

Translation Students' Difficulties with English and Arabic Color-based Metaphorical Expressions

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Abstract This study aims to identify the similarities and differences between English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions, to identify translation students' difficulties and their translation strategies. A corpus of English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions was collected and compared. It was found that English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions fall into five categories: (i) those that are identical in form and meaning in both languages; (ii) those that are the same in meaning but differ in form, (iii) those that are identical in form but different in meaning; (iv) those that exist in English but have no equivalents in Arabic; and (v) those that exist in Arabic but have no equivalents in English. Students' responses to a color-metaphor test showed that the students translated fewer than 25 % correctly and left many items blank. Color-based metaphorical expressions similar in both languages were easy to translate such as *black list*, *red line*, *green light*, whereas opaque ones were difficult. Literal translation was the most common translation strategy. Implications for translation pedagogy are given.

Keywords English color metaphors, Arabic color metaphors, translation students, metaphor translation difficulties, metaphor translation strategies, metaphor meaning transfer

1 Introduction

A color metaphor is a figure of speech that contains a color word such as *black*, *white*, *red*, *blue*, *green*, *yellow*, *orange*, *pink*, *silver* or *golden* and refers to one thing by mentioning a color, used for rhetorical effect. Color-based metaphorical expressions are common in all languages. For example, *black and white* used in English, is أسود وأبيض in Arabic, *blanco y negro* in Spanish, and *preto e branco* in Portuguese. Some metaphors are limited to some colors but not others. For example, *brown* has no metaphorical use in Arabic.

Being a sub-category of metaphors, color-based metaphors are widely used literally and metaphorically in different language genres and may also reflect cultural features of the language users (cf. Lan/MacGregor 2009, Rasekh/Ghafel 2011). Color metaphors may convey different connotative interpretations based on the beliefs, norms and constraints of the users' culture (cf. Mohamadi 2015). Some of the color-based metaphorical expressions in English and Arabic have both a literal and figurative/idiomatic meaning as in *red line*, *white flag*, *green light*, *black box*, *blue line*, *red carpet*; others have an idiomatic meaning only as in *black market*, *blue-blooded*, and الأبيض ('the two whites', i. e., 'salt and sugar' or 'milk and water'), الأخران ('the two greens, i. e., 'grass and trees') in Arabic. Some of the color-based metaphorical expressions have a single meaning as in *red line*, *blue collar*, *blueprint*, *black gold*, *yellow fever*, *black belt*, *red-light district* in English; others have multiple meanings as in شاب أخضر ('green

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person; i. e., 'young and inexperienced'), وجهه أصفر ('yellow faced; i. e., 'pale of fear or sickness'), الماء الأزرق ('blue water') in Arabic. Examples of color-based metaphorical expressions that are culture specific are *red light district*, *blue-blooded*, in English; and الأسودان ('the two blacks; i. e., 'the snake and the scorpion, or 'water and dates'), سوّد وجه أبيه ('to blacken his father's face; i. e., 'do something embarrassing'), الأخضر واليابس ('green and dry grass; i. e., 'destroy everything'), الرايات السود ('black banners; i. e., ISIS), إسوداد وجهه ('his face was blackened; i. e., 'embarrassed'), الحجر الأسود ('Black Stone in Kaaba; i. e., 'a holy stone'), and العين الحمراء ('show the red eye; i. e., 'be strict') in Arabic.

Since Arabic is a diglossic language, i. e., has a standard form and a non-standard colloquial form, with different dialects used across and within Arab countries, color-based metaphorical expressions are common in both Standard and colloquial Arabic. For example, يا نهار أبيض ('what a bright day; i. e., 'good news that brightens one's day'), يا ويله يا سواد ليله ('his nights will be black; i. e., 'will have bad consequences') are colloquial; whereas, ليالي حمراء ('red nights; i. e., 'full of drinking and dancing'), السوق السوداء ('black market'), السجادة الحمراء ('red carpet'), الضوء الأخضر ('green light'), كذبة بيضاء ('white lie'), منطقة رمادية ('grey area'), العصر الذهبي ('golden age') are standard as well as colloquial as both overlap in some cases.

Interestingly, color-based metaphorical expressions in Arabic are not only used in general, common language, but they are also used in different domains as in the following table:

Table 1: Color metaphor domains with Arabic examples and their English meanings

Domains	Arabic examples and their English meanings
Art and literature	<p>رمادية الحرف grey letters grey alphabet i. e. gloomy words</p> <p>رمادية المشاعر grey feelings i. e. sad</p> <p>أدب رمادي grey literature</p> <p>أحلام البنفسج violet dreams</p> <p>دموع برتقالية orange tears</p> <p>سيمفونية برتقالية orange symphony</p> <p>بياض الثلج as white as snow, i. e., Snow White</p> <p>الاقلام الصفراء yellow pens i. e. cynical authors</p>
Business banking and economics	<p>عميل ماسي platinum client</p> <p>بطاقة ذهبية gold card</p> <p>الطبعة الزرقاء blue print</p> <p>الذهب الأسود black gold</p> <p>السوق السوداء black market</p> <p>الياقات الزرقاء blue collars</p> <p>السجل الأخضر green record</p>

Religion	الدخان الأبيض الخيوط الأبيض والأسود الرايات السود حمر النعم تبييض وجوه وتسود وجوه الأسود والأحمر	white smoke white thread and black thread i. e. the line that separates darkness and dawn black banners red camels i. e. camels of good breed faces turning white i. e., honored faces turning black i. e., embarrassed the black and the red i. e. black people and blonde people
History	بنو الاصفر الهنود الحمر الرجل الأبيض العصر الذهبي	yellow race i. e. the Chinese Red Indians White man golden age
Law	سجل أسود نقطة سوداء القائمة السوداء	black record black dot black list
Medicine	الذئبة الحمراء الماء الأزرق الماء الأبيض الحمى الصفراء	red wolf i. e., lupus erythematosus blue water i. e., glaucoma white water i. e., cataract yellow fever
Politics military and media	ثورة برتقالية الجيش الأحمر الراية البيضاء عملية بيضاء البراميل الزرقاء الارهاب الأسود	orange revolution in Ukraine Red Army white flag i. e. surrender white operation i. e. nobody was killed blue barrels black terrorism
Zoology	الحوت الأزرق حصان أزر	blue whale blue horse
Sports and others	الحزام الأسود ميدالية برونزية	black belt bronze medal

