms into Arabic and how they can be transferred efficiently, maintaining the same message, effect, tone, and style in Arabic-English counterparts. The study found that several idioms and proverbs have been inaccurately rendered and overtly diverged from source message. Another study by Mubarak (2017) examined the obstacles and challenges of translating idioms from Arabic into English, focusing on considering cultural and linguistic factors for accurate translation. Furthermore, Ali and Al-Rushaidi (2017) pointed out the difficulties that Omani students confront when translating idiomatic and culturally bound expressions from English into Arabic. The study found that Omani students encounter obstacles when transferring idioms from English into Arabic. Alfaleh (2020) also surveyed the disparities when translating proverbs from English to Arabic. In her study, she came to identify some predominant discrepancies and differences and recommended techniques for enhancing the rendition process. The outcomes of her study pointed out and stressed the predominance of unintelligibility in translated proverbs and stressed the importance and need for accurate and culturally sensitive translations. A survey by Mounadil (2023) found that translation plays a key role in understanding various language genres concerning the globalization of information. However, culturally bound aspects may influence translation methods in discourses and, therefore, experience difficulties during the conveyance of the source text (ST) message. Idiomatic expressions may be important in our speech and culturally bound, requiring serious attention when translated. Translation of such sort of expressions may lead to different outcomes, including literal translation.

AI and Translation

Several studies have been conducted to evaluate the efficiency of AI translation from Arabic into English and vice versa. Obeidat and Jaradat (2024) examined the effectiveness of AI translation, particularly Google Translate and ChatGPT, in translating the resistance literature from Arabic into English. The study indicated that AI translation alters the original text, which is inaccurate for such translation and hence underscores the need to find substitute translations. Farghal and Haider (2024) argued that AI has become a real competitor with human translators; however, there should be further improvements for AI generative models, including Gemini and ChatGPT and concerning poetry translation. Alkhawaja (2024) scrutinized the differences between ChatGPT and Google Translate in terms of translation proficiency and found out that ChatGPT surpassed Google Translate; however, even ChatGPT cannot match the proficiency of human translations. Khoshafah (2023) argued that ChatGPT is useful in translating simple texts from Arabic to English, but when it comes to complex contexts, it faces challenges and requires human intervention, especially in fields like legal, historical, media, literary, and scientific fields. Albuhairy and Al-Garaady (2025) indicated that DeepSeek and ChatGPT are new generation language models having exceptional understanding of human language and hence advise integrating AI in language instruction and usage, with the need for further advancements in such models.

Method

The present study employed a qualitative comparative analysis of translation outputs performed by AI and NMT compared to HT. The researchers used a comparative analysis of the present study's corpus to compare AI and NMT with HT of English-Arabic idiomatic expressions. Collier (1993) claimed that comparison is a fundamental tool for the analysis process. It sharpens our description capacity and plays a central role in concept formation by bringing suggestive similarities and contrasts among cases into focus. Therefore, the researchers utilized a qualitative comparative method to highlight the discrepancies between AI, NMT, and HT when rendering idioms from English into Arabic. Furthermore, the study involved two AI and one NMT tools to evaluate performance accuracy compared to HT.

Data Collection

The translation system tries to generate translations using the English-Arabic corpus based on neural methods and attested HT. To experiment, an English-Arabic parallel corpus was collected from certified and attested (by publishers) sources, including two books compiled by professional translation professors with over 15 years of experience specializing in translation studies. These books are Translation from English to Arabic and Vice Versa (Najeeb. 2005), and the second one is Arabic–English–Arabic Translation: Issues and Strategies (Husni & Newman, 2015). The researchers randomly selected the corpus (idiomatic expressions), organized them, and prepared them for analysis. The SL is English, meaning that the researchers adopted a unidirectional method.

The researchers, after intensive research, selected the two sources above and directly went to the translation of idioms' parts, randomly collected the required data that could fulfil the research purpose. The researchers randomly selected data to evaluate the accuracy of the AI and NMT translation of the pre-recognized data by ML and the complicated data that AI and NMT find challenging. So, 20 idioms were selected for the abovementioned purpose. In this context, the researchers opted for the English data as the SL. However, the AI, NMT, and HT data may vary depending on cultural and linguistic peculiarities and the type of idioms being given as input for the machine and HT. During the data collection, categorization, and preparation for analysis, the researchers found out that there is a type of data that AI and NMT tools can appropriately process, and most of the data was challenging for them to handle. Therefore, the researchers categorized the data into two groups: close and far equivalents and prepared them for analysis.

Data Analysis

The researchers employed a comparative analysis technique in the present study for the evaluation of the output in translation accuracy of AI and NMT compared to HT of the data selected. The researchers also intended to analyze several elements, including linguistic accuracy, adequacy, fluency, and cultural sensitivity; the criteria upon which translation outputs can be evaluated. The sources were mainly attested books, from which a total number of linguistic data, including idiomatic expressions, were selected for this research. The present study is designed as a unidirectional, i.e., from English to Arabic.

