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## **The Influence of L1 on Learning English Idioms**

### **The Case of EFL Master Students at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements of the Master Degree in  
Linguistics

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## **Dedications**

*In the Name of GoD, the Most Merciful and Most Compassionate.*

*In the memory of my grandmother*

*This work is dedicated to my parents; my dear father and my beloved mother without whom, I would not have been what I am.*

*Thank you father and mother for all your sacrifices.*

*It is dedicated also to all my sisters and brothers and every member of my family.*

*All those who know me and who would be interested in reading my dissertation*

**Abdelkrim Hakim Kilani**

*In the memory of my father whom I will never forget, I dedicate this dissertation, asking the Almighty Allah to bless his soul and dwell him in his vast paradise.*

*This work is dedicated to my precious parents; my lovely father, the source of my inspiration; my beloved mother, who supported me the whole time. I would never thank you enough for what you did for me.*

*To my wonderful brothers and sisters*

*To all my friends and relatives without exception*

**Khaled Bediar**

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**CAH:** Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

**EA:** Error Analysis

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**e.g.:** Example

**FL:** Foreign Language

**i.e.:** It means

**LMD:** License, Master, Doctorate

**L1:** First Language

**L2:** Second Language

**SL :** Source Language

**SLA:** Second Language Acquisition

**TL :** Target Language

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## **Abstract**

The main aim of the present study is to investigate the influence of L1 on learning English idioms. This study seeks to determine the extent to which EFL master students at Ibn Khaldoun University have mastered the English idioms, to find out the type of the English idioms which is easy for them to learn, and the type which is difficult for them, and to identify the cases of L1 interference. Data have been collected from 72 EFL master students who were asked to translate 27 idioms from Arabic into English. The idioms used in this study were classified into identical, similar, and different idioms. The results of the study revealed that English idioms are, to some extent, problematic to EFL master students who usually transfer linguistic elements from their L1 to English when they use English idioms. The results also revealed that identical idioms are easy for EFL master students to learn, while different idioms are difficult for them. The study ends with some recommendations.

**Key words:** Language transfer, idioms, native language, foreign language types errors.

## **General Introduction**

### **1. Introduction**

One of the major problems that EFL learners face when they use English language is to transfer linguistic elements from their first language (L1) into English which is considered as target language (TL). This phenomenon which is known as language transfer has been examined by a number of linguists who have tried to find out the linguistic elements that EFL learners usually transfer, and identify some strategies that may overcome this problem.

Language transfer can remarkably be noticed in the use of idioms. An idiom is an expression that denotes a particular meaning which is totally different from its constituents. That is why EFL learners, even advanced ones, face difficulties in learning and using English idioms. These learners, most of the time, avoid using English idioms in their interaction, but when they feel obliged to use them, the majority of them rely on their first languages and transfer linguistic elements from their L1 to English.

### **2. Research Motivation**

Like all EFL learners, EFL master students at Ibn Khaldoun University have problems with English idioms. It has been noticed that most of these learners do not utilize the English idioms in their classroom interaction. When these students use the English idioms, most of them transfer, to a certain degree, linguistic elements from Arabic into English. This motivates us to determine the extent to which EFL master students at Ibn Khaldoun University have mastered the English idioms, and the type of the linguistic elements these students transfer from their first language into Arabic.

### **3. Research Aims**

The main aim of the present study is to investigate the influence of L1 on learning English idioms. More specifically, This study seeks to determine the extent to which EFL master students at Ibn Khaldoun University have mastered the English idioms, find out the type of the English idioms which is easy for them to learn, and the type which is difficult for them, and identify the cases of L1 interference when using English idioms.

### **4. Research Questions**

The present research seeks to find answer to the following research problem: To what extent have EFL master Students at Ibn Khaldoun univeristy mastered the English idioms ?

For the sake of feasibility, this research problem has been broken down into three main questions:

1. Which type of English idoms is easy for EFL master students to learn ?
2. Which type of English idioms is difficult for EFL master students to learn ?
3. What are the linguistic elements that EFL master students transfer from their L1 to English when they use English idoms ?

### **5. Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses are proposed to answer the research questions stated above:

1. English idioms which are identical to Arabic ones are easy for EFL master students to Learn
2. English idioms which are syntactically different from Arabic ones are difficult for EFL master to Learn

3. When they use English idioms EFL master students transfer different linguistic elements such as verbs, prepositions...etc.

## **6. Significance of the Study**

Taking into account that the study of language interference has received attention from both linguists and teachers, the results of the present study seem significant to several fields like linguistics, language pedagogy, and language learning. The results obtained can be used by linguists who focus on second language acquisition and error analysis. Moreover, they can be used by teachers to identify the problems that EFL master students have when learning English idioms and design strategies to overcome these problems.

## **7. Research Methodology**

In order to describe and explain the extent to which EFL master students have mastered the English idioms, and the linguistic elements they transfer from Arabic into English, a quantitative approach was used. A questionnaire was distributed to 72 EFL master students who were asked to translate 27 Arabic idioms into English. The idioms were classified into three main categories: Identical, similar, and different idioms. Identical idioms refer to Arabic idioms which have exact counterparts in English. Similar idioms denote Arabic idioms which have the same meaning as their counterparts in the English but they are slightly differently worded. Different idioms refer to Arabic idioms which have the same meanings as their counterparts in the English but they have totally different forms.

## **8. Organisation of the Dissertation**

The dissertation includes three chapters. Chapter one highlights theoretical background knowledge about idioms and language transfer. Chapter two describes the

research protocol used to collect the data. Chapter three presents analyzes and discusses the results obtained from the EFL master students.

**Chapter One**  
**Literature Review**

## **1.1. Overview**

The present chapter attempts to shed light on idiomatic expressions and language transfer. The chapter defines the word idiom and idiomaticity, and explains the role of culture in developing and understanding idiomatic expressions. Moreover, it presents the degrees of idiomaticity and clarifies relationships between idiom and figurative language. The chapter also gives an overview about language transfer. It introduces language transfer and its types, and discusses the two approaches of error analysis: Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) and Error Analysis (EA). Furthermore, the chapter illustrates the linguistic elements that FL learners may transfer from their native language to target language.

## **1.2. Idioms**

### **1.2.1. Definition of Idioms**

Idioms or idiomatic expressions are a part of every language. It is defined in contrast to “normal” vocabulary. English linguists, grammarians, lexicographers, and pedagogues have defined idioms in a number of ways. Idioms are considered as “frozen pattern of language which allow little variation in form and, often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components” (Baker, 1992, p.63). According to Langacker (1968, p.79), “an idiom is a kind of complex lexical item. It is a phrase whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of the morphemes it comprises”. Likewise, Fraser (1976, p.v ) defined idiom as “a single constituent or series of constituents, whose semantic interpretation is independent of the formatives which compose it”.

Idioms are linguistic expressions whose overall meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of the constituent parts. To put in other words, “idiom is a group of words which has, as a whole, a different meaning from the meaning of its constituents” (The Longman



Pocket Dictionary, 2001). In this regard, Richards and Schmidt (2011, p.245) defined, in the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, an idiom as “an expression which functions as a single unit and whose meaning cannot be worked out from its separate parts”. Likewise, Bolinger (1975), argued that idioms are “groups of words with set meanings that cannot be calculated by adding up the separate meanings of the parts” (as cited in Lattey, 1986, p. 219)

Idioms are considered as fixed expressions in a language community. Carter (1998, p.66), for instance, considered idioms as fixed expressions which denote “a type that includes proverbs, stock phrases, catchphrases, allusions, idiomatic similes and discursal expressions”. Moreover, Baker (1992, p.63) defined the fixed expression as “the extreme end of the scale from collocations in one or both of these areas: flexibility of patterning and transparency of meaning”. Furthermore, Lipka (2013, p10) stated that “an idiom is a conventionalized expression whose meaning cannot be determined from the meaning of its part”.

After reviewing all of the preceding definitions of idioms, the following primary idiom features can be identified:

1. Idioms' form and order are fixed (frozen).
2. idioms convey meaning that cannot be translated literally, in that they do not always imply what we expect them to mean. Al-Sha'lan (2007, p. 46)
3. Idioms are expressions of culture
4. Idioms have specific language characteristics by definition. They work on three parts of language: form, meaning, and usage, implying that they have syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects.

### **1.2.2. Idioms and Culture**

An idiom is usually a colloquial metaphor — a term which needs some foundational knowledge, information, or experience, to use only within a culture where parties must have common (Carter, 1998). Idioms are therefore not considered part of the language, but rather a component of the culture.

An idiom is a phrase with a meaning that differs from the meanings of the individual words in it. Each language includes numerous and massive idioms that one may use in his/her daily lives. Interestingly, native speakers of any language sometimes use idiomatic expression without being aware that they use idioms in their daily conversations.

It is well known that idioms are related to culture because they are directly attached to a society's history, literature, customs, religion, traditions, life style...etc. For instance, the idiomatic expression 'knight in shining armor' which means to help someone in a difficult situation; dates back to the medieval times when soldiers (knights) ride on horses, and are supposed to rescue and protect women « poem of Henry Pye in 1790 ».

According to Ronak and Newmanin (2015) , idioms can be developed from different sources which are culturally based such as :

1. Traditional beliefs like as folklore
2. Holy books
3. Literature
4. Famous ancient events
5. Historical Figures

As cultures are typically localized, idioms are often not useful outside of that local context. However some idioms can be more universally used than others, and they can be easily translated (Ronak and Newmanin, 2015).

### **1.2.3. Idiomaticity**

#### **1.2.3.1. Definition of Idiomaticity**

Idiomaticity is one of the primary issues that continue to be examined by linguists. As a matter of fact, in order to translate idioms from a source language into a target language, one must first understand the background culture of the source language (Ronak and Newmanin, 2015). For instance, if a particular person wants to translate the English idiom ‘is the Pope Catholic’, must be familiar with the English culture. If the person translates the idiom using word by word translation, the readers/ the listeners of the target language will not understand the meaning of the idiom. This entails that, understanding idioms and using them properly entails a degree of proficiency which is hard for the non-native speaker of a given language to acquire. When it comes to English language, for instance, learning and mastering idiomatic expressions are the most difficult task even for advanced learners.

Idiomaticity is, in fact, a general phenomenon in all languages and is defined by Cowie and Mackin (1975), in their Oxford Dictionary of Current Idioms as “a combination of two or more words which function as a unit of meaning”. This means that, there is a discrepancy between what the phrase as a whole means and what its constituent would mean if read compositionally. This is, however, only one of the features of idiomaticity. For an idiom to express the meaning that it denotes, it must also be institutionalised. Institutionalisation of lexis means that there is a received meaning which is understood by all the constituents.

The terms idiom and idiomaticity denote different meanings. According to Wulff (2008, p.), “in linguistic theory, idiom is reserved for phrases that behave like single words in some respects and like assembled phrases in others. On the one hand, idioms are not just phrasal lexemes because they can be modified both lexically and syntactically”.

Ghazala (2003) defined idiomaticity as “idioms’ ‘most special and essential component, namely, their metaphorical aspect” (p. 204). According to him, idiomaticity is “the heart of the matter of any idiomatic expression” (p. 208). According to Palmer (as cited in Aldahesh, 2013) idiomaticity is considered as a lexical feature

Kaveka and Zybert (2004) (as cited in Aldahesh, 2013, p. 25) assumed that the terms idiomatology, idiomaticity, idiomatic and phraseology are used to refer to the same area which is idiomaticity.

### **1.2.3.2. Degrees of Idiomaticity**

According to Fernando (1981:19) There are four degrees of idiomaticity:

#### **➤ Opaque Idioms**

Because the idiom's meaning is not derived from the meaning of its components, opaque idioms are the most difficult to interpret.

E.g spill the beans (i.e. to reveal a secret) or , trip the light fantastic (to dance) can only be acquired via an arbitrary connection.

#### **➤ Semi-Opaque Idioms**

Are less ambiguous than the first, and one of its components may be used to deduce their meaning.

E.g to know the robes (i.e. to know a particular job is done)

### ➤ **Transparent Idioms**

The meaning of transparent idioms is clearly understood and translated.

E.g to see the light (i.e. to understand)

### ➤ **Semi-transparent Idioms**

They are idioms whose components can assist in identifying the meaning of the phrase.

## **1.2.4. Types of idioms**

Idioms are categorized into three semantic levels based on their amount of compositionality. According to Fernando (1996, p.35-36), there are three different groups of idioms:

- **Pure idioms** (non-compositional, semantically opaque) : These idioms have a purely figurative meaning (non-literal meaning). That is to say, they cannot be understood literally.
- **Semi-idioms** (noncompositional, but interpretable) : These idioms have one literal meaning and one non-literal meaning.
- **Literal idioms** (partially compositional) : These idioms have literal meaning. That is, the words have the same meaning as the expression. To put it in other words, the words that constitute the idiom and the idiom express the same semantic meaning.

Cacciari and Tabossi (1993:27) suggested that idiomatic expressions can be classified as part of the large family of fixed phrases, clichés, proverbs, indirect speech acts, speech formulae, and so on. Then, it provides some degree of conventionalization of meaning while differing in semantic and syntactic features. Similarly, McCarthy and O'Dell (2010) categorized idioms into: Prepositional phrase, proverb, simile, binomials, triomial, clause or sentence, euphemism, fixed statements, and cliché.

In addition to the classifications mentioned above, Nunberg (1978) (as cited in Glucksberg and Keysar, 1993) categorized idioms as follows:

- **Normally decomposable idioms:** where the literal significance of its components contributes to the comprehension of the metaphorical meaning. For instance, the expressions “pop the question” and “button your lips” are two examples of such idioms. In these idioms, “question” and “button” belong to the same conceptual domains as “ask” and “close”, respectively.
- **Abnormally decomposable idioms:** These idioms contain terms which indirectly, imply metaphorical meanings. For example in the term “spill the beans”, spill can be understood as to reveal, and beans as a secret.
- **Semantically non-decomposable idioms:** in which there is no evidence on the idiom metaphorical significance in the literal meaning of the components. For instance, in the idiom “kick the bucket” which means “to die”, the meanings of the idiom’s components do not not reflect the overall figurative meaning.

### **1.2.5. Idioms and Figurative Speech**

Figurative language is a language that uses words or expressions which have different meaning from the the literal interpretation. A figure of speech, termed also a ‘rhetorical figure’, is a phrase or word used in a non-literal sense for rhetorical or rich effect. Figurative language can be employed in any type of communication, such as daily conversations, newspaper opinion, ads, novels, poems, and so forth. To understand figurative language, one may use his or her imagination. Idiom is part of figurative language that is used in many kinds of texts. A number of cognitive linguistics argued that conceptual metaphors give birth to idiomatic expressions. Gibbs and O'Brien (1990) assumed that conceptual metaphors motivate the figurative meaning of many idioms. Following the same line of thought, Maalej (2008)

claimed that both idioms and metaphors have a power of likening .i.e., they cannot be understood if they are taken literally. The difference between the two, however, can be marked through a separate existence of a basic correlation. According to Maalej (2008), idioms and metaphors are culture-specific aspects of a particular language, i.e., the non-existence of a direct one to one correspondence in the TL of a particular idiom in the SL is the result of culture-specific metaphors.

Likewise, Cooper (2008) argued that idioms belong to the category of non-literal or figurative language that also contains metaphors, similes, and proverbs. He claims that these forms of language are not easy to understand and to learn since they do not mean what they literally state. For him, The main feature that characterizes idiomatic expressions is that the words are used metaphorically. Therefore, the structure has a little role to play in understanding the meaning of the whole expression.

Figurativeness is the checkpoint of idiomatic expressions. The meaning of idioms cannot be understood in terms of the compositional meanings of their individual words, like in the idiom *Skate on thin ice* (take a risk). Thus, words in idioms have meaning only when they considered as a whole (some idioms may have a literal and figurative meaning), otherwise, they are meaningless.

### **1.2.6. Comprehension of Idioms**

Idioms always cause a lot of problems to learners of a foreign language. Students usually find difficulties in recognizing an expression as idiomatic or not, and then understanding its exact meaning (Imrose, 2013). This is mainly due to the fact that idiomatic expressions carry a metaphorical sense that makes the comprehension of an idiom difficult if not impossible. In other words, the meaning of an idiom cannot be deduced from the meaning of its constituent parts (Cooper, 2008).

The source and the target cultures have a great influence on the comprehensibility as well as the translatability of idioms. Hence, better understanding and using idioms needs both knowing their historical background and familiarity with both the S and the T cultures, and having a clear idea about their different situational context (Cooper, 2008)

Since idioms are figurative expressions that do not mean what they literally state and since they are so frequent in spoken and written discourse, understanding and producing idioms cause a vocabulary learning problem for L2 learners (Imrose, 2013).