Interpreting and translating color-based metaphorical expressions involve knowledge of their literal and figurative meanings. Cultural metaphors require an understanding of the input domains and their properties or connections with the output domains. The amount of knowledge that language users have about the relationship between color symbols in language and culture allows that the ‘right’ reading be activated in different contexts (Plaza 2015).

2 Literature review

Metaphors have received considerable attention in linguistics, pragmatics and translation studies, especially translatability and transfer procedures. A review of the literature has shown several lines of research that investigated metaphors, in general, and color-based metaphorical expressions, in particular. One group of studies focused on different types of color-based metaphors. For example, Ghafela/Mirzaie (2014) investigated the underlying conceptual meaning

involved in the construction of Persian color-based metaphors of emotion and body parts, and the interplay of linguistic expressions and cultural knowledge. Another study by Wijana (2015) classified color metaphors in Indonesian into chromatic and achromatic and compared them with English. Indonesian color metaphors were found to correlate with extra linguistic factors such as politics, religion, history, the environment, and other socio-cultural aspects. No significant differences were found in the metaphorical uses of achromatic colors in English and Indonesian. Furthermore, Al-Adaileh (2012) classified the connotations of Arabic phrases, in which the color terms *black*, *white*, *yellow*, *red*, *green*, and *blue* occurred into: orthophemistic, euphemistic, or dysphemistic. The researcher found that colors have many orthophemistic connotations. Dysphemistic connotations were found to be more common than euphemistic connotations. The uses of *black*, *yellow*, *red* and *blue* were predominantly dysphemistic; *white* mostly had positive connotations, whereas *green* was associated with both euphemistic and dysphemistic connotations.

A second group of studies explored color-based metaphorical conceptualizations in a single language. In a study on the metaphorical conceptualizations of the colors *black* and *white* in the British National Corpus (BNC) and Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual (CREA), Plaza (2015) found that the use of *black/negro* as 'bad, unhappy' and *white/blanco* as 'good, innocent' represent cultural realities. She concluded that both English and Spanish *black* and *white* collocations, idioms and proverbs are powerful symbols in culture. Similarly, Chinese people are fond of *hong se*, i. e., 'red color', and use it in expressions such as *red flag*, *red clothes*, *red lantern*, *red couplet*. They consider it the "national color" of China and call China "Red China". The word *red* in metaphors in Chinese has special associations, symbols, implied meanings, and usages. Chinese culture, customs, value-concept and way of thinking are reflected in red-color metaphors (cf. Qiang 2011). In addition, Persian proverbs and poems with color terms have their metaphorical reflections in the users' beliefs, ideas, or values. Colors are not distributed equally in Persian proverbs, and color-based metaphors in proverbs and poem share both positive and negative connotations (cf. Aliakbari 2013, Aliakbari/Khosravani 2015). In Arabic poetry, the emotive metaphorical conceptualizations of happiness and sadness reveal many cultural similarities and differences with English (cf. Elseddig et al. 2016).

A third group of studies compared color-based metaphors in two or three languages. Philip (2006) compared the connotative meanings of color-word metaphors in English and Italian, how those meanings are fixed linguistically, and the similarities and differences across the two languages. In English and Chinese, the similarities in color metaphors are attributed to the common perceptual and cultural experience, whereas the differences originated from the different living environment, religion, customs, and philosophy (cf. He 2011). In English and Persian, the connotation of colors in the structure of metaphorical expressions are somewhat overlapping and most of the metaphorical expressions are culture-bound and specific to each language (cf. Rasekh/Ghafel 2011). Moreover, color metaphors in English and Turkish proverbs have similar connotative meanings in the case of *white* and *black*, but negative and positive connotations in the case of *red*, *green*, *yellow* and *blue* as those depend on the cultural background and context in which the proverbs are used (cf. Mohamadi 2015).

In a comparative study of eight color terms in business English in two specialized corpora: The Hong Kong finance corpus (HK-F) and the financial texts from the British National Corpus (BNC-F), each containing about seven million words, Lan/MacGregor (2009) indicated that all eight colors *black*, *white*, *green*, *red*, *yellow*, *blue*, *brown* and *grey* were used literally and metaphorically in both corpora with quantitative and qualitative differences. Overall, color

words appeared more frequently in the British than in the Hong Kong corpus with the exception of *yellow*, but more often as metaphors in the HK-F with the exception of *red*. The ratios of literal to metaphoric use of color terms revealed large variation between colors and corpora. The researchers gave cultural reasons for the differences in usage between the two corpora. Across both corpora, metaphorical expressions incorporating *black* have negative connotations, *white* metaphors have positive connotations, whereas other colors showed an equal mix of positive and negative connotations.

A fourth group of studies examined how metaphors, in general, and color metaphors, in particular, are translated from one language to another. In this respect, Abdullah/Shuttleworth (2013) investigated the challenges faced in translating metaphors in technical texts from English to Malay. The metaphors in the source text (ST) and target text (TT) were classified according to Newmark's (1988) categories: (i) dead metaphor; (ii) cliché metaphor; (iii) stock/standard metaphor; (iv) adapted metaphor; (v) recent metaphor; and (vi) original metaphor. Although metaphors were used in both ST and TT, the percentage and frequency of use differed from one to another. There were 30 metaphors in the ST compared to 11 in the TT. When the 19 metaphors in the ST were translated, they were either deleted from TT or no longer existed as metaphors. The majority of metaphors in the ST and TT were stock metaphors. In translating the 11 metaphors that appeared in both the ST and TT, the metaphor type changed from one type in the ST to another in the TT. The translation strategies used were deletion in the case of untranslatable metaphors, substitution of a metaphor by a different metaphor, or use of an exact equivalent.