The tools used in the present study are Reverso, representing NMT, DeepSeek, and ChatGPT (representing the AI models), and all are paid, seeking a high level of translation accuracy. The given data (idioms) is categorized into close and far equivalent types and put in tables for comparison. The tables contain SL, TL translation (using Reverso, DeepSeek, and ChatGPT4), HT texts, transcription, and the intended meanings of the previously mentioned data. To evaluate the accuracy of translations and discover the discrepancies between AI and NMT, the researchers, as Arabic-native speakers, translators, EFL lecturers, and a linguist, have done the process, however time-consuming. Although human evaluation is time-consuming, it proves to be the most reliable and accurate method to compare different systems and approaches (Han et al., 2012). So, the data was collected and placed in tables for analysis, and AI, NMT, and HT were compared, and finally, the data was prepared for evaluation and discussion.

Results and Discussion

The present study showed that AI and NMT tools provided accurate translation when rendering close equivalent idioms. This can be seen in Appendix 1, where AI and NMT tools can provide an acceptable translation of close equivalent data. That might be a result of ML, DL, and NN grasping the linguistic and cultural gaps of the simple data type (close equivalents) and the persistent practice of such data by language users and computer developers. Furthermore, the study unveiled essential linguistic and cultural discrepancies between AI and NM compared to HT in the English-Arabic context, which included literal, structural, lexical, semantic, and cultural discrepancies when rendering the far equivalents, proving that the

existing AI and NMT systems are incapable of fully comprehending the subtleties of the Arabic language. The following are some of the discrepancies found in the present study.

Table 1. Challenges of AI and NMT in Translating Idioms

Disparities	Source language	NMT	AI		Human Translation
		Reverso	ChatGPT4	DeepSeek	
Literal	dark horse	الحصان الأسود alhisaan al'aswad	الحصان الأسود alhisaan al'aswad	ٱلْفَرَسُ الأَسْوَد al-farasu alaswad	شخص كتوم shakhsun katuum
	in cold blood	بدم بارد bidamin baarid	بدم بارد bidamin baarid	بِدَمٍ بَارِد bidamin bārid	مع سبق الإصرار والترصد ma`a sabaq alisraar wa ttarassud
Semantic	come a cropper	فشل فشلا ذريعا fashalla fashalan tharīʿan	وقع في المحظور waqaʿa filmahdhuur	فَشِلَ فَشْلًا ذَرِيعًا fashila fashlan dhariʿan	ينكفئ على وجهه yankfi` alaa wajhah
	a drop in the ocean	قطرة في المحيط qatratun fii muhiit	قطرة في محيط qatratun fii muhiit	قَطْرَةٌ فِي البَحْر qaṭratun fil-baḥr	غيض من فيض ghaydhun min faydh
Syntactic	to cost an arm and a leg	لتكلف الذراع والساق litukallif addiraaʿan wasaaq	يكلف ذراعًا ورجلًا yukallif dhiraaʿan warijlan	بَاهِظُ التَّكْلِفَة bāhiẓu al-taklifah	باهظ الثمن baahiz aththaman
	rub shoulders with	فرك الكتفين مع faraka alkatifayni maʿa	يختلط بالكبار yakhtalit bilkibaar	خَالَطَ العُظَمَاء khālaṭa aluẓamāʾa	يخالط yukhaalit
Cultural	returned empty-handed	عادوا خالي الوفاض ʿāduu khālī alwifāḍ	عاد خالي الوفاض ʿāda khālī alwifāḍ	عَادَ خَائِبَ الْيَدَيْن aada khāʾiba al-yadayn	رجع بخفي حنين rajaʿa bikhuffay Ḥunayn
	a drop in the ocean	قطرة في المحيط qatratun fii muhiit	قطرة في محيط qatratun fii muhiit	قَطْرَةٌ فِي البَحْر qaṭrah fil-baḥr	غيض من فيض ghaydhun min faydh

RQ.1. What are the linguistic and cultural peculiarities that may contribute to discrepancies in the quality of AI and NMT of idioms in English-Arabic language pairs?

At the linguistic level, we can observe that the present study highlighted some discrepancies in the far equivalent type, including the structural, lexical and semantic, and cultural levels. The following is a brief count of such discrepancies.