Researchers and scholars propose various techniques to translate idiomatic expressions. Baker (1992), for instance, suggests four strategies:

- **Paraphrasing translation:** This is the most frequent approach for the translation of idioms, employed if there is no target language (TL) equivalent matching the source language (SL) language text language because of the differences between source and target language style preferences.
- **Translation by omission:** this method is based on the omission of the entire language as the TL and SL languages are not homogeneous.
- **Translation using a language of similar form and meaning:** This is absolute equivalence, utilized especially if the source language and destination language language belong to the same family and share cultural similarities.
- **Translation by a language of the same meaning but different form:** This means that the SL expressive language is a partial equivalence and the same meaning is translated in its equivalent in the TL language.



### **1.3. Language Transfer**

For nearly a century, first language (L1) transfer has been a major topic in applied linguistics, second language acquisition (SLA), and language pedagogy. Its significance, on the other hand, has been re-evaluated multiple times in recent decades.

Earliest studies on Language transfer begins from the 1940s and 1950s, when the science of linguistics was greatly affected by Behaviorism, considering learning as a habitual development process. As a result, transfer from the native language marked a sort of L1 habit influence on L2 acquisition. L1 interference is a serious challenge for persons who are learning a second language. According to Fries (1945), both L2 theory and pedagogy require comparisons between a learner's native language and the target language. Lado (1957) also emphasized the importance of the original tongue, citing it as a significant factor. The relevance of the original language was again emphasized, as it is a primary source of failure in L2 learning. As a way of explaining the role of L1 in L2 learning, he suggested the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH). According to this hypothesis, L2 learners' productive and receptive skills are influenced by their L1 patterns, and similarities and contrasts between L1 and L2 are major determinants of L2 learning ease and difficulty.

Many people, both linguists and non-linguists, have been drawn to the phenomenon of language transfer. This phenomenon has received a lot of attention from several researchers who have developed multiple approaches (CAH and EA). Linguistically, transfer refers to the application or generalization of a learner's original language (L1) knowledge to aid in the use and comprehension of a second language (L2) (Fries, 1945). In applied linguistics, second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and language instruction, language transfer has recently been a major topic.

### 1.3.1. Definition

Language transfer is a term used when the linguistic features of one language influence those of another language. There are numerous synonyms and meanings for first language transfer, such as "cross meaning" interference, "L1 interference," "Linguistic interference," and "Cross linguistic impact." When a learner applies the norms and forms of a first language to a second language, this is known as language transfer. Odlin (1989 , p.27) defines the term 'transfer' as "the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired"

The Term "Transfer" is defined by Weinreich (1953,p.1) as "those instances of deviation from the norms of either language that accumulate in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language." However, Corder (1981) refers to the phenomenon as "mother tongue influence". Corder (1981) emphasized the role of the learner's cultural experience in learning of FL patterns which are different from the learners' culture.

Accordingly , The term "Transfer" refers to taking something from a situation into another one where the context or circumstance is different, initially referring to a negative situation, Ellis ( 1997, p.57) pointed out that , "L1 transfer refers to the influence that the learner's L1 exerts over the acquisition of an L2".

The transfer of one's first language (L1) is seen to be an essential element in second language acquisition (SLA), language teaching, and language learning. The work of two American linguists, Charles Fries and Robert Lado, in the 1940s and 1950s sparked the initial discussion regarding L1 transfer. Lado (1957, p.2), says that

Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to foreign language and culture to foreign language and culture-both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and culture as practiced by natives.

L1 interference is another name for language transfer . “It is the transmission of linguistic traits in a multilingual person's speech. It’s considered as an important characteristic of second language learners” (Odlin, 1989, p. 3). For example, Chinglish (Chinese+English), Japlish (Japanese+English), and Franglais (French+English) can all describe what language transfer means. Odlin (1989) also stated that language transfer can occur at various levels, including linguistic and pragmatic levels.

### **1.3.2. Types of Transfer**

The definition of transfer specifies the various types of transfer. According to Ellis (1994), transfer should be viewed as a broad phrase that encompasses a variety of various types of influence from languages other than the L2. The study of transfer includes errors (negative transfer), facilitation (positive transfer), avoidance of target language forms, and over-use of target language forms. From Ellis’s point of view (1994), there are two types of language transfer : Positive transfer (resulting in correct use of the L2) and negative transfer (resulting in errors).

#### **1.3.2.1. Positive Transfer**

Learners tend to apply their knowledge of the L1 in order to understand certain patterns in the TL; this is referred to as positive transfer. It happens when two languages are similar. In other words, because the L1 and L2 are similar, learning the TL relies on the

learners' prior understanding of the L1. "Positive transfer is the automatic application of L1 structure in L2 performance when the structure in both languages is the same, resulting in proper utterance," (Dulay et al, 1982, p. 97).

### **1.3.2.2. Negative Transfer**

Negative transfer is defined by Osgood (1949), as "the influence of a specific interpolated activity on the retention of previously learnt activity" (as cited in in Ellis, 1997, p. 15). Interference or retro-active transfer are other terms for negative transfer. Learners usually make mistakes because of of this form of transfer. Positive transfer improves learning due to similarities between L1 and L2, while this type hinders learning due to disparities in the TL and NL (Lado, 1957).

### **1.3.3. Error Analysis Approaches**

Many linguists have attempted to conceptualize the EFL learners' errors. The aim of these linguists is to create a systematic approach that helps them to discover the reasons behind these errors and develop strategies to minimize them. To this end, two dominant approaches have been proposed: Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) and Error Analysis (EA).

#### **1.3.3.1. Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis**

Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis is an approach of error analysis proposed by Robert Lado (1957) in his famous book 'Linguistics Across Culture'. Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis was the dominant approach in field of second language acquisition (SLA) in the 1960's and 1970's. This approach maintains that identifying the similarities and the differences between a learner's native language and the foreign language that this learner attempt to acquire is the key to detect the types of errors that this learner is expected to produce. The supporter of this approach assume that the linguistic elements of the foreign language which are similar to the learner's native language are easy for him/her to acquire;

while the linguistic elements of the foreign language which are different from learner's native language are difficult for him/her to acquire (Fries, 1945).

### **1.3.3.2. Error Analysis**

Many linguists, based on scientific researches, argued that contrastive analysis hypothesis can not be used to discover the linguistic elements which are problematic for FL learners and those which are not, and proposed an alternative approach to conceptualize the FL learners' errors. This approach is known as 'Error Analysis' (Fang and Xue-mei, 2007).

Error Analysis was established by Corder and his colleagues in 1960's. This approach has become the dominant approach in the field of second language acquisition since the 1970's. It maintains that the learner's native language is not the only source of the errors that he/she produces while learning a foreign language (Richards and Schmidt, 2002).

Unlike contrastive analysis hypothesis which focuses on establishing the similarities and differences between native language (s) and foreign language (s); Error analysis approach seeks to determine the strategies that FL learners follow to acquire foreign language, explore the reasons behind these FL learners' errors, to collect information about the common difficulties that FL learners usually face when they learn foreign language (Richards and Schmidt, 2002).

### **1.3.3.3. Types of Errors**

Many researchers in the field of second language acquisition have concluded that FL learners' errors can be grouped into two main categories: Interlingual and intralingual errors.

- **Interlingual Errors**

Interlingual errors refer to the errors that FL learners produced when they transfer rules from their native language. Learners of foreign language may transfer different linguistic elements from their native language like sounds, content words, function words, grammatical

rules...etc. various researchers ( Keshavarze, 1994 ; James ,1998) (as cited in Sabbah, 2005 ) have designed, based on the type of the linguistic elements that FL learners transfer from their native language, a taxonomy of error analysis

- **Phonological errors:** Transferring sounds from native language to foreign language,
- **Grammatical errors :** Transferring prepositions, determiners, singular/plural forms, tenses, articles from native language to foreign language
- **Syntactical errors :** Transferring word order from native language to foreign language
- **Lexical errors :** Transferring content words, like verbs, adjectives, adverbs, nouns from native language to foreign language
- **Substance errors :** Transferring stylistic elements, punctuation, and spelling from native language to foreign language.
- **Morphological errors:** Transferring affixes, prefixes, and suffixes from native language to foreign language

- **Intralingual Errors**

Intralingual errors refer to the errors that FL learners produce because of their false application of the target language's rules. In this type, FL learners misuse some rules of the foreign language they are acquiring.

#### **1.4. Conclusion**

This chapter presents the definition of idioms and idiomaticity, the types of idiomatic expressions, the role of culture in creating and interpreting these expressions, the relationship, and the relationship between idiomatic expressions and figurative speech. This chapter also examines some of the theoretical perspectives on language transfer and error analysis approaches.

**Chapter Two**

**Research Methodology**

## **2.1. Overview**

This chapter presents the research protocol followed to collect the data. It describes in details the research methodology used to conduct this research. The chapter highlights the aim of the present study and illustrates the research designs. Moreover, the chapter describes the participants involved in this study and the reasons behind choosing them. Furthermore, it describes the research tool used to collect the data and details the process of data collection. Besides, the chapter presents the criteria used to analyze the data.

## **2.2. Research Aim**

As stated in the general introduction, the aim of this research is to determine the extent to which the EFL master students at Ibn Khaldoun University have mastered the English idioms. This study seeks to determine the type of English idioms which is easy for the EFL master students to learn, and the type of idioms which is difficult for them, and to find out the linguistic elements that EFL master students transfer from their L1 into English when they use English idioms.

## **2.3. Research Design**

To conduct this research, the researchers followed the quantitative approach. According to Casebeer and Verhoef (1997, p.131), quantitative research refers to “the numerical representation and manipulation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect”

The quantitative approach was used to quantify precisely the numbers of the EFL master students who master the English idioms, the number of EFL master students who find difficulties in learning English idioms, and the number of the students who transfer some linguistic elements from Arabic into English. To this end, a questionnaire was distributed to a



sample consisting of 100 EFL master students who were asked to translate 27 idioms from Arabic into English.

## 2.4. Participants

Cohen et al. (2007) argued that in order to conduct a research that represents the whole population, researchers must select a valid sample. To obtain accurate and reliable results, a group of 72 EFL master students from Ibn Khaldoun University have been randomly selected to be the representative sample of the study. We have selected EFL master students because students, at this advanced level, are supposed to know more about the English idioms and the translation techniques. It is worth mentioning that the sample consists of master one and master two students. Table (1) below provides a detailed description of our chosen sample, including the participants' level, specialty, gender, and number.

**Table (1): The number of the participants**

	Master one				Master two			
Specialty	Linguistics		Didactics		Linguistics		Didactics	
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Number	10	22	4	1	9	19	4	3

## 2.5. Methods of Data Collection

### 2.5.1. Questionnaire

Questionnaire is one of the famous research methods that many researchers rely on to collect valid and reliable data. Questionnaires refer to “any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answer” (Brown 2001, p.6). Questionnaires are used for a number of reasons. They might be used to obtain information and views, or to attempt to justify/quantify impressions.

To obtain valid results, the researchers designed the questionnaire in a specific way. The questionnaire used in the present research includes 27 Arabic idioms which are classified into three important sections. Each section consists of nine Arabic idioms.

- **Section One: Identical Idioms ( the same form, the same meaning)**

This section is devoted to identical idioms. It includes nine Arabic idioms which have the exact counterparts in English. That is, the Arabic idioms used in this section have the same form and meaning as their counterparts in the English Language. Table (2) below shows the identical idioms used in the first section.

**Table (2): Identical Idioms**

Section 1: Identical Idioms
على طرف لسانه /ʔala ʔarafi lisa:nihi/
لا دخان بدون نار /la : duxa :an bidu :ni na :r/
كل الطرق تؤدي إلى روما /kul ʔaʔʔuruq tuʔaddi : ʔila ru :ma/
لا تحكم على الكتاب من غلافه /la: taħkum ʔala ʔalkita:bi min ʔila:fihi/
التقط أنفاسه / ʔiltaqaʔa ʔanfa :sahu/.

عش ودع غيرك يعيش /ʔiʃ wadaʔ ʔajraka jaʔi:ʃ/
يقرا ما بين السطور //jaqraʔu ma:bajna ʔaʃʃutu:ri/
بين نارين / baina na:rajni/
زلة لسان //zalatu lisa:nin/

- **Section Two: Similar Idioms ( slightly different wording, the same meaning)**

Section two is dedicated to similar idioms. It includes nine Arabic idioms. These idioms have their counterparts in English. Unlike the idioms of the first section, the Arabic idioms used in section two have the same meaning as their counterparts in the English Language but they are slightly differently worded. Table (3) below reveals the similar idioms used in the second section.

**Table (3): Similar Idioms**

Section two : Similar idoms
قرة عين /qurrata ʔajn/
الصديق وقت الضيق /ʔaʃʃadi:q waqta ʔdd:q/
الطيور على إشكالها تقع /ʔaʃʃuju:r ʔala ʔaʃka:liha: taqaʔ/
ولد وفي فمه ملعقة من ذهب /wulida wa fi: famihi: milʔaqatun min ḏahab/
للضرورة أحكام /liḏaru:rati ʔahka:m/
اللبيب بالإشارة يفهم /ʔallabibu bilʔiʃa:rati jafhamu/
يضرب عصفورين بحجر واحد /jadribu ʔuʃʃfu:rajni bi: ḥaḏʒarin wa:ḥid/
يصطاد في المياه العكرة /jaʃʃa:du fi: ʔalmija:hi ʔalʔakira/
الجوع امهر الطباخين /ʔaldzuʔ ʔamharu ʔaʃʃaba:xin/

- **Section Three: Different Idioms ( different form, same meaning)**

Section three is devoted to different idioms. It includes nine Arabic idioms. These idioms do not have their exact counterparts in English. The meanings of the Arabic idioms used in this section can be described using English idioms which have totally different forms. Table (4) below reveals the different idioms used in the third section.

**Table (4): Different idioms**

<b>Section Three : Different idioms</b>
يقوم الدنيا ويقدها /juqi:mu ?adunjia: wa juq?iduha/
هذا الشبل من ذلك الاسد /ha: ða: ?aʃʃibel min ða :lika ?al?asad/
على قدر بساطك مد رجلك /?ala qader bias:tika mud ridʒli:k/
عاد بخفي حنين / ?a :da bixufaj hunajn/
يزيد الطين بلة /jazi:du ?atʃi:na bilatan/
يصنع من الحبة قبة /Jaʃna?u mina ?alḥabati qubatan/
افشي السر /?aʃfa ?assir/
كالمستجير من الرمضاء بالنار /kalmustadzi:r mina ?alramða?i binna:ri/
الملدوغ يخاف من جرة الحبل /?almaldu:ʃ jaxa:fu min dʒarati ?alḥabli/

## 2.6. Methods of Data Analysis

To analyze the data, the researchers created, based on the strategies that participants used to translate the Arabic idioms, a set of criteria:

1. Provide the the exact equivalent English idiom.
2. Provide the equivalent English idiom+ interfering L1's rules.
3. Provide Word for word translation.

4. Provide the meaning of the idiom without giving the correct idiom.
5. Provide no translation.

These criteria were used to classify and analyze the participants' results, and to determine, therefore, the extent to which EFL master students have mastered the English idioms.

## **2.7. Conclusion**

The present chapter gives a details the process of data collection. It introduces the aim of the study, the research design, the participants involved in this study and the reasons behind selecting them. It also presents the research instruments used to collect the data, and presnts the design of the questionnaire and methods of data analysis.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Results and Discussion**

### **3.1. Overview**

The third chapter is devoted to present and analyze the results obtained from the EFL master students to show the extent to which these students have master the English idioms, the type of English idioms which is easy for them to learn, and the type of English idioms which is difficult for them, and the cases of language transfer. The data obtained are presented and analyzed in relation to the criteria mention in the previous chapter.

### **3.2. Data Analysis**

To analyze the data, three sections are developed. Each section is used to analyze one type of idioms. Section one is used to analyze identical idioms. Section two is devoted to discuss similar idioms. Section three is dedicated to examine different idioms. The English idioms obtained from EFL master students are classified, according to the strategies the students used to produce these idioms, into five categories: (1) the exact equivalent idiom, (2) the right equivalent idiom+ interfering L1's rules, (3) word for word translation, (4) the meaning of the idiom, (5) no transaltion.

It is worthmentionning that, each Arabic idiom is presented and described using its exact equivalent English idiom.