Another study by Gholami et al. (2016) examined how 65 metaphors selected from a book with 54 supplications titled *Al-Sahifah Al-Sajjadiyah* were translated from Arabic into English by Chittick (2008) and Muhani (1984). English translations were compared with the Arabic ST using the Jakobson/Halle's (1956) syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes. On the syntagmatic axis, i. e., the axis of combination, words are linked or chained together according to grammatical rules, but the researchers made choices about which words to link together on the paradigmatic axis, i. e., the axis of selection. The researchers concluded that Chittick translated the metaphors as literally and faithfully as possible. He observed both the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes in his translation more than Muhani, and thus approximated the original text's literary style. On the other hand, Muhani mostly converted the metaphors to their senses, and paid more attention to meaning and content than linguistic form.

Similarly, Shabani (2008) compared the English translation of 33 color metaphors extracted from the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi by Warner/Warner (1925) and Davis (2007). The analysis was based on Newmark's (1988) seven procedures for translating metaphors: (P1) reproducing the same image in the TL; (P2) replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image which does not clash with the TL culture; (P3) translating the metaphor by a simile, retaining the image; (P4) translating the metaphor or simile by a simile plus sense, or a metaphor plus sense; (P5) converting the metaphor to sense; (P6) deleting the metaphor if it is redundant or serves no practical purpose; and (P7) translating the metaphor by the same metaphor combined with sense. The researcher found that Warner and Warner applied five procedures in translating color metaphors in *Shahnameh*, whereas Davis applied all seven procedures. Warner and Warner applied Newmark's P1 in 70 % of the color metaphors. Deletion and translation of metaphor by simile plus sense were not applied at all. By contrast, 36 % of the color metaphors in Davis' translation were translated via P1, and 64 % via the remaining six procedures. Warner and Warner's tendency to use the first procedure resulted in a literal translation of a particular

metaphor, whereas Davis had a tendency towards using the other six procedures which led to simplification, explicitation, and production of a reader-oriented text.

To summarize, the prior studies reported above investigated color-based metaphors in several languages: Arabic, English, Chinese, Spanish, Italian and Persian. They utilized different approaches in analyzing the data, the metaphor type and translation strategies used. They focused on examining the connotative meaning of color metaphors, cultural issues that affect the interpretation of color metaphors, the challenges that they pose for translators, and the different translation approaches used. However, prior studies that investigated the translation of color-based metaphors per se are limited. There is a lack of studies that investigated the difficulties that translation students have in translating general-type color-based metaphors. Therefore, the present study aims to fill a gap in this area. It aims to examine English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions, to identify the similarities and differences between them, to investigate translation students' ability to comprehend and translate color-based metaphorical expressions from English to Arabic and vice versa, and to identify the strategies that they use in translating them. In other words, the present study aims to answer the following questions: (i) What are the similarities and differences between English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions? (ii) Which types of color-based metaphorical expressions are easy to translate, and which ones are difficult to translate by translation students at the College of Languages and Translation (COLT)? (iii) Which strategies do student translators at COLT use in translating color-based metaphorical expressions from English to Arabic and vice versa?

Since color-based metaphorical expressions are an inseparable feature of technical and non-technical discourse, language users, in general, and translation students, in particular, are advised to familiarize themselves with color-based metaphorical expressions in different domains, especially because translation students at COLT take 18 specialized translation courses in: humanities, education, sociology, literature, politics, media, medicine, natural sciences, Islamic studies and others, and knowledge of the similarities and differences between English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions is crucial in meaning transfer.

Metaphors can pose translation problems, since transferring their meaning from one language and one culture to another may be hindered by linguistic and cultural differences (Schäffner 2004). Because the color systems of Arabic and English are not connotationally identical, this study reports on the connotations of Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions as an under-researched area of Arabic pragmatics. The cultural connotations carried by color-based metaphorical expressions in Arabic are quite profound and abstruse. Understanding the similarities and differences of color metaphors between English and Arabic is of great importance in cross-cultural communication. This also helps teachers, students and translators in teaching, translation, and appreciation of culture. As university lecturers use metaphors for important functions such as explaining and evaluating, EFL and translation students may be missing valuable learning opportunities. The color-metaphor translation error categorization scheme in this study could be used in helping learners of English and student translators comprehend color metaphors.

3 Subjects

A total of 115 translation students at the College of Languages and Translation (COLT), King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia participated in the study. Students in semester 6 (60 students) constituted the beginners' group, those in semester 9 (55 students) constituted the

advanced group. The subjects in both groups completed four levels of English language courses: 4 listening, speaking, reading and writing courses, 3 grammar and 2 vocabulary courses, in addition to several Arabic language courses: syntax, morphology and rhetoric. They took linguistics (2 hours), semantics (3 hours), text linguistics (2 hours), 3 interpreting courses (6 hours), and 2 specialized translation courses in physical sciences and the humanities (2 hours each). In addition, students in level 9 completed 12 specialized translation courses in medicine, engineering, military, Islamic studies, media, administration, sociology, education, security, commerce, politics, and computer science (2 hours each).

As for color-based metaphorical expressions, students in both groups did not study color-based metaphorical expressions per se, rather they studied a sample of English idioms and metaphors in the vocabulary courses that they took.