Semantics

Complicated expressions, as in the present study, can be challenging for AI and NMT tools to deal with when it comes to conveying the connotative meaning of such expressions. This was evidenced in the present study's findings, which are shown at the far equivalent level in Table 1. For example, the idiom *"in cold blood,"* which is rendered in Arabic as *"bidamin baarid بدم بارد,"* is a clear example of far equivalents that were mistranslated by AI and NMT tools. That is, *"in cold blood"* as translated by Reverso, DeepSeek, and ChatGPT4, as *"بدم بارد"* is only a very literal translation. However, it is translated by humans (from the given books) as

"m`aa sabaq alisraar wattarassud مع سبق الإصرار والترصد" meaning "intentionally and without emotion," which sounds much more logical than that of AI and NMT tools. Similarly, the idiom "*rain cats and dogs*" was translated by Reverso as "*qitat wakilaab almatar*" قطط وكلاب المطر, a translation which is very far from the intended meaning. However, ChatGPT4 and DeepSeek translated this idiom better than that of Reverso. Undoubtedly, the translation provided by humans seems more reasonable and more linguistically woven.

Structure

Structure is another challenging aspect for AI and NMT tools to handle in the present study. Through the findings of the present study, specifically far equivalents, we can figure out that AI and NMT tools fall short in handling the grammatical structure of the TL, committing errors in some constituents, including articles, prepositions, number markers, verb conjugations, etc. For instance, in the idiomatic expression, "*a drop in the ocean,*" Reverso maintains the definite article (*the* ال) in the TL, but ChatGPT4 eliminated the definite article; nevertheless, it provided the same translation output as Reverso did. Moreover, DeepSeek gave a different translation for the current idiom. Again, the number marker is diverged when rendering the English idiom "*hands of the watch,*" which is translated by DeepSeek as "عَقْرَبَا السَّاعَة *aqrabā assā'ah,*" meaning "two hands of the watch" instead of "hands of the watch," and thereby violates the rule of English since it does not have dual, but Arabic does. Furthermore, in the expression "*rub shoulders with*", there is a preposition "*with,*" which is given in the output as "*ma`a*" مع by Reverso and "*bil*" ب (by/with) by ChatGPT4; a morpheme which is not present in the target text. That is, AI and NMT tools can find it challenging for some expressions to convey the correct grammar in the target text.

Culture

Translation converts a given corpus's meaning, message, cultural nuances, and elements into another language. Translating fixed or culturally bound expressions, such as idioms, has been a significant issue for translators due to their specificity and incorporation of several cultural factors. In the present study, we found out how cultural peculiarities are handled by the most advanced sort of translation tools (AI and NMT systems). Let us consider the example *"a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush"* is English culture-bound, which has an equivalent of the Arabic language pair "*a bird in the hand is worth ten in the bush,*" (ten but not two). Conversely, the expression "*in cold blood*" can be found in English. However, it is an Arabic culture-specific expression, which has "*ma`a sabaq alisraar wa ttarassud*" مع سبق الإصرار والترصد equivalent, meaning "intentionally and without emotion." Thus, this particular idiom is translated wrong, rendered to Arabic by Reverso, ChatGPT4, and DeepSeek as "*bidamin baarid.*" بدم بارد These examples are not the only ones in the present study; there are also many culturally specific examples and expressions noticed throughout the study.

RQ.2. How does the source language (SL) affect the performance of AI and NMT of idiomatic expressions?

In most data of the present study, AI and NMT tools maintain the literal translation of the SL in the TL when rendering idiomatic expressions from Arabic into English, particularly at the far equivalent level. Conversely, humans understand literal and figurative language. To check the accuracy of AI and NMT tools, let us take, for example, the English idiom *"the foot of the mountain"* as correctly rendered by both DeepSeek and AI tools as "*safh aljabal*" سفح الجبل; a correct translation at the identical equivalent level. NMT tools work well with such data types. In contrast, the idiom "*dark horse,*" which was translated by Reverso, DeepSeeK, and ChatGPT4 to Arabic as "*alhissaan alaswad*" الحصان الأسود, a mere literal translation is given. However, it has nothing to do with the horse or the colour, but rather "a person who keeps things or ideas secret." Similarly, "*Carry coal to Newcastle*" is translated literally by the NMT tools as *"hamal alfahm ilaa niyukaasil* حمل الفحم إلى نيوكاسل," which has the correct translation by humans as "*yabiie ` almaa fii haarat assaqqayiyn,*" يبيع الماء في حارة السقايين which means "to do something wholly unnecessary" instead of "carrying coal to Newcastle." Thus, Reverso, DeepSeek, and ChatGPT4

found it challenging to render far equivalent expressions accurately, and therefore, the SL can affect the AI and NMT violate the performance as shown in the output.

RQ. 3. Can AI and/or neural machine-translated texts be considered reliable substitutes for human-translated texts in rendering idiomatic expressions from English into Arabic?