### 3.2.1. Identical Idioms

**Table (5) : Percentage of Translating Identical idioms from Arabic into English**

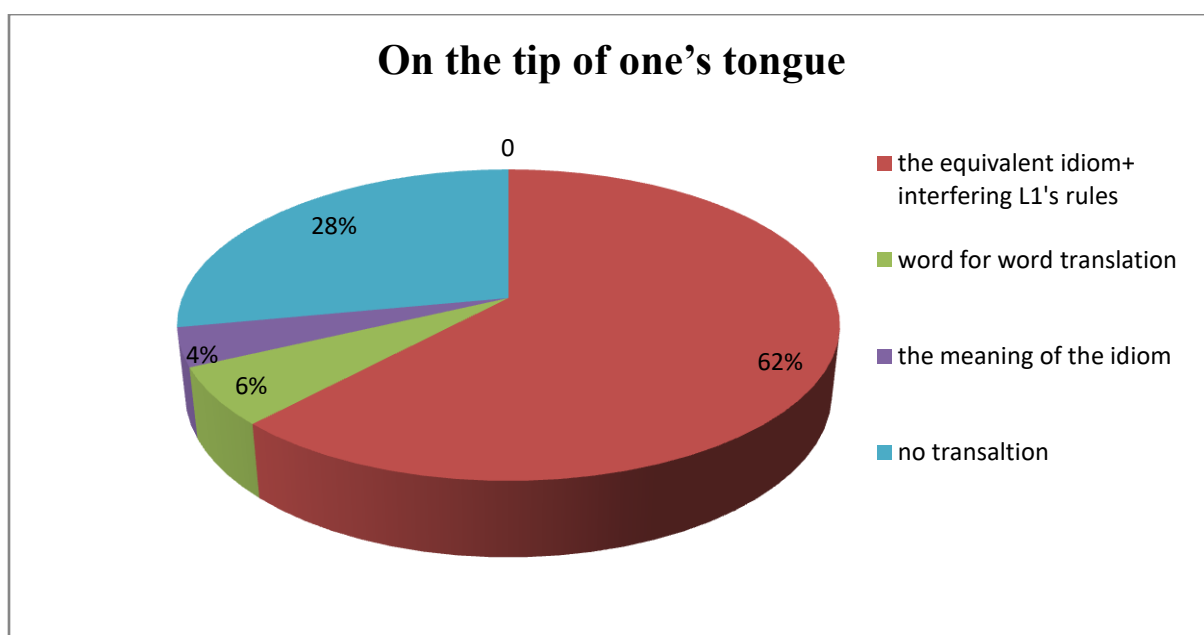
Identical Idioms	The exact equivalent idiom	The equivalent idiom+ interfering L1's rules	Word for word translation	The meaning of the idiom	No translation
On the tip of one's tongue	0%	62%	6%	4%	28%
No smoke without fire	86%	0%	0%	7%	7%
All roads lead to Rome	52%	21%	21%	6%	0%
Do not judge a book by its cover	46%	36%	6%	6%	6%
Take a breath	72%	0%	18%	3%	7%
Live and let live	11%	0%	72%	6%	11%
Read between lines	44%	42%	4%	10%	0%
Between two fires	37%	0%	31%	17%	15%
Slip of the tongue	66%	0%	3%	6%	25%
Totale percentage	<b>46%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>11%</b>

Table (5) clearly indicates that 46% of the EFL master students find the exact English idioms of the nine Arabic idioms which are identical to English. The table also shows that



18% of these students find the right equivalent idioms, but they transfer some linguistic elements from their first language (Arabic) into English. Moreover, the results demonstrate that 18% of the participants translate the identical idioms literally (word for word translation). Only 7% of the EFL master students translate the meanings of these idioms, and 11% of them do not translate the Arabic idioms at all.

### 1. On the tip of one's tongue

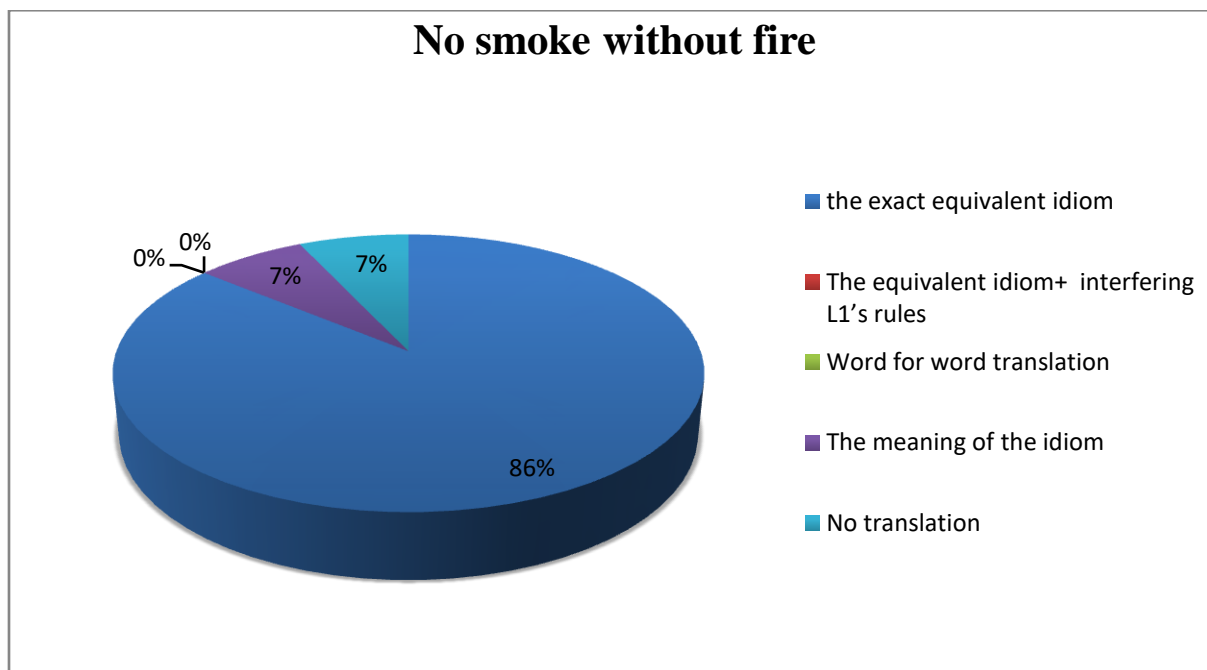


**Figure 01: Identical idiom 01**

The English idiom 'on the tip of one's tongue' is identical to the Arabic idiom 'على طرف لسانه' /ʔala ʔarafɪ lisa:nihi/. Figure (1) shows that no student succeeds in finding the English identical idiom 'on the tip of one's tongue'. The majority of the students (62%) use the equivalent English idiom and interfere some elements from L1 (Arabic). Most of the students, instead of using 'one's', they use the possessive determiners 'his', or 'its'. Besides, they use the prepositions 'in' or 'at' instead of using 'on'. The figure also shows that 28% of the participants do not translate the Arabic idiom 'على طرف لسانه' /ʔala ʔarafɪ lisa:nihi/.

Furthermore, 6% of the participants give the English equivalent of each word, instead of giving the exact equivalent English idiom, and 4% of them provide the meaning of the Arabic idiom.

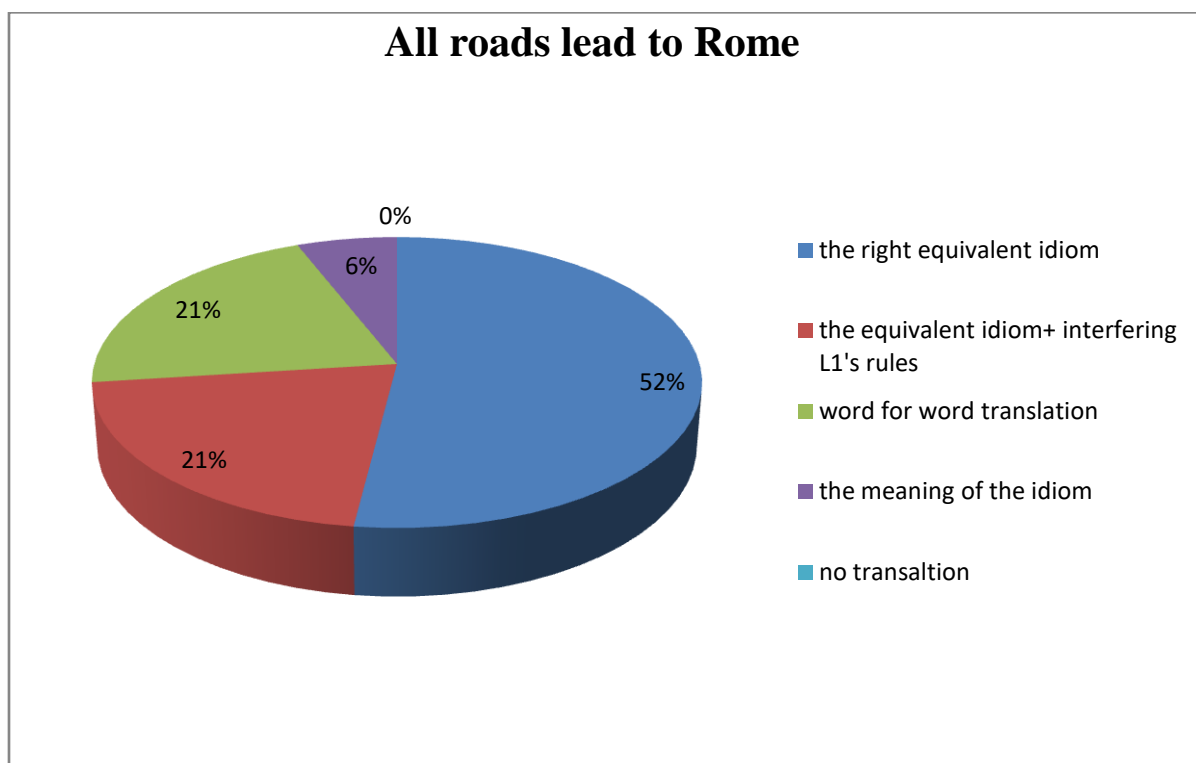
## 2. No smoke without fire



**Figure 02: Identical idiom 02**

The English idiom 'no smoke without fire' is identical to the Arabic idiom 'لا دخان بدون نار' /la : duxa :an bidu :ni na :r/. As figure (2) demonstrates, the majority of the students succeed in finding the the exact equivalent English idiom of the Arabic idiom 'لا دخان بدون نار' //la : duxa :an bidu :ni na :r/. Only 7% of the participants give the meaning of the idiom instead of providing the exact equivalent idiom. However, 7% of the EFL master students do not translate the Arabic idiom at all.

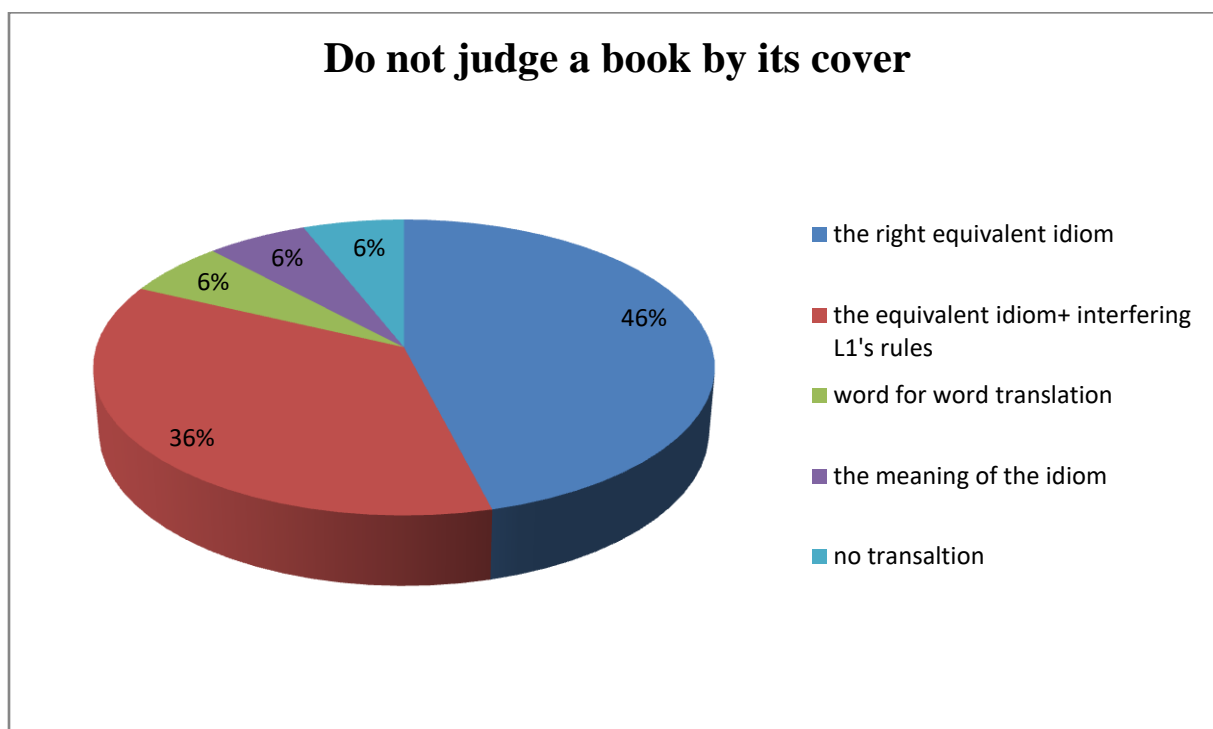
### 3. All roads lead to Rome



**Figure 03: Identical idiom 03**

The English idiom ‘all roads lead to Rome’ is identical to the Arabic idiom ‘ كل الطرق تؤدي الى روما ’ /kul ?aṭṭuruq tu?addi : ?ila ru :ma/. The idiomatic expression “all roads lead to Rome” is a commonly and frequently used one, yet, as it is shown in figure (03), only 52% of the EFL master students are able to find it. 21% of these students use the equivalent English idiom, but they transfer some linguistic elements from their first language. Some students add the determiner ‘the’ to the word ‘roads’. Other students use the verbs ‘ go’, ‘take’, and ‘get’ instead of using the verb ‘ lead’. Other students use the word ‘ path’ and ‘way’ instead of the word ‘ roads’. The figure also reveals that 21% of the participants use the literal meaning of each word, while only 6% provide the meaning of the Arabic idiom ‘ كل الطرق تؤدي الى روما ’ /kul ?aṭṭuruq tu?addi : ?ila ru :ma/, instead of giving the exact equivalent English idiom.

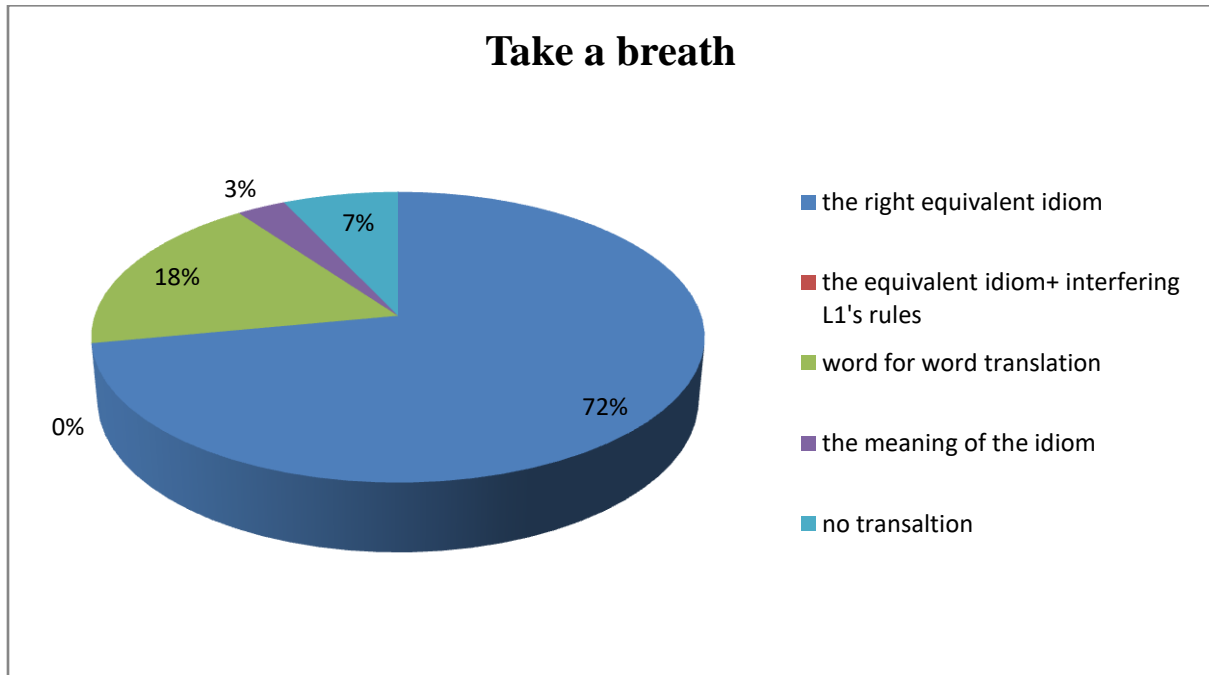
#### 4. Do not judge a book by its cover



**Figure 04: Identical idiom 04**

The English idiom ‘do not judge a book by its cover’ is identical to the Arabic idiom ‘لا تحكم على الكتاب من غلافه’ /la: taḥkum ʔala ʔalkita:bi min ɣila:fihi/. The English idiom “do not judge a book by its cover” is also a commonly and frequently used expression, but, as figure (4) shows, only 46% of EFL master students find the exact idiom. However, 36% of them interfere some linguistic elements from L1. They use the determiner ‘the’ instead of ‘a’, and the possessive determiner ‘his’ instead of ‘its’. Moreover, they use the preposition ‘from’ instead of ‘by’. The figure also shows that 6% of the EFL master students give the literal meaning of each word. Besides, 6% of them provide the meaning of the idiom, and 6% do not translate the idiom at all.