4 Methodology

4.1 Collecting the color-metaphor data

A corpus of 195 English and 278 Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions were collected from various online resources. The Arabic corpus, in particular, was collected from Al-Maani dictionary, Ilyas (2014), Arab informants and the author's own collection as a native speaker of Arabic. The Arabic color-metaphors were verified by two professors at the Arabic department to make sure that the sample includes color-based metaphorical expressions only and does not include mere phrases consisting of nouns and adjectives. The majority of the Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions are common in Standard Arabic, with few from spoken Arabic dialects in different Arab countries. Many are common in both standard and colloquial Arabic.

4.2 Color-based metaphorical expressions in English and Arabic

The color words *black*, *white*, *red*, *yellow*, *green*, *blue*, *pink*, *orange* are adjectives and nouns in both English and Arabic, with few derived forms in English such as: (i) derived verbs: *blacken*, *whiten*; (ii) derived gerunds: *whitening*; (iii) derived adjectives: *yellowish*, *greenish*, *reddish*, *brownish* etc.; (iv) some color words have plural forms: *whites*, *blacks*. Since Arabic is a derivational language, several forms are derived from most color names and are used in metaphors such as:

- Derived transitive verbs (TV): يبييضُ ('turn white'), يصفّرُ ('to turn yellow'), يزرُقُ ('to turn blue'), يحمرُّ ('to turn red'), يسودُ ('to turn black'), يخضرُّ ('turn green').
- Derived action nouns derived from IV: اسوداد ('becoming black'), ازرقاق ('becoming blue'), احمرار ('becoming red'), اصفرار ('becoming yellow'), اخضرار ('becoming green').
- Derived agents and patients: مبييض ('whitish'), مصفر ('yellowish'), محمر ('reddish'), مزرق ('bluish'), مسود ('blackish').
- Color names have masculine and feminine forms, and singular and plural forms: اسود *black*, singular, masculine, سوداوان *black*, dual, masculine and feminine, سود *black*, plural, masculine, سوداء *black*, singular, feminine, سوداوات *black*, plural, feminine.

In addition, Arabic has dual color names الأ سودان ('the two blacks; i. e., 'dates and water'), الأسمران ('the two blackish; i. e., 'water and wheat'), الاحمران ('the two reds; i. e., 'meat and wine'), الأخضران

(‘the two greens’, i. e., ‘grass and trees’), each of which has one or more metaphorical meanings such as: الأبيضان (‘the two whites’ referring to ‘milk and water’), الأصفران (‘the two yellows’, i. e., ‘gold and saffron’). There is no dual form for *blue, brown, orange, or pink*.

4.3 Data analysis

Each English color metaphor was translated into Arabic and each Arabic color metaphor was translated into English. Then, color-based metaphorical expressions were classified into the following categories: (i) color-based metaphorical expressions that are identical in their conceptual basis (meaning) and linguistic form (wording) in both languages such as *white lie* – ‘كذبة بيضاء’; (ii) color-based metaphorical expressions that are the same in conceptual basis, but different in linguistic form as in *black sheep* – ابن البطة السوداء (‘black duck’); (iii) color-based metaphorical expressions that have the same linguistic form but different conceptual bases such as *Black Stone* which has a literal meaning in English, but in Arabic, it refers to the holy stone in Kaaba in Makkah; (iv) color-based metaphorical expressions that exist in English but have no equivalents in Arabic (*paint the town red*); (v) color-based metaphorical expressions that exist in Arabic but have no equivalents in English يا خبر اسود (‘what bad news’).

The percentages of color-based metaphorical expressions in each category were computed. Translations, comparisons and categorization of English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions were verified by two professors of English-Arabic translation. Disagreements were solved by discussion.

4.4 The color-metaphor test

At the beginning of the semester, beginner and advanced student groups were given one of two versions of a color-metaphor test, as the students took the test in different class sessions. Each version of the test consisted of 25 English and 30 Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions that were randomly selected from the English and Arabic color-metaphor corpora collected and which covered color-based metaphorical expressions in all five categories. The items were presented in isolation as presenting them in context would help the students infer their meaning. The test instructions specified what the items were. The subjects were asked to translate English color-based metaphorical expressions into Arabic and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions into English. The subjects were not allowed to use a dictionary. No time limit was imposed on the test session.

4.5 Analyzing students’ responses

The subjects’ written responses to the color-metaphor test were marked by the author. To be marked correct, each English and Arabic color metaphor had to be translated correctly, either by an equivalent color metaphor or by an explanation if equivalents are absent. To find out the strategies that the subjects used in translating color-based metaphorical expressions, mistranslations were compiled and subjected to further analysis. Translation strategies were classified into: (i) avoidance (leaving the answer blank), (ii) literal translation, (iii) explanation, (iv) partial translation, (v) contextualized guessing, (vi) use of synonym, (vii) confusing color

metaphors with non-metaphorical phrases, (viii) inventing their own metaphors, (ix) free language expression, and (x) extraneous translation. The color-metaphor translation error corpus consisted of 2185 incorrect responses for both groups. Quantitative and qualitative data analyses of the color-metaphor error data are reported.

4.6 Test reliability

Since it was not possible to use parallel forms, split-halves of each full test, or re-test the students two weeks after the first administration of the test, reliability of the test scores was calculated using the Kuder-Richardson 21' formula as it estimates the internal-consistency of the test items from a single administration of the test. The reliability coefficient of the color-metaphor test scores was .70 for the beginners' group and .73 for the advanced group. Inter-scorer reliability was also calculated by having a colleague who taught translation mark a sample of answer sheets and by comparing both analyses. There was a 94 % agreement between the two scorers in identifying those color-based metaphorical expressions available in both English and Arabic and those that are available in one language only and classifying the translation strategies utilized by the subjects. Disagreements were solved by discussion.