In the present research findings, there are two types of idiomatic expressions: close and far equivalent idioms. At the close equivalent level, Reverso, ChatGPT4, and DeepSeek could translate the idiomatic expressions from English into Arabic, easily to an acceptable and very close to the translation performed by humans. This is because NN and DL, upon which AI and NMT tools can work, or that these models have previously recognized such a data type. However, at the far equivalent level (the majority in the present study), Reverso, ChatGPT4, and DeepSeek failed to translate idiomatic expressions professionally, as HT. This is evidenced in Table 3 in the appendix section, where AI and NMT, compared to humans, failed on most occasions to translate idiomatic expressions from English into their Arabic language counterparts. Therefore, we can conclude that, in this case, Reverso, ChatGPT4, and DeepSeek, however very advanced, cannot replace human translation, more concisely in such linguistically fixed and culture-bound expressions; here, idiomatic expressions.

Based on the research objectives, questions, the review of the related studies, and the findings, it can be deduced that discrepancies are met in the translation performed by AI and NMT tools, particularly at the far equivalent level of idiomatic expressions. Such disparities included linguistic (syntactic and semantic), cultural, as well as literal translation. According to the response to the first question, linguistic and cultural disparities are met in the translation performed by Reverso, ChatGPT4, and DeepSeek compared to HT. These linguistic and cultural elements include but are not limited to syntactic, lexical, and semantic constituents, but also include cultural elements which affect the performance of AI and NMT tools when rendering idioms. The study revealed that although these tools are highly advanced, they fall short, especially at the far equivalent level, in translating idioms from English into Arabic.

Based on the objectives, findings, and the results of the current study, we can notice that SL affects the translation performed by AI and NMT tools, resulting in either diverged, correct, or literal translation (at the close equivalent level. According to Pham (2005), "The emphasis and focus of attention from the original text should be preserved in the translation" (p. 223). Almost all the idioms provided in Appendix 1, close equivalents, can be easily translated by AI and NMT tools compared to HT. The meanings in the SL were preserved in the TT. Whether AI and NMT tools translated them literally or accurately, the connotative meaning is still present in the TL. For instance, *"in the blink of an eye"* would be translated into Arabic as *"في غمضة عين fii ghamdat aiyn,"* the translation which was closely (in the form and meaning) given by Reverso, but a tiny change was made by ChatGPT4 as it altered the meaning of "*غمضة blink*" into *"طرفة tarfa,"* which necessarily maintains the same meaning, but another substitute (synonym) of the term. However, the intended meaning is *"غمضة,"* as given by both Reverso and HT. DeepSeek translated the same idiom the same way, but it missed the preposition *"في fii"* at the beginning of the idiom, a significant element. The rest of the translations seem equally given as in the TL, proving that close equivalent idioms are rendered simply by AI and NMT tools.

Semantics is a significant aspect of linguistics, concerned with the meaning of words and sentences in a language. In almost all languages, denotative (superficial meaning) and connotative meanings (underlying message behind expressions) are unavoidable. Errors caused by miscomprehension of the ST represent a serious problem, resulting in sentences with distorted meanings. In the present study, in several close equivalent idioms, AI and NMT tools can deal with because NNs, DL, and the regular practice of such data being inputted and intensively used in various networks, such idioms can be rendered with a degree of satisfaction compared to the translation performed by humans. A few alternations, or rather synonyms, occurred during the processing and evaluation of the findings. For instance, for idioms, a few words were substituted, giving different words but still maintaining the same message, and instead, the message of the SL, as in the meaning of *"blink" (turfa طرفة)*, in which AI tools necessarily maintain the same meaning, but use another substitute for the same term.

However, the intended meaning is "*ghamda* غمضة" as given by both Reverso and HT. Similarly, *"to be the apples of someone's eyes,"* DeepSeek, compared to ChatGPT4, humans, and Reverso, gives *"qurrat aiyn shakhsin* قرة عين شخص." However, ChatGPT4 provides another form *"habiib aiyni* حبيب عيني" to mean "my eyes lover." That meaning is somewhat acceptable; the only thing that matters is that it does not follow the norms or system of the TL, since ChatGPT4 can manipulate the language generation and translation processes in each input. DeepSeek, on one hand, provided a better translation than ChatGPT4's translation of the same idiom. On the other hand, DeepSeek translated the idiom *"an iron fist in a velvet glove"* as Reverso, ChatGPT4, and humans did, but the only difference is that it added a strange word at the end of the sentence "قَطِيفَة", which means "amaranth"; which is useless in such context. Moreover, *bilaa* and *duun*, in *"bilaa/duun jadwaa"*, are synonymous terms that mean "without." Therefore, they were used alternatively to convey the same equivalent message. To conclude, the meanings in the SL of several idioms are maintained in the TL, resulting in literal translation at times and accidentally correct translation by AI and NMT tools interchangeably.