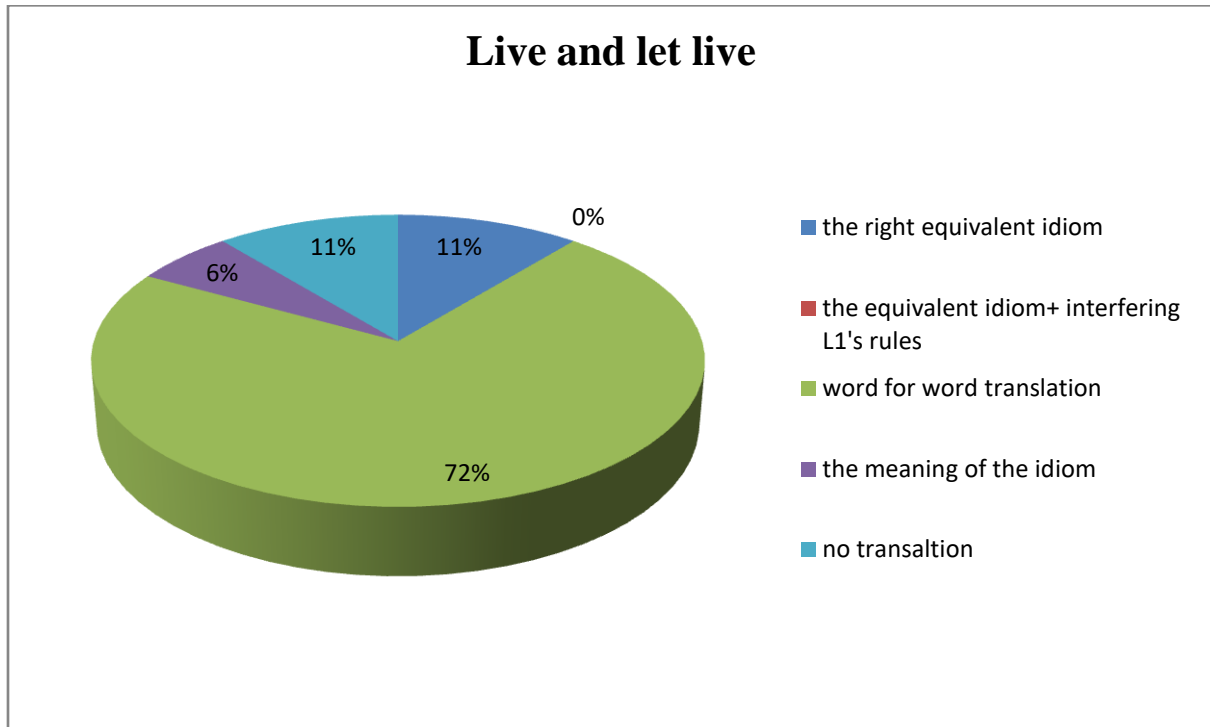
## 5. Take a breath



**Figure 05: Identical idiom 05**

The English idiom ‘take a breath’ is identical to the Arabic idiom ‘التقط أنفاسه’ / ?iltaqāṭa ?anfa :sahu/. Figure (5) reveals that 72% of EFL master students succeed in finding the exact equivalent English idiom ‘take a breath’. However, 18% of these students use some linguistic elements from their first language. They use words like ‘hold’ and ‘catch’ instead of ‘take’. The figure also indicates that 7% of the participants do not translate the Arabic idiom ‘التقط أنفاسه’, some of these students provide wrong translation. They use ‘he died’. It seems that these students mix between the Arabic idiom ‘التقط أنفاسه’ / ?iltaqāṭa ?anfa :sahu/, which means ‘take a breath’ and ‘لفظ انفاسه’ /lafāḍa ?anfa :sahu/ which denotes ‘he dies’.

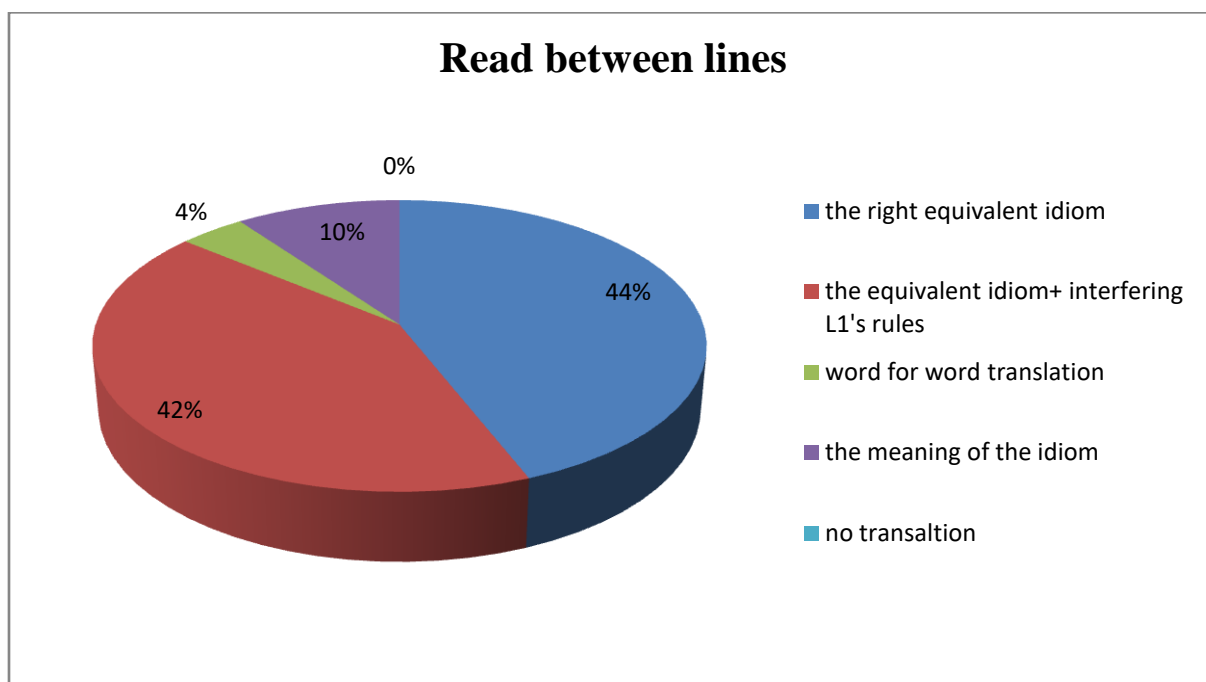
## 6. Live and let live



**Figure 06: Identical idiom 06**

The English idiom "live and let live" is identical to the Arabic idiom 'عش ودع غيرك يعيش' /ʔiʃ wadaʔ ɣajraka jaʔi:f/. The results in figure (6) demonstrates that only 11 % of the EFL master students succeed to find this idiom, while 72% of them use the literal meaning of each word instead of giving the exact equivalent English. Moreover, 11% of the participants do not translate the idiom, while only 6% of them provide the meaning of the Arabic idiom 'عش ودع غيرك يعيش' /ʔiʃ wadaʔ ɣajraka jaʔi:f/.

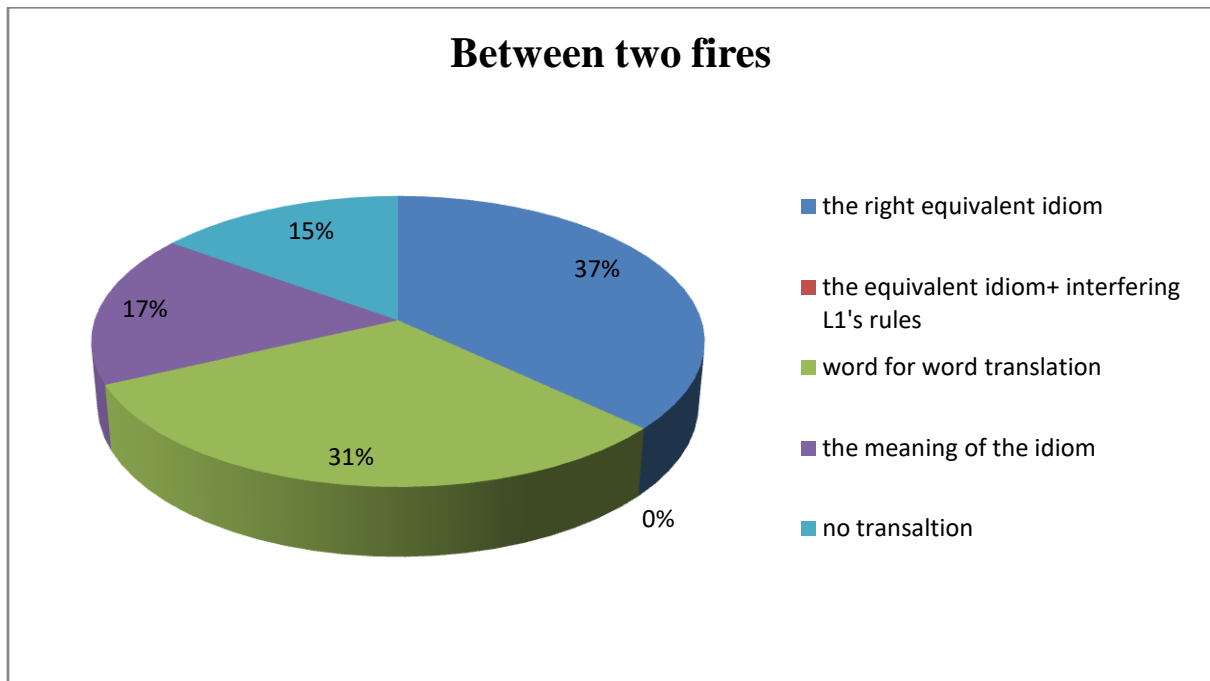
## 7. Read between lines



**Figure 07: identical idiom 07**

The English idiom 'read between lines' is identical to the Arabic idiom 'يقرأ ما بين السطور' .  
/jaqra?u ma:bajna ?aššutu:ri/. Figure (7) shows that 44% of EFL master students find the exact equivalent English idiom 'read between lines'. However, 42% of them transfer some linguistic elements from their first Language into English. Most of these students use the definite article 'the' before the word 'line'. The figure also reveals that 10% of the participants use the English meaning of the Arabic idiom instead of providing the exact equivalent idiom. They use expressions like "clever" or "smart person".

## 8. Between two fires

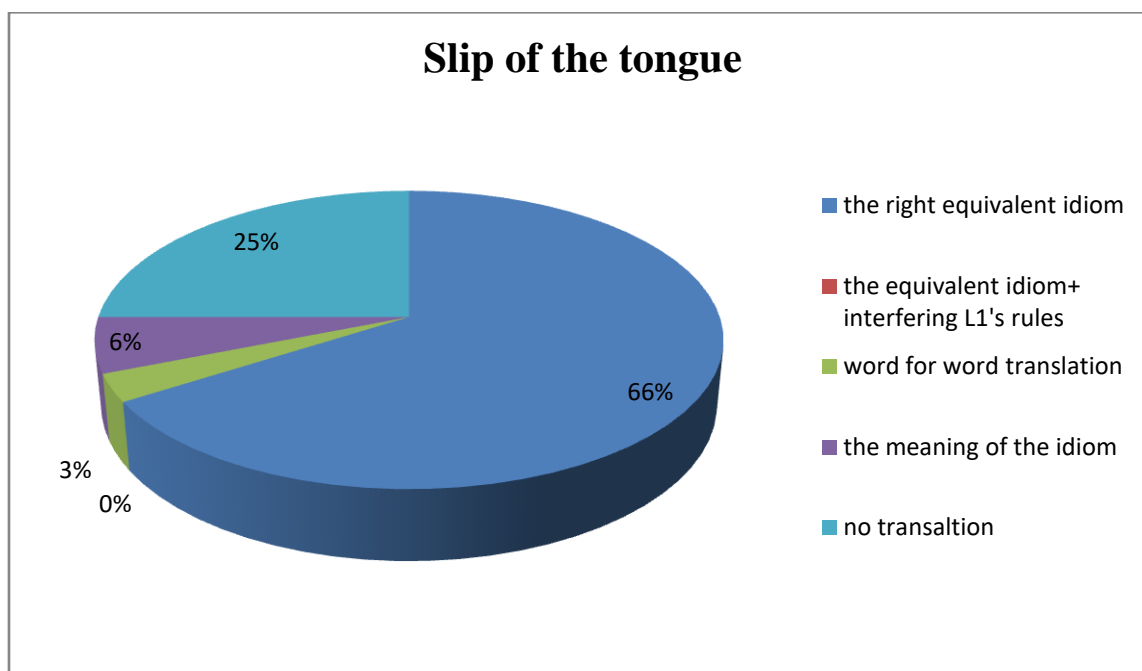


**Figure 08: Identical idiom 8**

The English idiom “between two fires” is the exact counterpart of the Arabic idiom “بين نارين” /baina na:rajni/. From figure (8) above, it is clear that 37% of EFL master students are able to find this English idiom. Yet 31% of these students use the literal meanings of the words. Moreover the figure shows that 17% of the participants provide the meaning of the idiom instead of using the exact equivalent English idiom, while 15% of them do not translated the idiom at all.



## 9. Slip of the tongue



**Figure 09: identical idiom 09**

The English idiom ‘ slip of the tongue is identical to the Arabic idiom ‘ زلة لسان’ /zalatu lisa:nin/.As it is shown in the figure (09), most of EFL master students (66%) give the exact equivalent English idiom. However, 25% of them do not translate the Arabic idiom. Moreover, only 6% of the participants provide the meaning of the idiom, while only 3% of them use the literal meaning of each word.