5 Results

5.1 Translation equivalence in English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions

Analysis of the meaning equivalence of English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions showed that 30 % of the color-based metaphorical expressions in the English and Arabic data are identical in their conceptual basis and linguistic form as in: *white lie* – كذبة بيضاء, *black market* – السوق السوداء, *red line* – خط احمر, *yellow journalism* – الصحف الصفراء, *green light* – الضوء الأخضر, *white smoke* – الدخان الأبيض, *black belt* – الحزام الأسود, *black record* – سجل اسود, *black magic* – سحر اسود.

Data analysis also showed that color-based metaphorical expressions that exist in English but have no equivalent metaphors in Arabic constituted 58 % of the data as in *white hope*, *paint the town red*, *white magic*, *give a black eye*, *green old age*, *green with envy*, *blue-blooded*, *once in a blue moon*, *out of the blue*. Likewise, color-based metaphorical expressions that exist in Arabic but have no equivalent metaphors in English constituted 60 % of the corpus as in: أيايدي بيضاء ('white hands', i. e., 'good deeds'), وجهه اصفر ('his face turned yellow', i. e., 'he looks pale/scared'), الخط الأزرق ('blue line'), ابيضت عيناه ('his eyes turned white because of sadness'), قرشك الأبيض ليومك الأسود ('save your silver money for your black day'), قلبه أبيض ('white-hearted', i. e., 'good-hearted', 'have good intentions', or 'innocent'), ليلة بيضاء ('white night', i. e., 'happy, joyful night'), مسيرة بيضاء ('white path', i. e., 'a lifetime full of good deeds'), منافسة بيضاء ('white competition', i. e., 'fair competition'), نسخة بيضاء من فكرة سوداء ('white version from a black idea', i. e., 'to create a good idea from a bad/evil one'), أيام سوداء ('black ideas', i. e., 'evil ideas'), أيام سوداء ('black days', i. e., 'hard times').

Thirdly, color-based metaphorical expressions that have the same conceptual basis in both English and Arabic but different linguistic forms constitute 5 % of the Arabic corpus and 6 % of the English corpus as in ابن البطة السوداء ('black duck', i. e., 'black sheep'), احمر وجه ('red-faced', i. e., 'blushed', once in a 'blue moon'). Similarly, color-based metaphorical expressions that have a similar linguistic form in both languages but different conceptual bases constitute 5 %

of the Arabic corpus and 6 % of the English corpus as in: (a) *Men in blue* referring to the police in English but in Arabic it means ‘men who live in the desert’; (b) *Bluetooth* refers to Bluetooth technology in English, but in Arabic it means ‘a guy who is mean’; (c) *red-eye* in English means ‘a journey that leaves late at night and arrives early in the morning’, but *to show the red eye* – يرى العين الحمراء in Arabic means ‘a person who is an intimidator’; (d) *Snow White* is a popular fairy tale character in English, but in Arabic it means ‘as white as snow’ and refers to the fairy tale character as well; (e) *Black Stone* has a literal meaning in English, but in Arabic it refers to the holy stone in Kaaba in Makkah.

5.2 Students’ difficulties with English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions

Analysis of the subjects’ responses to the English and Arabic color-metaphor tests showed that beginners as well as advanced students had considerable difficulty in translating English color-based metaphorical expressions to Arabic, and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions to English. Beginners and advanced students gave a total of 3245 and 3540 responses to the test items respectively. Both groups left 41 % blank. The typical beginners and advanced students responded to 31 % and 28 % of the color-based metaphorical expressions on the whole test respectively. Less than 34 % of their responses to the test items were correct (cf. Table 2).

Table 2: Mean, median, range and total number of correct and incorrect responses to the color-metaphor test items

Group	N	Color meta-phors	Mean		Median		Range		Sum	
			Cor-rect	Incor-rect	Correct	Incor-rect	Cor-rect	Incor-rect	Cor-rect	Incor-rect
Advanced	55	Arabic	39.1 %	42.3 %	28 %	39 %	5-21	5-39	440	495
		English	32.4 %	43.1 %	23 %	44 %	4-19	4-39	330	550
		Total	27.4 %	37.4 %	25 %	34 %	4-21	4-39	770	1045
Beginners	60	Arabic	37.2 %	44.7 %	24 %	29 %	3-17	3-20	480	540
		English	32.4 %	46.2 %	20 %	34 %	2-14	2-15	360	600
		Total	21 %	39 %	25 %	34 %	2-17	2-20	840	1140

No significant differences were found between beginners and advanced students in the total test scores ($T = .25$; $p > .69$), the Arabic color-metaphor subtest scores ($T = 1.9$; $p > .63$), nor the English color-metaphor subtest scores ($T = 2.5$; $p > .54$). However, results revealed significant differences between the English and Arabic color-metaphor test scores for the advance group ($T = 3.6$; $p > .01$), but not for the beginners ($T = 1.6$; $p > .78$). This means that advanced students have slightly more difficulties in translating English than Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions, whereas beginners have comparable difficulties in both. A positive correlation was found between the subjects’ English and Arabic sub-test scores ($r = .34$; $p > .01$), i. e. students’ ability to translate English color-based metaphorical expressions into Arabic and vice versa. This means that competence in translating English color-based metaphorical expressions is

related to that of translating Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions, and that weakness and/or improvement in one, results in weakness and/or improvement in the other.

Results also showed that about 41 % of the English items were left blank by all the subjects. Fewer than 25 % of the English and Arabic items were translated correctly and 34 % were translated incorrectly. Color-based metaphorical expressions that were translated correctly were those that are similar in both English and Arabic such as: *black list* – القائمة السوداء, *red line* – خط أحمر, *green light* – الضوء الأخضر.