The grammar of idioms can be challenging, mainly when translating them between two distant languages (here, English and Arabic). Through the present study's findings, in terms of close equivalents, very few additions, omissions, or substitutions in the structure occurred. In *"to be the apple of someone's eyes,"* HT provides *"qurrat aiyn shakhsin maa* قرة عين شخص ما." However, when it comes to NMT tools, Reverso adds some introductory additions *"to be-* أن تكون *a takuun,"* which are not found in HT, and therefore the structure of this idiom is distorted. This means that it rendered the idiom literally, as stated in the SL (source text affects the structure of the target text). Similarly, DeepSeek missed a part of the translation *(maa* ما*)*, resulting in a process called "omission" in linguistics. Again, DeepSeek translated the word *"hands"* in "hands of the watch" into *"*عَقْرَبَا*"(dual),* which means "two indicators of the watch." Here, it uses dual (Arabic marked aspect) instead of the plural marker. By doing so, the TL is distorted, and the structure is manipulated by the DeepSeek Rendition. Overall, SL affected the output in the TL, as was proved in the present study, and therefore resulting in distortion in the structure of some expressions of the present study.

Regarding linguistic and cultural aspects, as shown in the results related to the performance by Reverso, ChatGPT4, and DeepSeek, there are linguistic and cultural disparities found in the AI and NMT renditions of far equivalent idioms compared to HT. AI and NMT often need assistance with idiomatic expressions because they tend to translate words or phrases literally rather than capturing their figurative and connotative meanings. In most of the present study's findings, AI and NMT tools maintain the literal translation in the TL of the original message, but humans understand both the literal and figurative language. Al-Khresheh and Almaytah's (2018) study, which summarized the lack of MT systems with sophisticated capacity to handle specific translation tasks without human oversight, is in line with this point. To check the accuracy of AI and NMT tools, let us take the English idiom *"dark horse,"* which was translated alike by Reverso and ChatGPT4 to Arabic as *"alhissaan alaswad* الحصان الأسود" and by DeepSeek as *"*الأسْوَد الفَرَس *Alfarasu alaswad;"* a mere literal translation is provided. However, it has nothing to do with the horse nor with the color, but rather "a person who keeps things or ideas secret." Similarly, *"carry coal to Newcastle"* is translated literally by both Reverso and ChatGPT4 as *"hamal alfahm ilaa niyukaasil* حمل الفحم إلى نيوكاسل" and نَقْلُ التُّبْنِ إِلَى الحَرِيسَة *Naqlu al-tubni ilaa al-ḥarīsah"* by DeepSeek, which has the correct translation (faithful) by humans as *"yabiie almaa fii haarat assaqqayiyn,"* which means "to do something wholly unnecessary" instead of *"carrying coal to Newcastle."* The wrong translation was provided by all models. In addition, if we look at the example *"that ship has sailed,"* which was translated literally by Reverso as *"laqad abharat tilk assafeenah* لقد أبحرت تلك السفينة" the message that could not convey the meaning in the TL. Thus, it is rendered as *"faat alqitaar "*, *"*فات القطار*"* which sounds more reasonable and accurate.

However, ChatGPT provides a translation closer than Reverso's in this expression. ChatGPT4's translation of the current idiom *is "alfursa da `at* الفرصة ضاعت*,"* which gives the same underlying meaning regardless of the form. Unlike ChatGPT4, DeepSeek provided *"*فات القطار*" fāt alqiṭār;"* a faithful translation that aligns with the translation provided by humans. At this point,

we can say that ChatGPT4 and DeepSeek do not maintain the original form or literal translation of the SL but try something different. This matter means that with time and some suggestions for the development and advancements of AI, it might cope with such challenges. In some contexts, AI can give various outputs, especially when you try more than once when asking for the inputs, but that does not mean it can perform with the accuracy of HT (Grami et al., 2019). He discussed the overall accuracy of MT systems in English-Arabic translation, indicating a broader gap in achieving high levels of accuracy and fidelity of HT performance and how varied and far to handle professional translation.