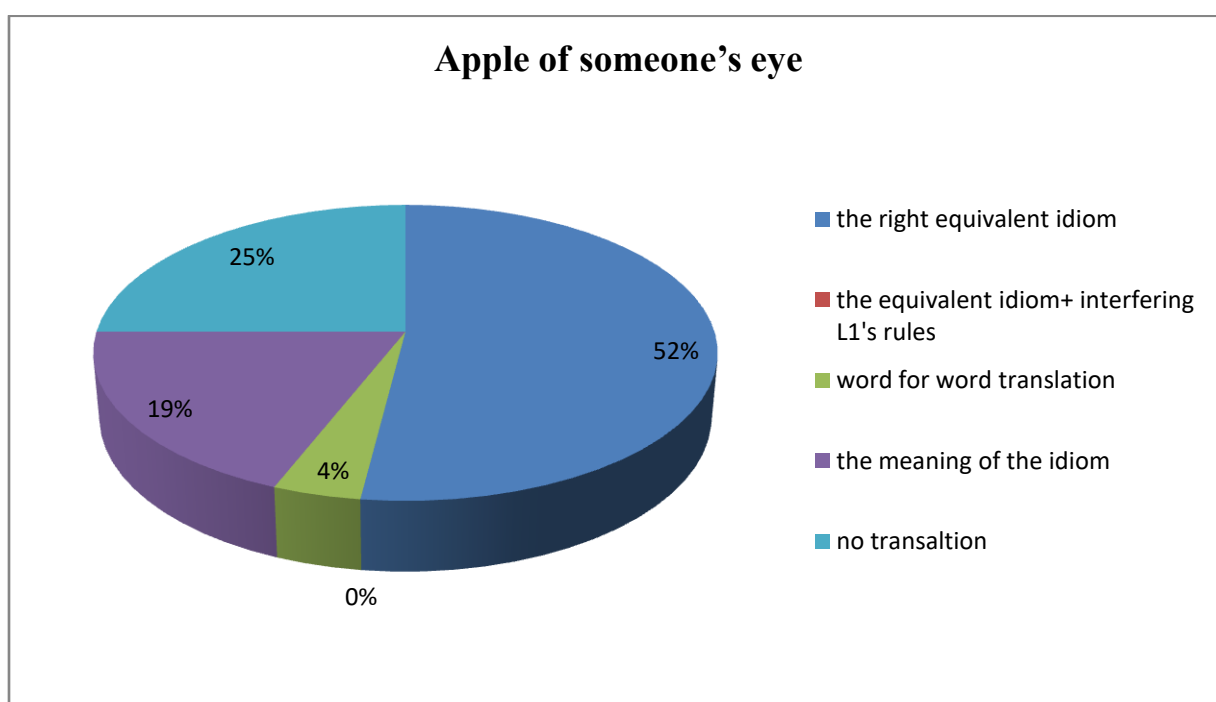
### 3.2.2. Similar Idioms

**Table (6) : Percentage of translating similar idioms from Arabic into English**

Similar Idioms	The exact equivalent idiom	The equivalent idiom+ interfering L1's rules	Word for word translation	The meaning of the idiom	No translation
Apple of (someone's) eye	52%	0%	4%	19%	25%
A friend in need is friend indeed	47%	0%	14%	31%	8%
Birds of a feather block together	17%	0%	44%	8%	31%
To be born with a silver spoon in one's moth	4%	0%	51%	25%	20%
Necessity knows no laws	12%	0%	27%	25%	36%
A word to the wise is enough	3%	0%	31%	25%	41%
To kill two birds with one stone	3%	0%	58%	17%	22%
To fish in troubled waters	6%	1%	46%	4%	43%
Hanger is best sauce	0%	0%	58%	8%	34%
<b>Totale percentage</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>27%</b>

It is clear from table (6) above that 16% of the EFL master students find the exact English idioms of the nine Arabic idioms which are similar to English. Only 1% of these students find the right equivalent idioms, but they transfer some linguistic elements from their first language (Arabic) into English. The table also reveals that 38% of the participants translate the idioms literally (word for word translation), and 18% of them translate the meaning of the idioms. Moreover, 27% of these participants do not translate the idioms at all.

### 10. Apple of someone's eye

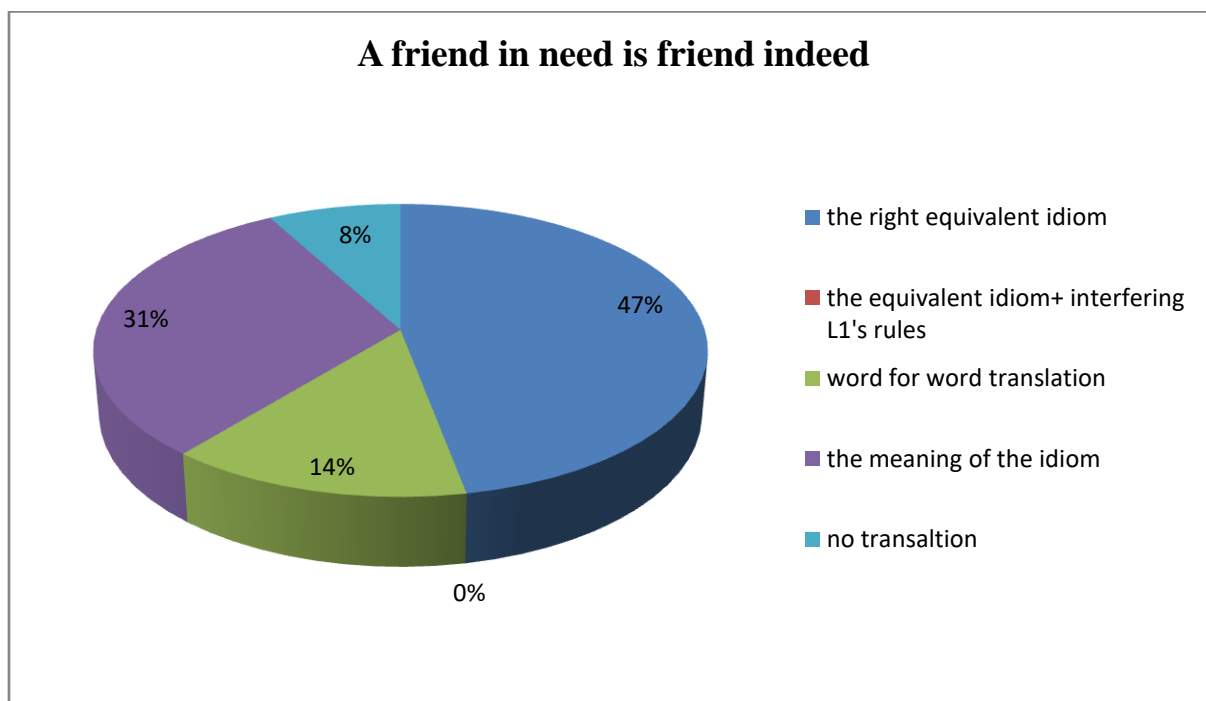


**Figure 10: Similar idiom 01**

The English idiom 'apple of someone's eye' is similar to the Arabic idiom 'قرفة عين' /qurrata ʔajn/. The two idioms have the same meaning but they are slightly differently worded. The above figure shows clearly that an acceptable number (52%) of the EFL master students are able to perfectly interpret and translate the above idiom into its exact English equivalent. Yet, 25% of the sample either avoid translating it or render it incorrectly

in TL. The figure also indicates that 19% of the participants provide the meaning of the Arabic idiom instead of giving the exact equivalent English idiom. These participants use words like ‘dearset’, ‘darling’, and ‘sweetheart’. Finally, 4% of the EFL students use word for word translation.

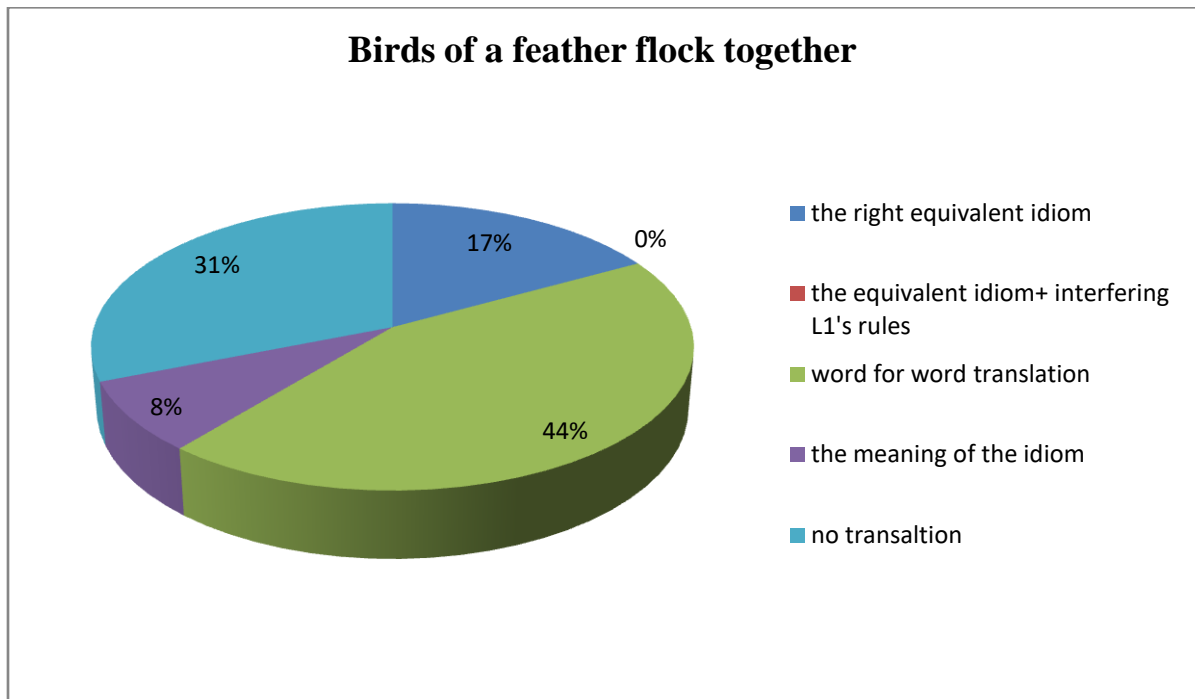
### 11. A friend in need is friend indeed



**Figure 11: Similar idiom 02**

The English idiom ‘a friend in need is friend indeed’ is similar to the Arabic idiom ‘الصديق وقت الضيق’ /ʔaʕʕadi:q waqta ʔd̥d̥:q/. Figure (11) demonstrates that 47% of the EFL master students succeed in finding this idiom. However, 31% of them provide the menaing of the Arabic idiom instead of giving the exact equivalent English idiom. Besides, 14% of the particpnats give the English equivalent of each word ( word for word translation), and 8% provide no translation at all.

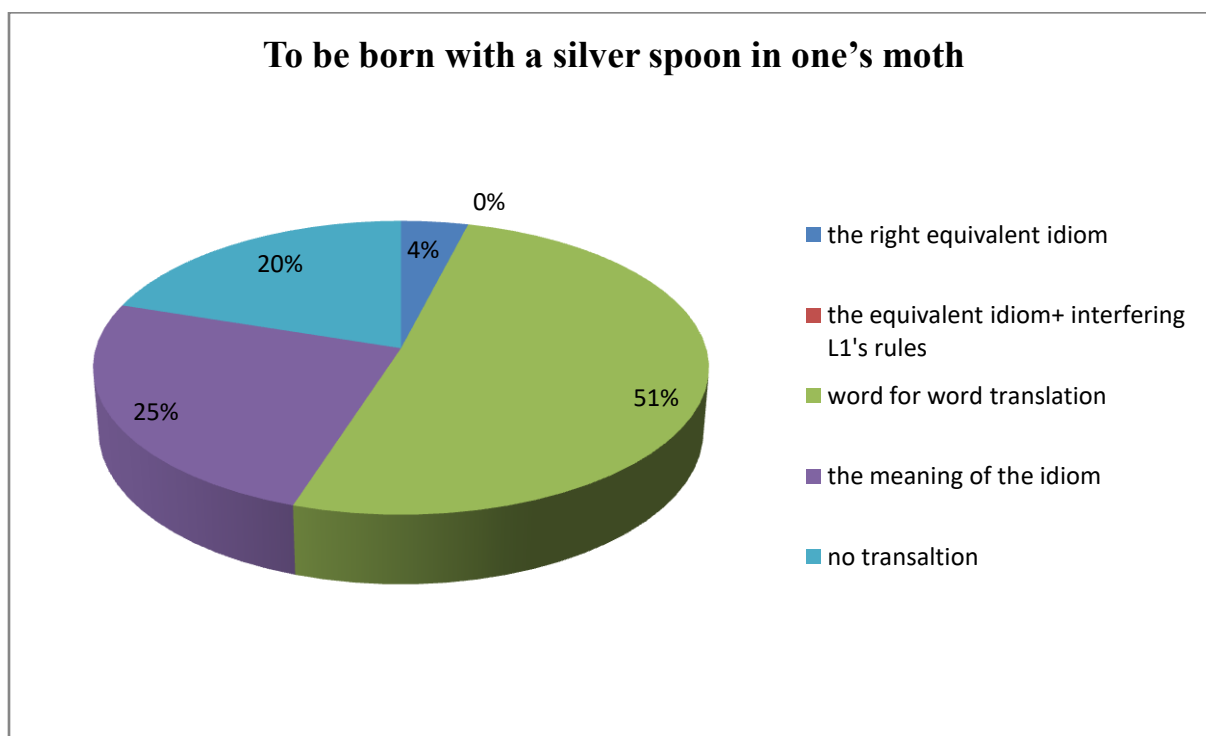
## 12. Birds of a feather flock together



**Figure 12: Similar idiom 03**

The English idiom 'birds of feather flock together' is similar to the Arabic idiom 'الطيور على أشكالها تقع' /ʔaʔtuju:r ʔala ʔafka:liha: taqaʔ/. It is obvious from figure (12) that only 17% of the EFL master students find the exact English idiom. The majority of these students (44%), translate the Arabic idiom 'الطيور على أشكالها تقع' /ʔaʔtuju:r ʔala ʔafka:liha: taqaʔ/ using word for word translation. Besides, 31% of these students do not translate the Arabic idiom, and 8% of them provide the meaning the idiom instead of the giving the exact equivalent English idiom.

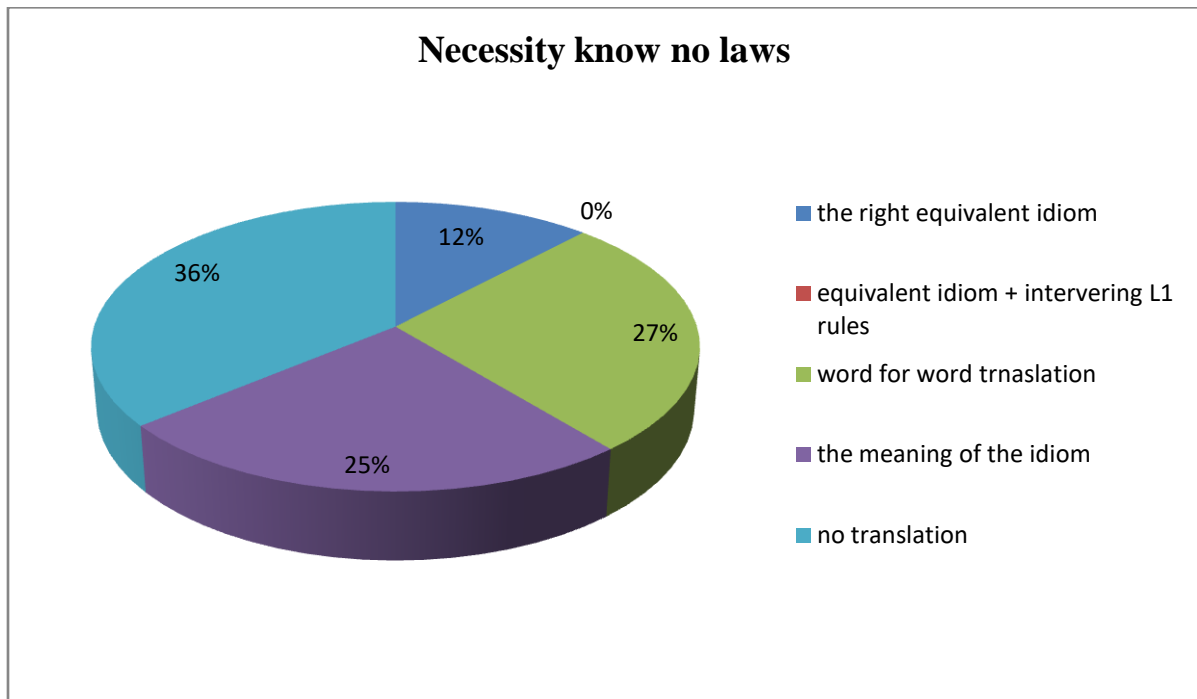
### 13. To be born with a silver spoon in one's moth



**Figure 13: Similar idiom 04**

The English idiom ‘to be born with a silver spoon in one’s moth’ is similar to the Arabic idiom ‘ولد وفي فمه ملعقة من ذهب’ /wulida wa fi: famihi: mil‘aqatun min ḏahab/. Figure (13) reveals that only 4% of the EFL master students succeed to find this English idiom. However, the majority (51%) translate the Arabic idiom literally. Most of these students use the word ‘gold’ instead of using the word ‘silver’. Moreover, 25% of the participants provide the meaning of the idiom “to be born to parents who are rich and have a good social rank”. Furthermore, 20% of these participnats do not translated the idiom.