Qualitative data analysis of the error data showed that color-based metaphorical expressions with an idiomatic meaning were found to be more difficult than those that are more transparent. The fact that 60 % of the Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions in the corpus have no equivalent color-based metaphorical expressions in English, and that 58 % of the English color-based metaphorical expressions in the corpus have no equivalents in Arabic, makes the acquisition of color-based metaphorical expressions in both languages difficult. The students' difficulties in translating Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions to English may be due to inadequate linguistic competence in English, whereas their difficulties in translating English color-based metaphorical expressions to Arabic may be due to comprehension problems, as their meaning is not transparent, and they are culturally unfamiliar.

Findings of the present study are consistent with findings of prior studies which found that metaphorical expressions are problematic for non-English speaking students participating in academic lectures in English (cf. Littlemore 2004, Littlemore et al. 2011) and in academic reading in discipline-specific contexts (cf. Sandgren 2014). L2 and translation students have difficulty comprehending and translating metaphors regardless of their proficiency levels. As in the present study, no differences were found between undergraduate and graduate L2 Swedish readers in their ability to comprehend metaphorical expressions in English while reading. The frequency of comprehension errors was unexpectedly high in both groups, which indicates that their knowledge construction is hindered. Although the students' knowledge of the English language was high, metaphorical expressions still caused comprehension problems (cf. Sandgren 2014).

Findings are also consistent with studies conducted with Arab students such as Alsadi (2016) and Zibin (2016). Alsadi (2016) found that Qatari EFL students at the Department of Language and Literature had difficulties in comprehending and producing English metaphorical expressions due to their unfamiliarity with the English culture, and their inability to evaluate whether a statement is metaphorical or literal. Likewise, Zibin (2016) found that Jordanian EFL college students had difficulty in comprehending metaphorical expressions in English.

As in the present study, Charteris-Black (2002) indicated that figurative expressions, with an equivalent conceptual basis and linguistic form, are the easiest for Malay EFL students. However, the most difficult were those with a different conceptual basis and an equivalent linguistic form, and with culture-specific expressions that have a different conceptual basis and a different linguistic form. The students resorted to their L1 conceptual basis when they processed unfamiliar L2 metaphorical expressions.

5.3 Strategies used in translating English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions

No significant differences were found between beginners and advanced students in the present study in the strategies they utilized in translating English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions. Those strategies were as follows:

- (i) **Avoidance** which was the most common strategy, as 41 % of the items on the test were left blank such as: ضحكة صفراء ('yellow smile', i. e., 'cynical'), الاخضران ('the two greens', i. e., 'grass and trees'), حمراء النعم ('red camels', i. e., 'camels of good breed'), الياقات الزرقاء ('blue collars'), الأحمران ('the two reds', i. e., 'meat and wine'), فلان أخضر ('a green person', i. e., 'young and inexperienced'), حصان أزرق ('blue horse', i. e., 'thoroughbred horse'), الأشعة فوق البنفسجية ('ultraviolet rays') in Arabic; and *green about the gills, green party, green cross code, green power, green spit, green eye, blue film/magazine/video, blue one's money, blue-blooded, blue murder, beet red, once in a blue moon, out of the blue, and see pink elephant, red her-ring* in English as they are opaque.
- (ii) **Literal translation.** The subjects tended to translate color-based metaphorical expressions word-for-word, i. e., as consisting of two single words, not as a unit, although Arabic equivalents with the same conceptual basis but a different linguistic expression exist, as in the following faulty responses:

English is ST	Arabic is ST	English is ST	Arabic is ST
<i>silver spoon</i>	ملعقة فضة	يريه العين الحمراء	<i>show the red eye</i>
<i>silver plate/platter</i>	صحن فضة	الأخضر واليابس	<i>green and dry</i>
<i>black as thunder</i>	رعد أسود	وجهه أصفر	<i>his face is yellow, i. e., pale</i>
<i>black cap</i>	قبعة سوداء	الأقلام الصفراء	<i>yellow pens</i>
<i>show the red card</i>	يطرد لاعب من المباراة	الصحف الصفراء	<i>yellow newspaper</i>
<i>red eye</i>	العين الحمراء	كتب صفراء	<i>yellow books</i>

In the above examples, the subjects transferred the wording of the source color-based metaphorical expressions to their word-for-word equivalents, although each has a different wording in the TL (Arabic on the left and English on the right). The English color-based metaphorical expressions *silver spoon, silver plate, white with fear, black sheep* were translated into ملعقة فضية, صحن فضة, أبيض من الخوف, respectively, although the equivalent Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions are ابيض من الخوف, رعد أسود, وجهه أصفر respectively.

- (iii) **Explanation.** In some cases, some students explained the meaning of the color metaphor as in:

- *did something that made me proud* بيضت وجهي
- *hard times, difficult times, rough days, unhappy days* أيام سوداء
- *to be strict with his child* يريه العين الحمراء
- *bad news* خبر أسود
- *out of the blue* بشكل غير متوقع
- *once in a blue moon* في السنة مرة

- (iv) **Contextualized guessing.** Some students translated *catch someone red-handed* into يضبط شخصا ويدها ملطخة بالدماء. Here, the students knew the meaning of 'catch someone' but interpreted *red-handed* as 'covered with blood'.