The process of intelligibility between nations is very significant. Comprehension plays a substantial role in linguistics as it removes ambiguities. Semantics is a technical term that refers to the study of meaning, and as meaning is a part of language, semantics is a part of linguistics (Palmer, 2001). However, the process becomes more complicated when transforming the message from SL to TL, especially when using AI and MT systems, such as NMT tools. AI and NMT are models that hold promise in increasing translation accuracy by reducing the variations (gaps) between homo transformation and their output, as studies have evidenced (Wu et al., 2018). Despite that, challenges in English-Arabic translation still need to be addressed, particularly in translating all types of phrases, proverbs, idioms, and colloquial expressions (Grami et al., 2019). Complicated expressions, as in the present study, can be challenging for AI and NMT tools to handle when it comes to conveying the connotative meaning of such expressions. This was evidenced in the present study's findings, shown in Table 3. For instance, the idiom *"in cold blood,"* which is translated to Arabic as *"bidamin baarid* بدم بارد*" is* a clear example of a far equivalent that is translated wrong. That is, *"in cold blood"* as translated by Reverso, DeepSeek, and ChatGPT4 as "بدم بارد" is only a very literal translation provided. However, it is translated by humans as *"m`aa sabaq alisraar wattarassud* مع سبق الإصرار والترصد*,"* meaning "intentionally and without emotion," a very far meaning from that of AI and NMT tools. Similarly, the idiom *"rain cats and dogs"* was translated by Reverso as *"* قطط وكلاب المطر *qitat wakilaab almatar,"* a translation which is very far from the intended meaning. However, its translation using DeepSeek and ChatGPT4 is closer to the professional translation done by humans, as it is translated by ChatGPT4 as *"*يمطر بغزارة *yumtir bighazaara,"* except that DeepSeek added the word *"*يَهْطِل*"* which is not there in ChatGPT4 and human translations.

Undoubtedly, the translation provided by humans seems reasonable and more linguistically woven. The strongest emphasis is marking the importance, and perhaps a must, of human intervention as in Al-Khresheh and Almaytah's (2018) study, which displays the professionalism of humans in rendering such complicated data and coping with the nuances that might be present. So, the AI and NMT, not only for the given idioms but also for most of the present study's data, fell short in rendering the far equivalent idioms from English into Arabic. Several studies, such as in Khoshafah (2023) and Grami et. al. (2019), pointed out that AI models and NMT tools need to be enhanced when dealing with fixed expressions or culture-bound ones, and thus find it challenging to render complex expressions. These investigations stand in line with the idea that linguistic disparities, as stated in the first question, arose when translating idiomatic expressions employing Reverso, ChatGPT4, and DeepSeek. In most situations, AI and NMT tools fall short in conveying the meaning intended as professional humans do.

In the section of the far equivalent idioms, as translation provided by Reverso, DeepSeek, and ChatGPT4 are vastly different from the intended meanings, they hold some structural differences. In the example, *"a drop in the ocean,"* however, literal translation, Reverso maintains the definite article(*the*) in the output *"*قطرة في المحيط*"* ChatGPT4, however, provides almost the same meaning as Reverso; it does not maintain the definite article. DeepSeek translated the first part of the idiom as the previous tools, except that it gives a word that is not even in the SL, *"*البَحْر*, the sea."*Hannouna (2010) and Madsen (2009), who pointed out the existence of inaccuracies in syntax and semantic translation done by NMT, stand with the present point that NMT tools might violate the rules in the TL, and again, answer the first question stated in the introductory section of the present study that linguistic aspects lead to disparities in the AI and NMT performance. Again, in the example *"to cost an arm as a leg,"*

meaning "very expensive," Reverso adds the initial morpheme to the word *"litukallif* لتكلف*"* and therefore violates the rules of the language and intended translation, along with the literal translation provided. Not only that, but also it maintains the feminine gender marker *"t-* ت- *in litukallif* لتكلف*."* ChatGPT4 maintains the masculine gender marker *"yukallif* يكلف*"* despite the literal translation it performs. DeepSeek gives almost the intended translation, but gives a synonymous word in the second part of the idiom *"*التَّكْلِفَة-الثمن*."* Similarly, in the example *"rub shoulders with"*, there is a preposition "with," which is given in the output as *"ma ʿa* مع*"* by Reverso and *"*ب *bil"* (by/with) by ChatGPT4; a morpheme which is not present in the target text. For tenses, despite the wrong translation, Reverso maintains the past tense in *"*فرك*"*, DeepSeek does the same in *"*خَالَط*"*, but ChatGPT4 maintains the present tense marker in *"*يختلط*."* That is, AI and NMT tools can find it challenging for some expressions to convey the correct grammar in the TT, more precisely, the verb conjugation. This suggests that there may be differences while dealing with the language difficulties of English-Arabic versions of NMT models (Grami et al., 2019). To conclude, despite the most vital strides AI and NMT have offered to several fields, including translation, they confront various linguistic challenges, including the syntax and semantics of the language. It refers to vast discrepancies in rendering complicated data, such as idioms.