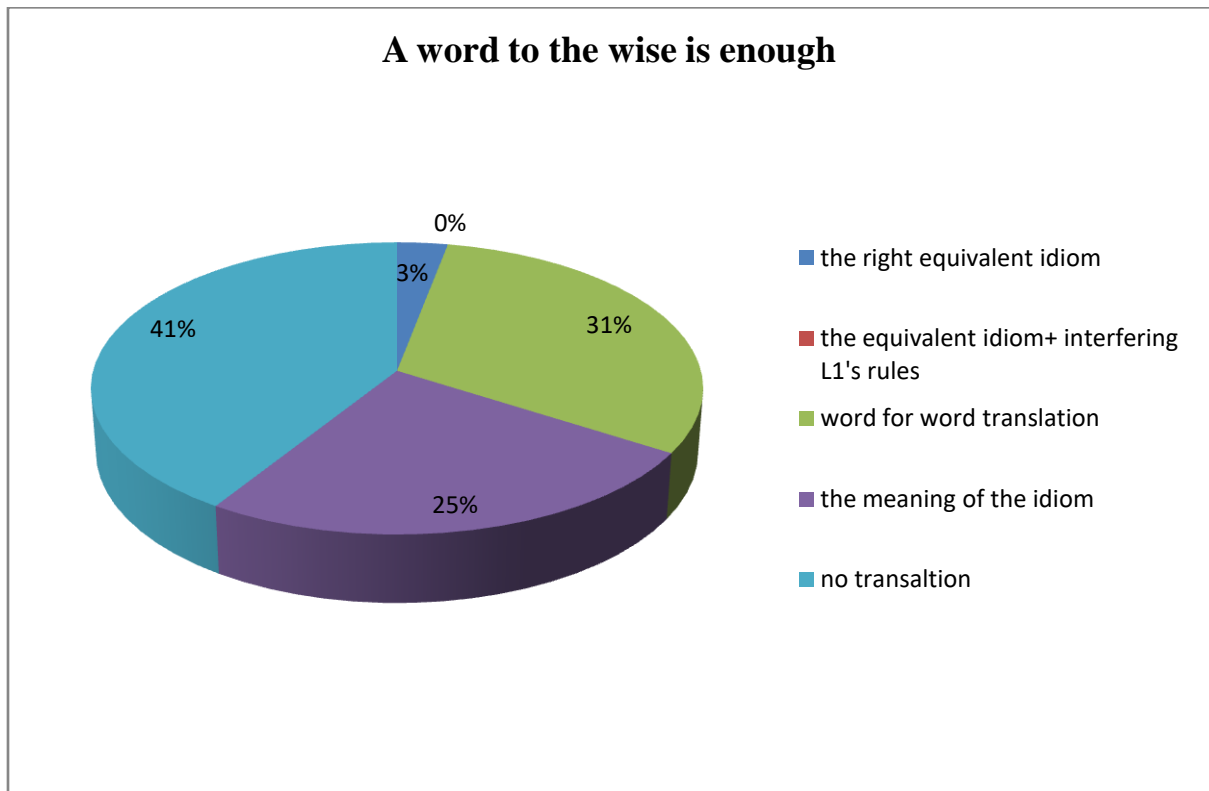
#### 14. Necessity knows no laws



**Figure 14: Similar idioms 05**

The English idiom ‘necessity know no laws’ is similar to the Arabic idiom ‘للضرورة أحكام’ /liḏaru:rati ʔahka:m/. It is obvious from figure (14) that only 12% of the EFL master students find this English idiom. However, 27% of them translate The Arabic idiom ‘للضرورة أحكام’ / liḏaru:rati ʔahka:m/ literally ( “necessity has rules”), while 25% provide the meaning of the idiom instead of giving the exact equivalent English idiom. Besides, 36% of these students do not translate the Arabic idiom at all.

### 15. A word to the wise is enough

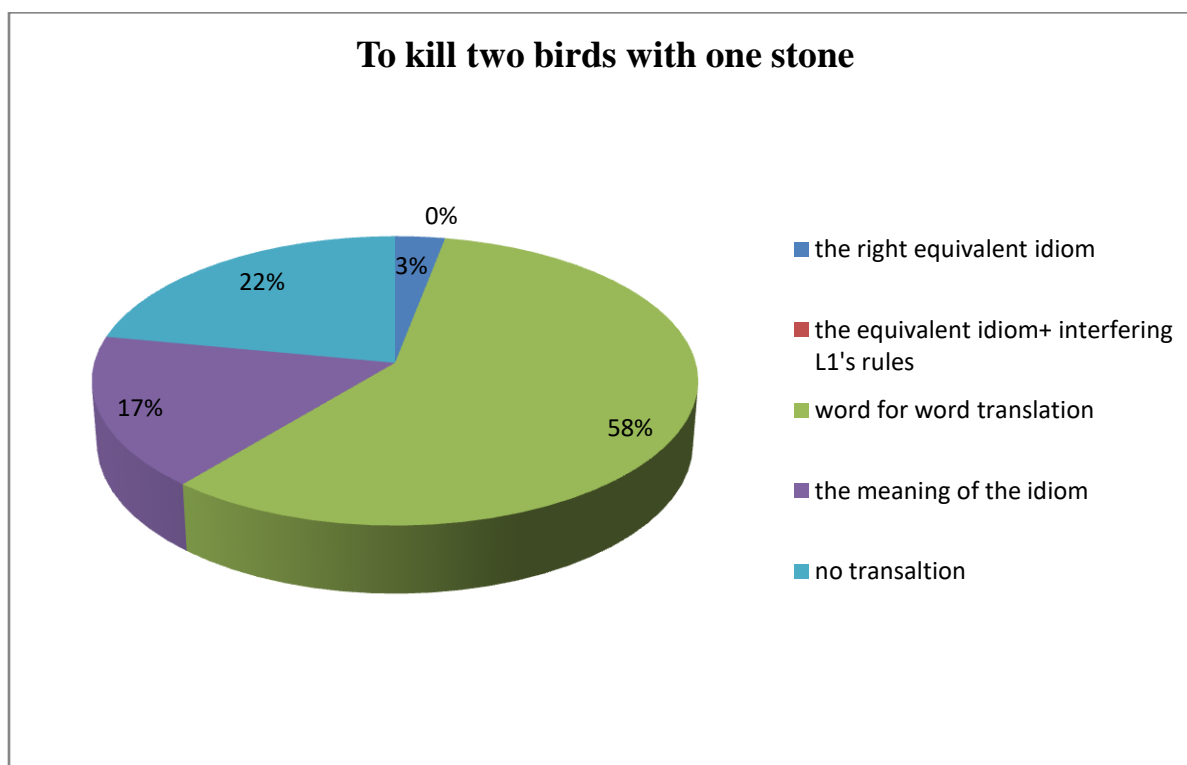


**Figure 15: Similar idiom 06**

The English idiom ‘a word to the wise is enough’ is similar to the Arabic idiom ‘اللبيب بالإشارة يفهم’ /ʔallabibu bilʔifa:rati jafhamu/. Figure (15) shows that only 3% of the EFL master students find the English idiom. However, 31% of the students give the English equivalent of each word, instead of giving the exact equivalent English idiom, and 25% of them provide the meaning of the Arabic idiom. The figure also reveals that 41% of the participants do not translate the Arabic idiom ‘اللبيب بالإشارة يفهم’ /ʔallabibu bilʔifa:rati jafhamu/.



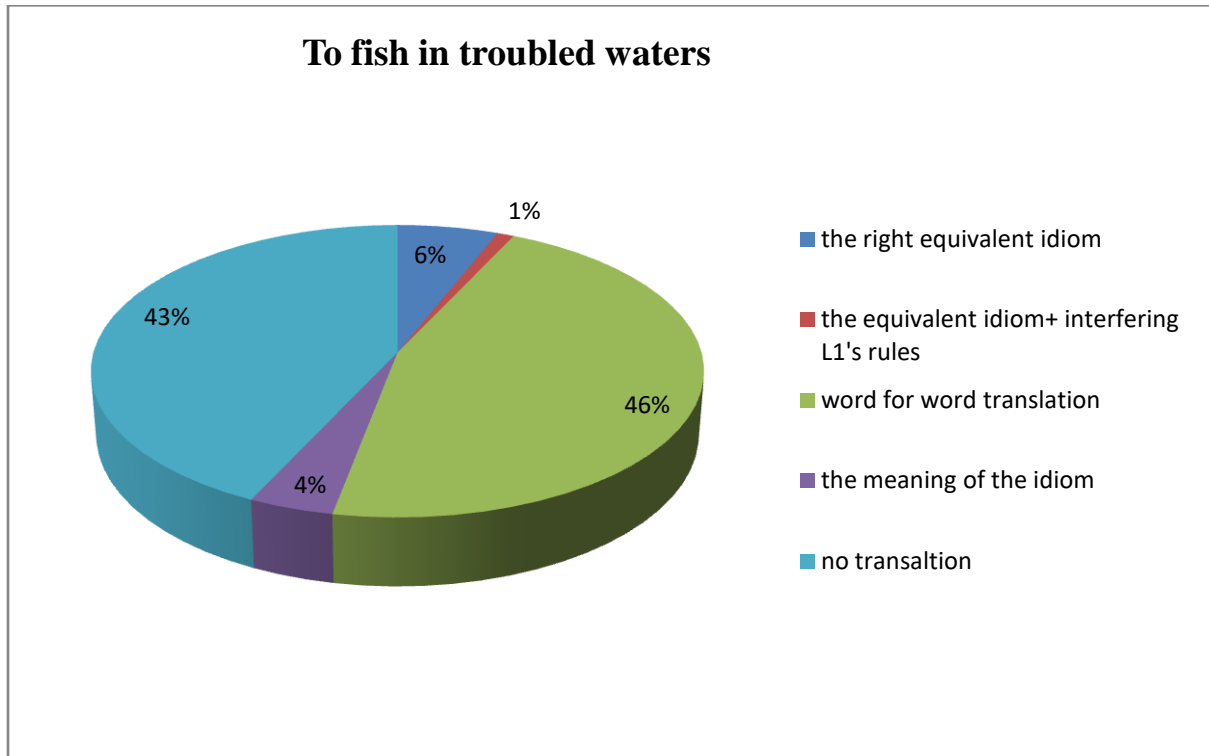
## 16. To kill two birds with one stone



**Figure 16: Similar idiom 07**

The English idiomatic expression “To kill two birds with one stone’ is similar to Arabic idiom ‘يَضْرِبُ عَصْفُورِينَ بِحَجَرٍ وَاحِدٍ’ /jadribu ʔuʃʃfu:rajni bi: ḥadzarin wa:ḥid/. As it shown in figure (16) above, only 3% of the EFL master students succeed to find the exact English idiom. However, 58% of these students give the English equivalent of each word, instead of giving the exact equivalent English idiom, and 17% of them provide the meaning of the Arabic idiom ‘يَضْرِبُ عَصْفُورِينَ بِحَجَرٍ وَاحِدٍ’ /jadribu ʔuʃʃfu:rajni bi: ḥadzarin wa:ḥid/. Besides, 22% of the participants avoid translating this Arabic idiom.

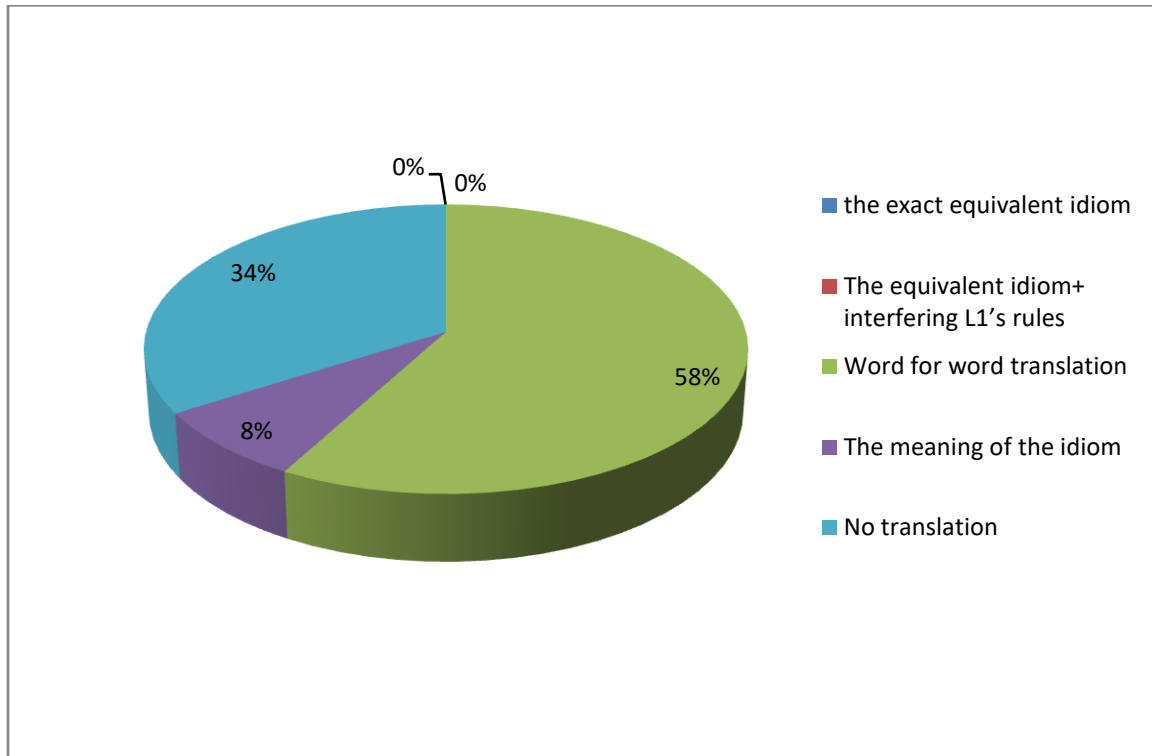
## 17. To fish in troubled waters



**Figure 17: Similar idiom 08**

The English idiom ‘to fish in troubled water’ is similar to the Arabic idiom ‘*يصطاد في المياه العكرة*’/jaṣṭa:du fi: ?almija:hi ?alʕakira/. Figure (17) shows that only 6% of the EFL master students find this English idiom. Only 1% of use the English idiom and interfere some linguistic elements from Arabic. These students use the definit article ‘the’ before the word ‘troubled (to fish in the troubled waters). Figure (17) also reveals that the majority of the students (46%) translate the Arabic idiom ‘*يصطاد في المياه العكرة*’/jaṣṭa:du fi: ?almija:hi ?alʕakira/ literally, and 4% of these students provide the meaning of this idiom. Besides, 43% do not translate the Arabic idiom at all.

## 18. Hanger is the best sauce



**Figure 18: Similar idiom 09**

The English idiomatic expression ‘ hanger is the best sauce’ is similar to the Arabic idiom ‘الجوع امهر الطباخين’ /ʔaldʒuʔ ʔamharu ʔaʔʔaba:xin/. Figure (18) above shows that no EFL master student finds the English idiom. The majority of these students (58%) translate the Arabic idiom ‘الجوع امهر الطباخين’ /ʔaldʒuʔ ʔamharu ʔaʔʔaba:xin/ literally, and 8% of them provide the meaning of the idiom instead of giving the exact equivalent English idiom. Besides, 34% of the participants do not translated the Arabic idiom at all.

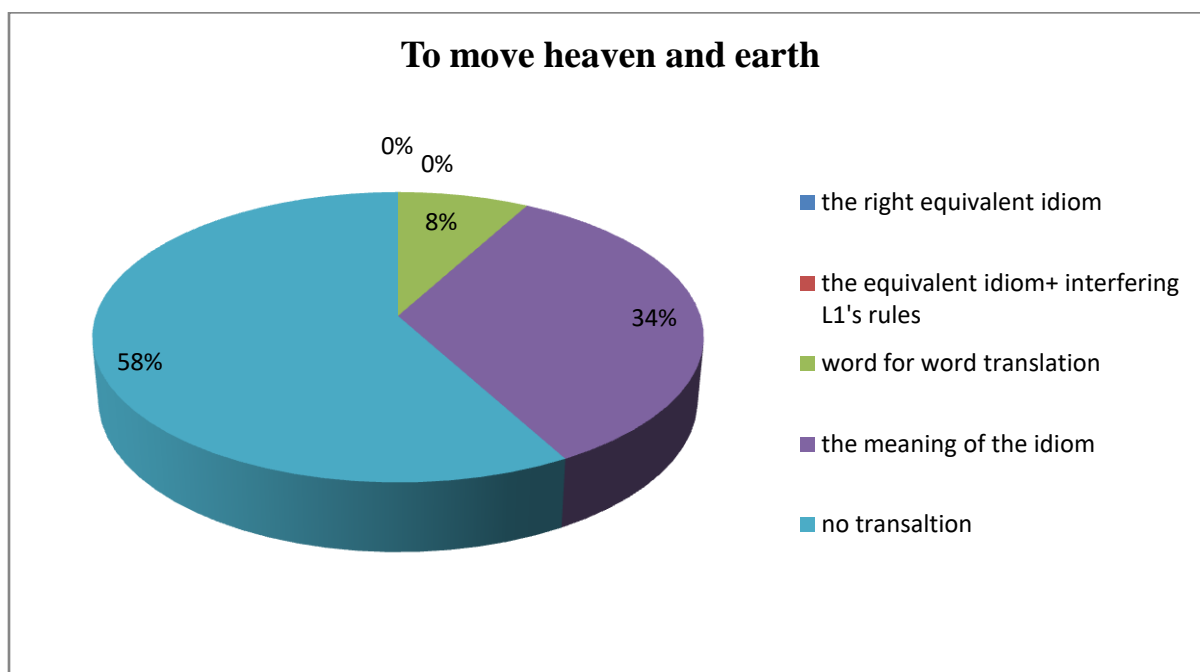
### 3.2.3. Different Idioms

**Table (7) : Percentage of translating similar idioms from Arabic into English**

Similar Idioms	The exact equivalent idiom	The equivalent idiom+ L1's rules interfering	Word for word translation	The meaning of the idiom	No translation
To move heaven and earth	0%	0%	8%	34%	58%
Like father, like son	42%	0%	15%	11%	32%
Cut your coat according to your cloths	0%	0%	12%	44%	44%
Empty handed	27%	0%	6%	6%	61%
To add insult to injury	3%	0%	8%	58%	31%
To make a mountain out of a molehill	3%	0%	4%	41%	52%
Spill the beans	28%	0%	18%	28%	26%
Out of the frying pan into the fire	0%	0%	8%	4%	88%
A burnt child dreads the fire	0%	0%	15%	14%	71%
<b>Total percentage</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>50%</b>

Table (7) presents the percentage of translating a set of Arabic idioms into English. Though the Arabic and the English idioms used in this section have the same meanings the idioms of the two languages have totality different forms. The table shows that only 11% of the EFL master students find the exact equivalent English idioms of the Arabic idioms. Moreover, 10% of these students translate the Arabic idioms using word for word translation, while 29% of them provide the meanings of these idioms. Yet, the majority (50%) does not transl the Arabic idioms at all.