- (v) **Partial translation.** Here some subjects translated part of the color-based metaphorical expressions and left the other part blank as in:
- *white with fear*: خائف *scared* without *white*
 - *green old age*: سن الشيخوخة *old age* without *green*
 - *green with envy*: حسود *jealous* without *green*
 - حصان ازرق ('blue horse', i. e., 'thoroughbred'): *horse without blue*
 - *pitch black*: أسود *black* without *pitch*
- (vi) Use of **synonyms** as in:
- فُرصة ذهبية *golden chance* instead of *golden opportunity*
 - سنة سوداء *gloomy year* instead of *dark year*
 - صفحة بيضاء *white page, blank page* instead of *white paper*
 - منطقة رمادية *grey region* instead of *grey area*
 - عصر ذهبي *golden period of time* instead of *golden age*
 - صحف صفراء *yellow newspapers* instead of *yellow journalism*
 - ورقة بيضاء *White paper* instead of *صفحة بيضاء*
- (vii) **Confusing** color-based metaphorical expressions with similar non-metaphorical phrases, such as:
- صفحة بيضاء (*ST*): *white page, blank page* and *white paper*
 - *white paper* (*ST*): ورقة بيضاء and صفحة بيضاء
- (viii) **Inventing their own metaphors** as in: احلام برتقالية was literally translated into *orange dreams*, and *Blue Murder* as جريمة فظيعة ('horrible crime'), جريمة شنيعة ('terrible crime'), as the name of the movie was not part of their background knowledge.
- (ix) **Free language expression**, i. e., using their own words, not the fixed expression of the metaphor as in saying: *golden heart* instead of *a heart of gold* as an equivalent to قلب من ذهب.
- (x) **Extraneous translation.** Some subjects did not know what a color metaphor means, so they just gave any phrase that they knew, without checking the accuracy of the meaning as in:
- فلان أخضر *green man*
 - *blackmail someone* 'يرسل بريد اسود لشخص', يرسل بريد سيء' *the students separated blackmail into black + mail* and translated them as two separate words with literal meanings, not as a compound with an idiomatic meaning.
 - *blue chip* 'شريحة زرقاء'.

The strategies subjects in the present study utilized in translating color metaphor are similar in type, but different in degree of difficulty to those utilized by Jordanian students in Zibin's (2016) and Smadi/Alrishan's (2015) studies, by Malay students in Charteris-Black's (2002) study, and by Swedish students in Sandgren's (2014) study. In Zibin's study, EFL college students' receptive knowledge of metaphors varied according to the type of metaphor: Metaphorical expressions that have a completely different conceptual basis in both English and Arabic, but are similar in linguistic expression (form), were the most difficult. Those that are totally different conceptually and linguistically in both languages elicited a significantly lower number of correct responses (52 %). Those that have different conceptual bases and linguistic expressions in English and Arabic, or where the conceptual bases are culturally neutral, elicited

ed a good number of correct responses (71 %). Those that have an equivalent conceptual basis in English and Arabic, but completely different linguistic expressions in both languages, were easy for the participants (81 %). The easiest to recognize were those that have the same conceptual bases and linguistic expressions (94 %), and those that have the same conceptual bases and similar linguistic expressions in both languages (85 %).

The strategies used in translating color-based metaphorical expressions in this study are similar to those used in translating idioms in Smadi/Alrishan's (2015) study who found that the most efficient strategy utilized by EFL Jordanian graduate students in translating opaque idioms was paraphrasing. The researchers attributed their finding to the degree of semantic transparency of the idioms under investigation. They added that variety in students' strategies in translating English idioms into Arabic reflects differences in students' linguistic and pragmatic competence and their familiarity with those idioms. Moon (1998: 219) described "pure idioms" as "opaque metaphors" which cannot be understood without knowledge of their historical origins. This is true in the case of old Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions that require historical knowledge of the metaphor as in: (i) الحمراء ('the Red'), referring to non-Arabs; (ii) الزرق ('the blues'), referring to spears and arrows; (iii) الأخضران ('the two greens'), referring to grass and trees or night time and the sea; (iv) الأسود ('the black with two sides'), referring to kind of snake; and Islamic color-based metaphorical expressions that require a conceptual basis as in: (a) الأحمر والاصفر ('the red and the yellow', i. e., 'all mankind'); (b) الخيط الأبيض من الخيط الأسود ('tell the white thread from the black thread', i. e., 'see the line that separates darkness from daylight'); (c) حمر النعم ('the red camels', i. e., 'best breed'); (d) يوم تبيض وجوه وتسود وجوه ('when some faces turn white and others turn black on the day of judgment', i. e., 'when some people feel happy and proud and other feel embarrassed, i. e., defamed, honored').

Sandgren's (2014) found that the most common cause of misunderstanding was cultural richness not the type of metaphorical expression. Comprehension of metaphorical expressions in two languages requires four main strategies by L2 readers: (i) Prior knowledge, (ii) guessing, (iii) translation, and (iv) context decoding. All these strategies involve bottom-up and top-down processing. Prior knowledge includes everything the reader brings to the text, such as general knowledge of the world, cultural knowledge, topical knowledge and specialist knowledge. Background knowledge, in particular, seems to be extremely important for translating color-based metaphorical expressions. In this respect, Anderson et al. (1977: 21) argued that "language comprehension always involves utilization of one's knowledge of the world", and that "many problems in reading comprehension are traceable to deficits in knowledge rather than deficits in linguistic skill".

The mistranslation strategies that subjects in the present study used reflect insufficient knowledge of English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions, what they mean, lack of historical knowledge and conceptual basis resulting in an inadequate ability to comprehend, match and transfer their meaning from one language to the other. In addition, the subjects had inadequate knowledge of the English culture. Al-Kharabsheh (2003) pointed out that the subjects' poor linguistic competence, their poor contrastive analysis ability and poor translation competence, the varying degrees of opaqueness in color metaphor, lack of sufficient experience and practice are factors that give rise to a wide range of mistranslations of English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions. Furthermore, students' difficulty with color-based metaphorical expressions may be due to inadequate instruction. Zibin (2016) indicated that metaphorical expressions are opaque as their conceptual basis reflects the encoding of a cul-

ture-specific meaning. Their conceptual bases and linguistic expressions are completely different in both English and Arabic.