Translating culturally bound expressions, such as idioms, has been a significant issue for translators due to their specificity and incorporation of several cultural factors. However, employing AI and NMT tools to translate such culture-bound expressions is a significant matter, as displayed in the present investigation. Let us consider the example *"a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush"* is English culture-bound, which is equivalent to the Arabic language pair *"a bird in the hand is worth ten" in the bush"* (ten but not two). Conversely, the expression *"in cold blood," which* was translated by Rverso, ChatGPT4, and DeepSeek incorrectly, can be found in English. However, it is an Arabic culture-specific term, which has "مع سبق الإصرارو الترصد *ma ʿa sabaq alissraar wa ttarassud,"* meaning equivalent, meaning "intentionally and without emotion." These examples are not the only ones in the present study, but also many culturally specific examples and other expressions are there. In "رجع بخفي حنين *rajaʿa bikhuffay Hunayn,"* which is Arabic-specific, it cannot be transformed into English carrying the same message, since AI and NMT tools failed to render. That is evidence of the existence of challenges in culture-bound expressions by NMT tools and AI models.

To sum up, while AI and NMT showed a high level of advancements in several fields, they can find it complicated to deal with complex expressions when translating between two distant language counterparts. Despite the capability of AI and NMT in rendering close equivalent idiomatic expressions from English into Arabic, they find it challenging to handle complicated expressions, such as the far equivalent idioms level of the present study. Several disparities, including syntactic, lexical, semantic, literal, and cultural aspects, are met in the present study findings in the translation performed by AI and NMT tools, and therefore, this is strong evidence that AI and NMT tools cannot be a reliable substitute for humans in addressing such complicated expressions.

Conclusion

The findings of this study unveil that NMT (Reverso) and AI (ChatGPT4 and DeepSeek) can understand, produce, and thereby translate the linguistic and cultural dimensions of idiomatic expressions that are equivalent closely, as shown in the tables in the results and appendix sections. This might be related to that, the NN, DL, and ML might have recognized earlier and been given such inputs, therefore, provided an acceptable translation. The researchers figured out that these close equivalents can be rendered since NN, ML, and DL had recognized earlier and through practice by language users and programmers who let the machine be fed with the required data. DeepSeek, however, found it challenging to render some idiomatic expressions with high accuracy, performed better than that of Reverso and ChatGPT4, as evidenced in the present study. The deep cognition of linguistic, cultural contexts, metaphors, and nonliteral language use is still primarily best handled by humans, even though AI and NMT have made considerable progress in rendering a range of corpora

efficiently. Cultural resonance, figurative speech, and contextual appropriateness are all critical in rendering far-equivalent idioms that AI and NMT frequently must catch up on. Therefore, while translating idioms from English into Arabic—or, more accurately, their far equivalents—the current investigation revealed several shortcomings in the AI and NMT tools' performance. Several issues with AI and NMT tools arose when compared to HT performance, which the researchers can outline as follows: disparities included syntactic variations, lexical and semantic accuracy levels, and cultural aspects. Finally, AI and NMT systems, no matter how advanced and developed, fall short in accurately rendering such data, and therefore, cannot replace humans when handling culturally and linguistically complex data as the present study corpus(idioms). Linguists, translators, developers, and language natives can work together to spot the shortcomings of AI and NMT and enhance their performance in a wider range to better overcome challenges and translate faithfully. Further research on the topic is encouraged to be conducted in other Arabic and non-Arabic language elements (proverbs, collocations, metaphors, etc) using AI and any MT tools in the field of translation, summarization, and language generation.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Close Equivalents

Source language	NMT	AI		Human Translation	Intent meaning
	Reverso	ChatGPT4	DeepSeek		
in the blink of an eye	في غمضة عين fii ghamdhat aiyn	في طرفة عين fii tarafat aiyn	طرفة عين tarfat aiyn	في غمضة عين fii ghamdat aiyn	extrem ely qui ckly
to be the apple of someone's eye	أن تكون قرة عين شخص ما 'an takuun qurrat aiyn shakhsin maa	حبيب عيني habiib aiyni	إقُرَّةُ عَيْنِ إشَخْص qurrat 'ayn (shakhsin)	قرة عين شخص ما qurrat aiyn shakhsin maa	the person whom someone loves m ost and is very proud of
the foot of the mountain	سفح الجبل safh aljabal	سفح الجبل safh aljabal	سَفْحُ الجَبَل Safḥu al-jabal	سفح الجبل safh aljabal	the area between the end of a mountain and the ground below it
the naked eye	العين المجرّدة alaiyn almujarradah	العين المجرّدة alaiyn almujarradah	العَيْنُ المُجَرَّدَة alayn almujarradah	العين المجردة alaiyn almujarradah	If something can be seen with the naked eye, it can be seen without the help of an instrument
hands of the watch	أيدي الساعة aydi assaa'ah	عقارب الساعة aqaarib assaa'ah	عَقْرَبَا السَّاعَة aqrabā assaa'ah	عقارب الساعة aqarib assaa'ah	Pointers in the clock
an easy prey	فريسة سهلة fariisah sahlah	فريسة سهلة fariisatun sahla	فَرِيسَةٌ سَهْلَة farīsah sahlah	فريسة سائغة/ سهلة	if something is easy prey, it does