### 19. To move heaven and earth

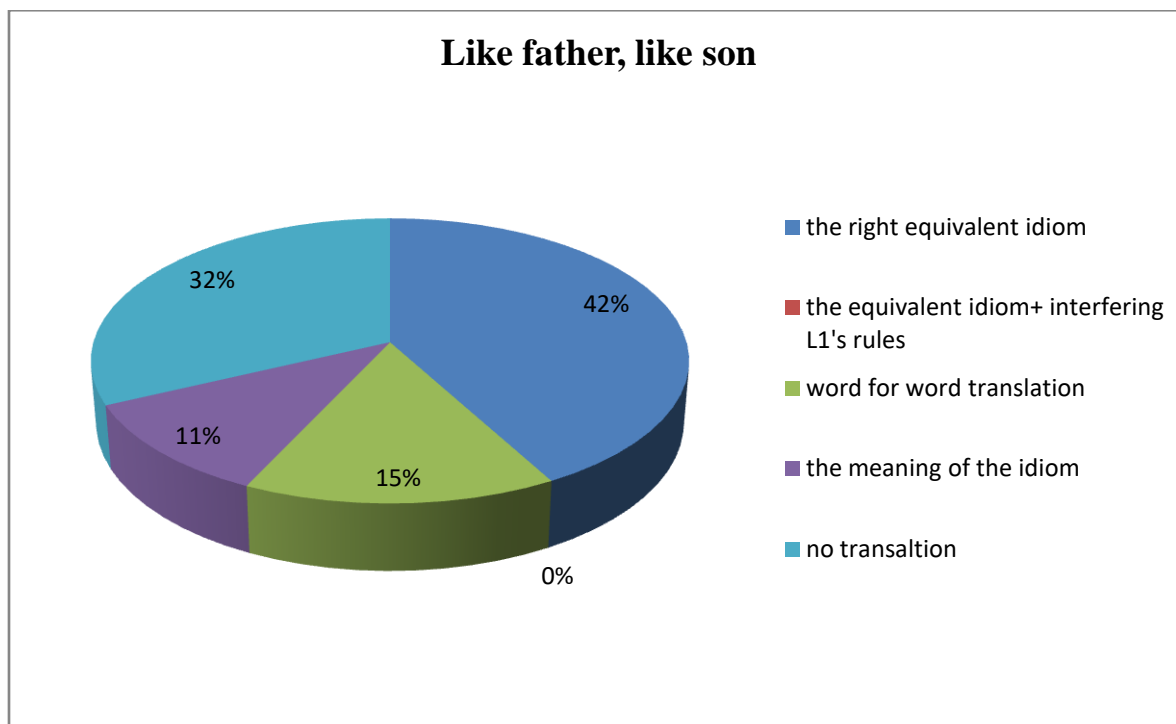


**Figure 19: Different idiom 01**

The English idiom ‘to move heaven and earth’ has the same meaning as the Arabic idiom ‘يقوم الدنيا ويقعدھا’ /juqi:mu ?adunjia: wa juq?iduha/. The results (figure 19) reveal that all the EFL master students fail to find this English idiom. The results also indicate that 58% of the EFL master students are not able to translate the Arabic idiom at all. However 34% of these students give the the meaning of the idiom. While 8% of them provide the meaning of each

word instead of using the exact equivalent English idiom of the Arabic idiom 'يقيم الدنيا ويقعدها' /juqi:mu ?adunjia: wa juq?iduha/

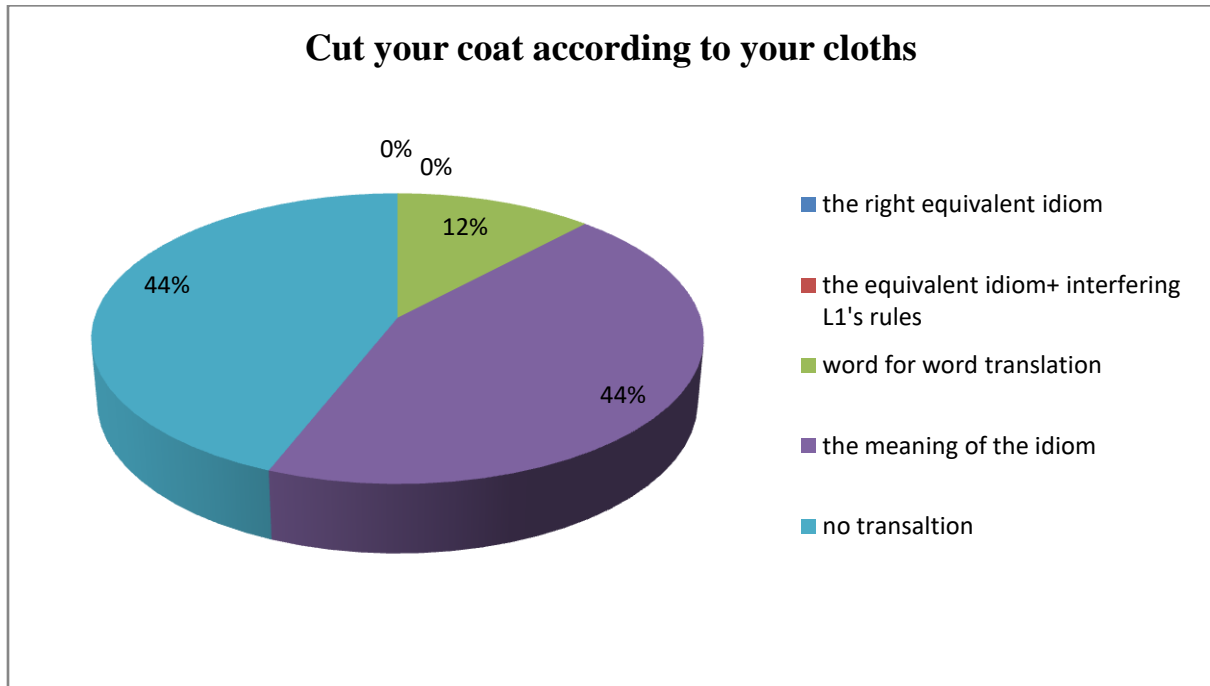
## 20. Like father, like son



**Figure 20: Different idioms 02**

The English idiom 'like father, like son' has the same meaning as the Arabic idiom 'هذا الشبل من ذلك الاسد' /ha: ða: ?aʃʃibɛl min ða :lika ?al?asad/. It can be noticed from the figure (20) that 42% of the EFL master students succeed in finding the right equivalent English idiom. However, 15% of these students translate the Arabic idiom literally (this cub from that lion), and 11% of them provide the meaning of the idiom. Besides, 32% of the participants do not translate the Arabic idiom ('هذا الشبل من ذلك الاسد' /ha: ða: ?aʃʃibɛl min ða :lika ?al?asad/) at all.

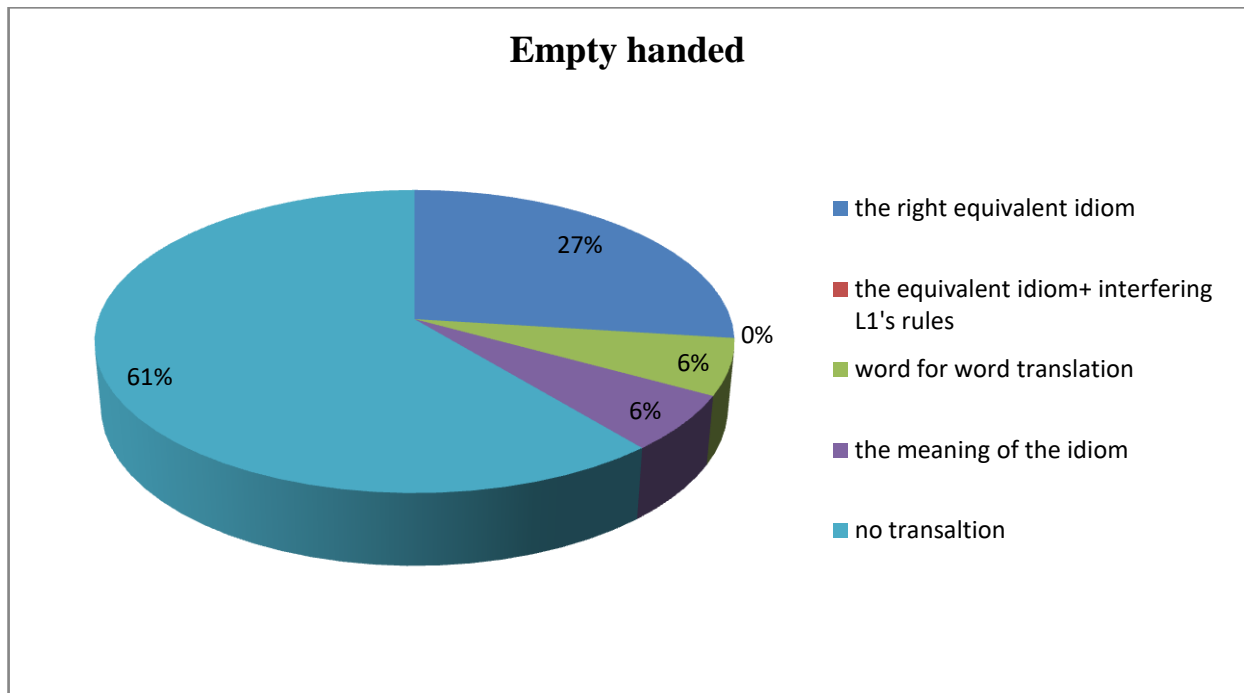
## 21. Cut your coat according to your cloths



**Figure 21: Different idiom 03**

The English idiomatic expression “cut your coat according to your cloths” has the same meaning as the Arabic idiom ‘على قدر بساطك مد رجلتيك’ /ʔala qader bias:ṭika mud ridzli:k/ . As figure 21 shows, all the EFL master students fail to find this English idiomatic expression. The majority of of these students (44%) provide the meaning of the Arabic idiom, while 12% translate it literally. Moreover, 44% do not translate the Arabic idiom at all.

## 22. Empty handed

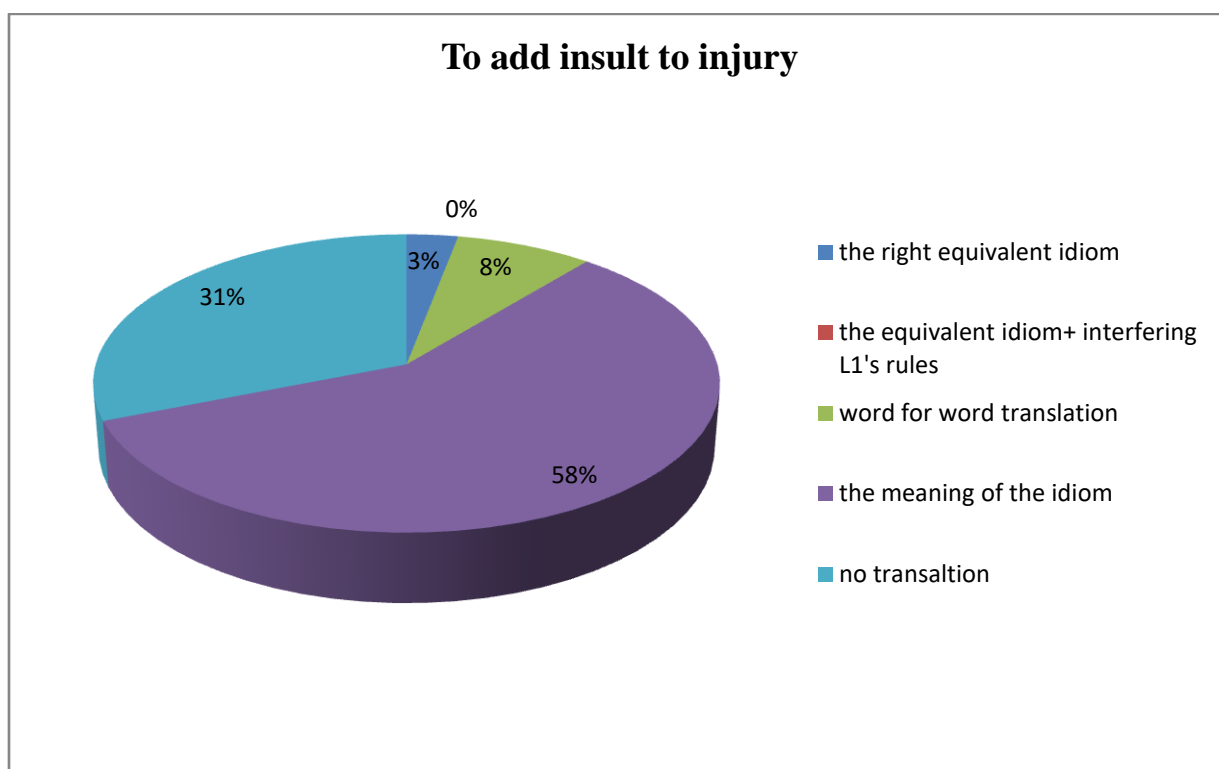


**Figure 22: Different idiom 04**

The English idiom ‘empty handed’ has the same meaning as the Arabic idiom ‘عاد بخفي حنين’ /ʔa :da bixufaj ɰunajn/. Figure (22) shows that 27% of the EFL master students find this English idiom. But, 6% of these students translate the Arabic idiom literally. Moreover, 6% of them provide the meaning of the idiom. The figure also indicates that the majority of the participants (61%) do not translate the Arabic idiom at all.