6 Conclusion and recommendations

Translation of metaphor, in general, and color-based metaphorical expressions, in particular, poses several challenges to students when they approach them linguistically, conceptually and culturally. Results of the present study revealed that beginners as well as advanced translation students at COLT have considerable difficulty in translating English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions, especially those that are culture-specific, or those with an idiomatic meaning. To help students master English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions, the author recommends that translation instructors raise students' awareness of the similarities and differences between English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions, the idiomatic meaning of some, how to translate those that exist in one language but not in the other, those that are similar in both languages in conceptual basis but different in linguistic form, those that are similar in the linguistic form but different in the conceptual basis, those that are culture specific, those that have a literal as well as a connotative meaning, and those with multiple meanings.

Since color-based metaphorical expressions are loaded with attributive, connotative meanings, semantic, pragmatic and communicative aspects should be taken into consideration. The amount of knowledge that translation students have about the similarities and differences between English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions will help the students comprehend and interpret them correctly.

To understand the literal and connotative meanings of unfamiliar color-based metaphorical expressions, translations students can check specialized English-English and English-Arabic dictionaries such as *Al-Maany Online Dictionary*, as such dictionaries, Bojović (2014) indicated, offer a unique treatment of metaphors, show how lexicalized metaphors and phrases have monosemous or polysemous metaphorical meanings, in addition to some specific regular patterns which can help students in the cognitive mechanism of translating metaphors.

Enriching students' prior (background) knowledge is of great importance as well. Providing students with language and translation activities can help enhance their knowledge of color-based metaphorical expressions and develop their ability to transfer their meaning from English to Arabic and vice versa.

Translation students can engage in the translation process and can practice and gain skills in all figurative language translation strategies. They can practice the translation procedures suggested by Schäffner (2004): substitution (metaphor into a different metaphor), paraphrase (metaphor into sense), or deletion. They can also practice Newmark's follow procedures: (P1) reproducing the same image in the TL; (P2) replacing the image in the SL with a standard TL image which does not clash with the TL culture; (P3) translating the metaphor by a simile, retaining the image; (P4) translating the metaphor (or simile) by a simile plus sense, or a metaphor plus sense; (P5) conversion of metaphor to sense; (P6) deletion when the metaphor is redundant or serves no practical purpose; and (P7) translating the metaphor by the same metaphor combined with sense. Since there is no one-to-one correspondence between numerous Arabic and English color-based metaphorical expressions, the students can practice the following strategies in translating those that do not exist in the TL: (a) taking into consideration the connotative and idiomatic meanings of color-based metaphorical expressions; (b) using

non-literal (free) translation in some cases; and (c) giving explanatory equivalents in others as *what a bad day!* – *يا نهار ابيض* and *the devil to pay* – *يا ويلك يا سواد ليلك* . Since the interpretation of and translation of metaphors is culturally conditioned, student translators can choose among three translation equivalents: (i) an exact equivalent of the original metaphor; (ii) a metaphorical phrase which would express a similar sense; (iii) replacing an untranslatable metaphor in the ST with its approximate literal paraphrase in TT (cf. Dobrzyńska 1995).

Finally, translation students and instructors may compile English and Arabic color-based metaphorical expressions together with their equivalents for future reference. Translation students' difficulties with multi-word units in English and Arabic such as those that contain body parts – رأس 'head', وجه 'face', عين 'eye', فم 'mouth', لسان 'tongue', يد 'hand', ساق 'leg', قدم 'foot' – or family members – أبو 'father', أم 'mother', أخ 'brother', أخت 'sister', ابن 'son', بنت 'daughter' – are still open for further investigation by future studies.

Appendix

The Color-Metaphor Translation Test

Test Version 1: Translate each Arabic metaphor into English and each English metaphor into Arabic.

بيضت وجهي بيض الله وجهك – صفحة بيضاء – مسيرة بيضاء – ابن البطة السوداء – الأسود والأحمر – أيام سوداء
 الخيط الأسود – سجل اسود – سودت عيشتي – صفحته سوداء – علامة سوداء – قلبه اسود – لايس نظارة سوداء –
 احمر وجهه – حمراء النعم – العين الحمراء – الموت الأحمر – اصفر واحمر – الأقلام الصفراء – الصحف الصفراء
 – كتب صفراء – ضحكة صفراء – الأخضران – شاب أخضر – اللطاق الأخضر – عدو أزرق – الطبعة الزرقاء –
 ذكريات برتقالية – الياقات الزرقاء – الفريق البرتقالي – أحلام وردية.

raise a white flag – white as a ghost – white house – white paper – beat somebody black and blue – black as night – black as thunder – black cap – black eye – black letter day – black market – black spot – blackmail someone – give a black eye – pitch black – show the red card – beet red – like a red rag to a bull – red hot – red herring – red tape – red-eye – to see red – to see the red light – a yellow streak.

Test Version 2: Translate each Arabic metaphor into English and each English metaphor into Arabic.

الاشعة فوق البنفسجية – رمادية المشاعر – قلب من ذهب – نصيحة ذهبية – بطاقة ماسية – عصر ذهبي – فرصة ذهبية
 – أيادي بيضاء – الراية البيضاء – كذبة بيضاء – يا نهار ابيض – خير اسود – سنة سوداء – الصندوق الأسود – القائمة
 السوداء – نقطة سوداء – الأخضران – الأشيعة تحت الحمراء – السنة الحمراء – الكريات الحمر – كتب صفراء – الحمى
 الصفراء – فلان أخضر – حصان أزرق – ماء أزرق – أحلام برتقالية – حياة وردية – أحلام رمادية – منطقة رمادية

green thumb – green about the gills – green cross code – green power – green finger – blue chip – blue one's money – blue-blooded – blue murder – once in a blue moon – out of the blue – see pink elephants – silver spoon – silver plate – golden handshake – golden boy – silver hair – bronze age – show the white feather – white with fear – out of the red – catch someone red-handed – paint the town red – roll out the red carpet – green with envy.

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