				Fariisah saaighah/ sahla	not require much effort to get
to no avail	دون جدوى duun jadwaa	دون جدوى duun jadwaa	دُونَ جَدْوَى dūna jawdā	بلا/ بدون جدوى bilaa jadwaa	without any success or any effect
an iron fist in a velvet glove	قبضة حديدية في قفاز مخملي qabdatun hadidiatun fii quffaaz ma khmali	قبضة حديدية في قفاز مخملي qabdatun hadidiatun fii quffaaz mak hmali	القَبْضَةُ الحَدِيدِيَّةُ فِي قُفَّازٍ مِنْ قَطِيفَةٍ alqabḍat alḥadīdiyyat fī quffāz min qaṭīfah	قبضة حديدية في قفاز مخملي qabdatun hadidiyatun fii quffaaz mak hmali	used to describe some one who seems to be gentle but is, in fact, forceful an d determined

Appendix 2: Far Equivalents

Source language	NMT	AI		Human Translation	Intent meaning
	Reverso	ChatGPT4	DeepSeek		
a drop in the ocean	قطرة في المحيط qatratun fii almuhiit	قطرة في محيط qatratun fii muhiit	قَطْرَةٌ فِي البَحْر qaṭrah fil-baḥr	غيض من فيض ghaydhun min faydh	minimal amount compared to the amount nee ded
rain cats and dogs	قطط وكلاب المطر qitat wakilaab almatar	يمطر بغزارة yumtir bighazaarah	يَهْطِلُ المَطَرُ بِغَزَارَة yahtul almatar bighazaarah	تمطر بغزارة tumtir bighazaara	to rain very heavily
come a cropper	فشل فشلا ذريعا fashala fashalan tharīʿan	وقع في المحظور waqaʿa filmahdhuur	فَشِلَ فَشَلًا ذَرِيعًا fashila fashlan dhariʿan	ينكفئ على وجهه yankfiʾ alaa wajhah	to fail badly, or to fall from a horse, or have a bad accident in a vehicle
dark horse	الحصان الأسود alhisaan al'aswad	الحصان الأسود alhisaan al'aswad	ٱلفَرَسُ الأَسْوَد alfarasu alaswad	شخص كتوم shakhsun katuum	a person who ke eps their interest s and ideas secr et, especially so meone who has a surprising ability or skill
carry coal to Newcastle	نقل الفحم إلى نيوكاسل naqal alfahm ilaa niyukasil	حمل الفحم إلى نيوكاسل hamal alfahm 'ilaa niyukasil	نَقْلُ التِّبْنِ إِلَى الحَرِيسَة naqlu altubni ila alḥarīsah	يبيع الماء في حارة السقايين yabiieʾ almaa fii haarat assaqqayee n	to do something wholly unnecessary
to cost an arm and a leg	لتكلف الذراع والساق litukallif addiraaʿan wasaaq	يكلف ذراعًا ورجلًا yukallif dhiraaʿan warijlan	بَاهِظُ التَّكْلِفَة bāhiẓu altaklifah	باهظ الثمن baahiz aththaman	to be extremely expensive
yellow livered	أصفر اللون 'asfarun allawn	جبان jabaan	جَبَانٌ كَالدَّجَاجَة Jabānun ka-al-dujājah	جبان jabaan	cowardly

rub shoulders with	فرك الكتفين مع faraka alkatifayni maʿa	يختلط بالكبار yakhtalit bilkibaar	خَالَطَ العُظَمَاء khālaṭa aluẓamāʾa	يخالط yukhaalit	to meet and spend time with someone
in cold blood	بدم بارد bidamin baarid	بدم بارد bidamin baarid	بِدَمٍ بَارِد bidamin bārid	مع سبق الإصرار والترصد ma`a sabaq alisraar wa ttarassud	intentionally and without emotion
that ship has sailed	لقد أبحرت تلك السفينة laqad 'abharat tilk assafiina	الفرصة ضاعت alfursah dha'at	فَاتَ القِطَار fāta al-qiṭār	فات القطار faat alqitar	an opportunity has already passed and is no longer possible
to back the wrong horse	لدعم الحصان الخطأ lid'am alhisan alkhata'	راهن على الحصان الخطأ rahan `alaa alhisaan alkhata`	رَاهَنَ عَلَى الخَاسِر rāhana ʿalā alkhāsir	راهن على الجواد الخاسر rahan `alaa aljawaad alkhasir	to make the wrong decision and support a person or action that is later unsuccessful
cool as cucumber	بارد مثل الخيار hadi' mithl alkhyaar	هادئ مثل الخيار hadi' mithl alkhiyār	هُادِئٌ كَالبَحْر hādiʾun ka-albaḥr	هادئ تماما hadi' tamaaman	very calm, especially when this is surprising

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