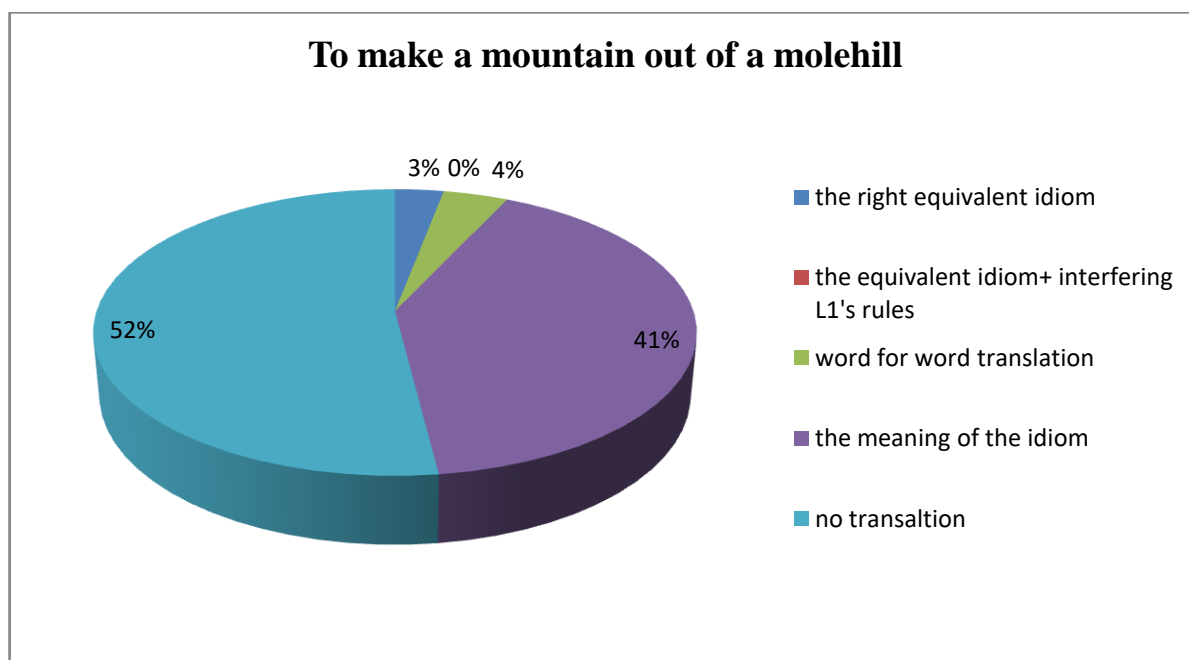
### 23. To add insult to injury



**Figure 23: Different idioms 05**

The English idiomatic expression ‘to add insult to injury’ has the same meaning as the Arabic idiom ‘يزيد الطين بلة’ /jazi:du ?at̤i:na bilatan/. As it shown in figure (23), only 3% of the EFL master students find this English idiomatic expression. However, the majority (58%) provide the meaning of the idiom instead of giving the exact equivalent English idiom of the Arabic idiom ‘يزيد الطين بلة’ /jazi:du ?at̤i:na bilatan/. the figure also whows that 8% of the participants translate the Arabic idiom literally, while 31% of them do not translate it at all.

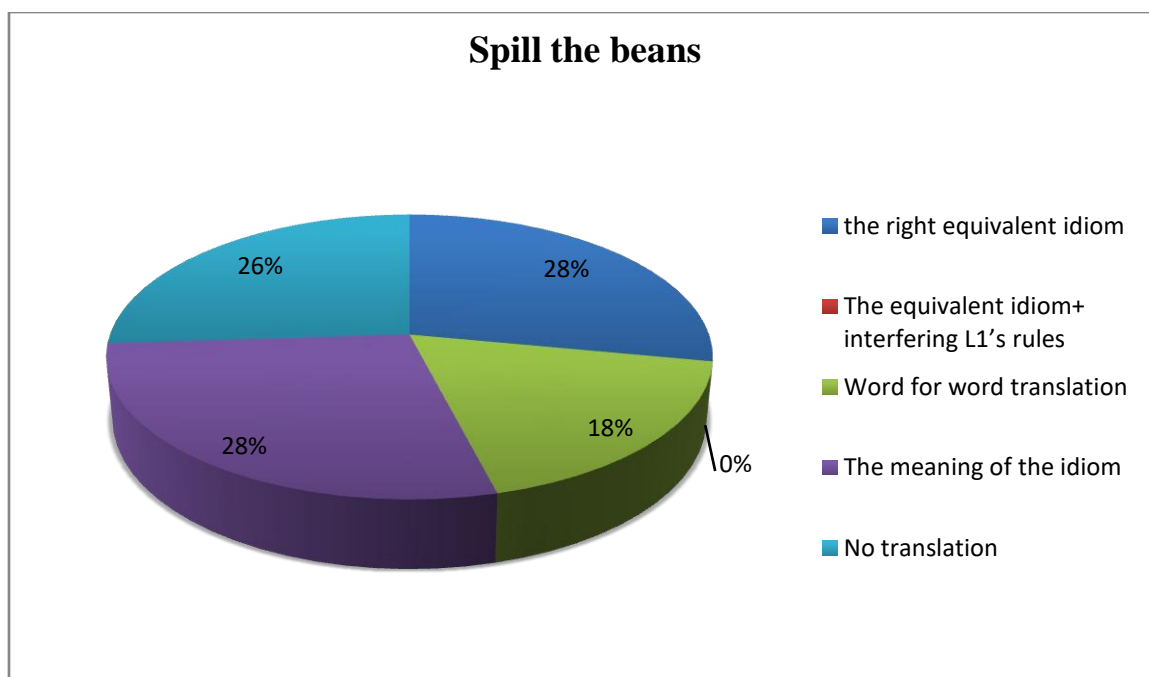
## 24. To make a mountain out of a molehill



**Figure 24: Different idiom 06**

The English idiom ‘to make a mountain out of a molehill’ has the same meaning as the Arabic idiom ‘يصنع من الحبة قبة’ /Jaşnaʕu mina ʔalḥabati qubatan/. As it shown in figure (24), only 3% of the EFL master students find this English idiomatic expression. However, the majority (41%) provide the meaning of the idiom instead of giving the exact equivalent English idiom of the Arabic idiom ‘يصنع من الحبة قبة’ /Jaşnaʕu mina ʔalḥabati qubatan/. these students use expressions like ‘to exaggerate’ and ‘to put too much focus on minor issue and make it seem like a major one’. The figure also shows that 4% of the participants translate the Arabic idiom literally, while 52% of them do not translate it at all.

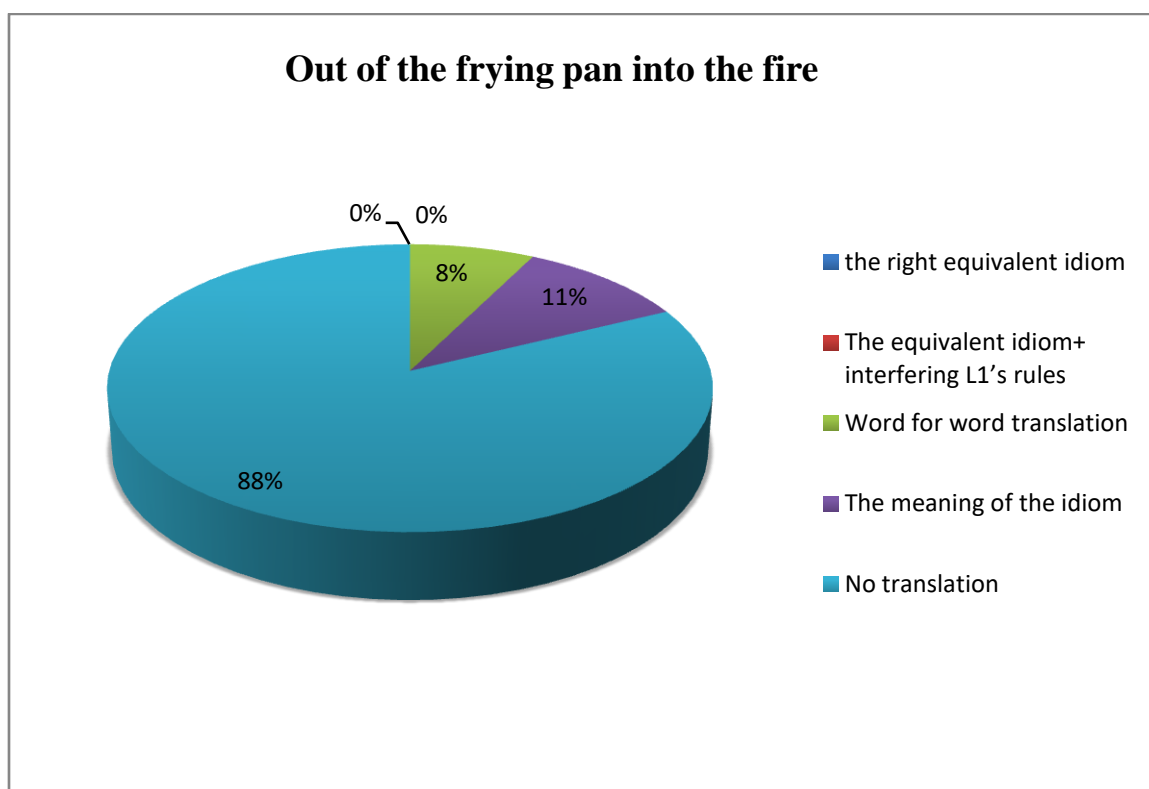
## 25. Spill the beans



**Figure 25: Different idiom 07**

The English idiom ‘spill the beans’ has the same meaning as Arabic idiom ‘افشي السر’ /ʔafʃa ʔassir/. As it is shown in the figure (25), 28% of the EFL master students find this idiomatic expression, and 28% of these students provide the meaning of the Arabic idiom. However, 18% of the participants give the literal meaning of the Arabic idiom ‘افشي السر’ /ʔafʃa ʔassir/, while 26% do not translate it at all.

## 26. Out of the frying pan into the fire



**Figure 26: Different idiom 08**

The English idiomatic expression ‘out of the frying pan into the fire’ has the same meaning as the Arabic idiom ‘كالمستجير من الرمضاء بالنار’ /kalmustadzi:r mina ?alramḍa?i binna:ri/. Figure (26) indicates that all the EFL master students fail to find this English idiomatic expression. The majority of these students (88%) does not translate the Arabic idiom at all. Besides, 11% of these students provide the meaning of the Arabic idiom ‘كالمستجير من الرمضاء بالنار’ /kalmustadzi:r mina ?alramḍa?i binna:ri/ instead of giving the exact equivalent English idiom, while only 8% of them use word for word translation.

## 27. A burnt child dreads the fire

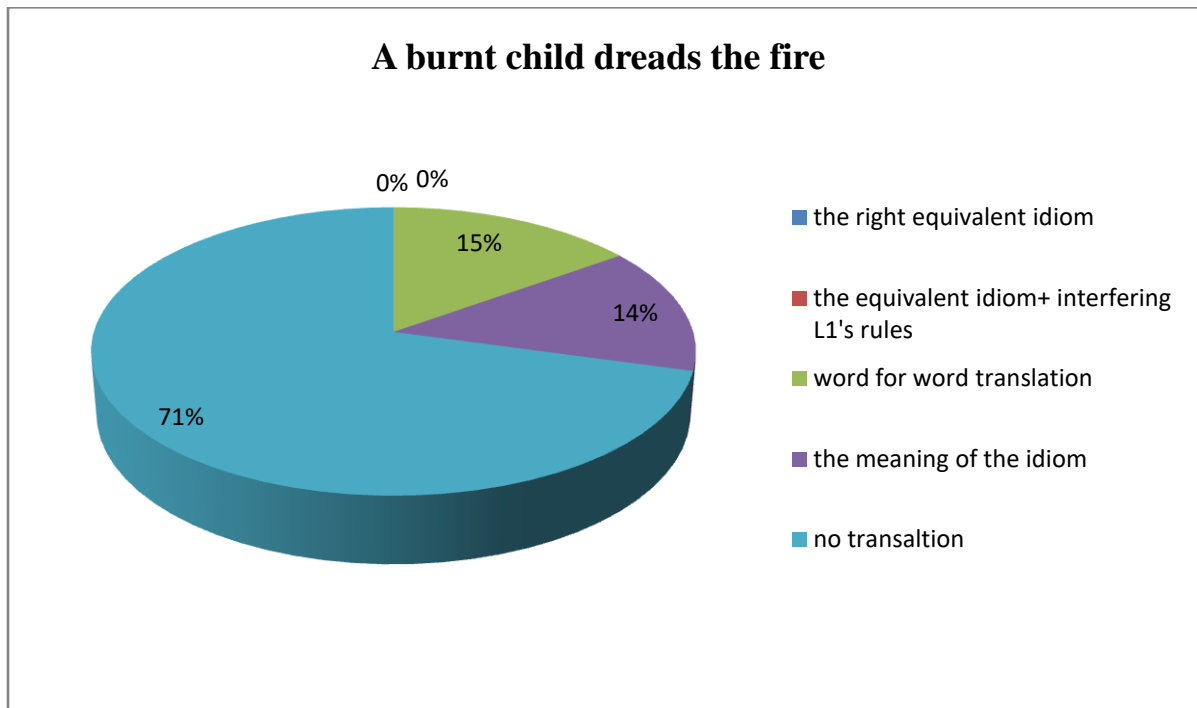


Figure 27: Different idiom 09

The English idiom ‘A burnt child dreads the fire’ has the same meaning as the Arabic idiom ‘الملدوغ يخاف من جرّة الحبل’ /?almaldu:γ jaxa:fu min dʒarati ?alḥabli/. Figure (27) clearly shows that all the EFL master students fail to find the English idiom. Moreover, The majority of these students (77%) do not translate the Arabic idiom at all. The figure also reveals that 15% of the participants translate the Arabic idiom ‘الملدوغ يخاف من جرّة الحبل’ /?almaldu:γ jaxa:fu min dʒarati ?alḥabli/ literally, while 14% provide the meaning of this idiom.

### 3.3. Discussion of the Findings

It seems that the data obtained from the EFL master students at Ibn Khaldoun University validate what have been hypothesized earlier. The results reveal that English idioms are, to some extent, problematic to EFL master students who find difficulties in translating Arabic idioms into English. The findings of the study show that EFL master

students find difficulties in translating Arabic idioms which are identical to English ones. Though these idioms have the same meanings and the same forms as their English counterparts; only 46% of the EFL master students succeed in finding the exact English counterparts. Moreover, the results indicate that only 16% of the EFL master students are able to find the exact equivalent English idioms of the Arabic idioms which have slightly different word order from their English counterparts. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that only a minority succeed in finding the exact equivalent English idioms of the Arabic idioms which have totally different word order from to their English counterparts. Based on these results, one can safely argue that the English idioms which are identical to Arabic ones are easy for EFL master students to learn; while the English idioms which are syntactically different from Arabic ones are difficult for EFL master students to learn.

Regarding language transfer, the results show that EFL master students transfer different linguistic elements from their first language (Arabic) into English when they produce English idioms. Most of these linguistic elements are negatively transferred and give rise to two types of errors: grammatical errors, and lexical errors. The first type occurs when EFL master students transfer grammatical elements from Arabic into English. This can be seen in the English idiom 'on the tip of one's tongue'. Some EFL master students use possessive determiners 'his', or 'its' instead of 'one's'; while others use prepositions 'in' or 'at' instead of using 'on'. Moreover, some EFL master students add the determiner 'the' to the word 'roads' when they translate the Arabic "كل الطرق تؤدي الى روما" /kul ?aṭṭuruq tu?addi : ?ila ru :ma/. Furthermore, some EFL master students use the determiner 'the' instead of 'a', and the possessive determiner 'his' instead of 'its' when they use the English idiom 'do not judge a book by its cover' to translate the Arabic idiom 'لا تحكم على الكتاب من غلافه' /la: taḥkum ?ala ?alkita:bi min yila:fihi/.

The second type takes place when the EFL master students transfer lexical elements from Arabic into English. This can be seen in the English idiom ‘ all roads lead to Rome’. Some of the EFL master students use the verbs ‘ go’, ‘take’, and ‘get’ instead of using the verb ‘ lead’; while other students use the words ‘path’ and ‘way’ instead of the word ‘roads’. Furthermore, some of the EFL master students use words like ‘hold’ and ‘catch’ instead of ‘ take’ when they translate the Arabic idiom ‘التقط أنفاسه’ /?iltaqata ?anfa :sahu/.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

The chapter presents, analyzes and discusses the data gathered from EFL master students. The results revealed that some EFL masterstudents at Ibn Khaldoun University really find considerable difficulties in guessing the appropriate meaning of the idiomatic expressions and producing intelligible version in the TL. Besides, the results show that these students usually transfer negatively grammatical and lexical elements from their first language to English

## **General Conclusion**

The present research seeks to examine the extent to which EFL master students at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret have mastered the English idioms, and determine the types of the linguistic elements they transfer from their first language (Arabic) to English when they produce English idioms.

To conduct this research, three chapters were designed. Chapter one gave an overview about idiomatic expressions and language transfer. Chapter two was devoted to describe the research protocol followed to collect and analyze the data. To gather information seventy two EFL master students at Ibn Khaldoun University were asked to translate twenty seven idioms from Arabic into English. The idioms were grouped into three categories: identical, similar and different idioms. Each category included nine Arabic idioms. Chapter three was dedicated to present, describe and analyze the data gathered from the participants.

The findings of the study show that English idioms are, to some extent, problematic to EFL master students who find difficulties in translating Arabic idioms, especially the Arabic idioms which have totally different word order from their English counterparts. Moreover, the results reveal that English idioms which are identical to Arabic ones are easy for EFL master students to learn; while English idioms which are syntactically different from Arabic ones are difficult for them. Furthermore, the findings indicate that EFL master students negatively transfer grammatical elements and lexical elements from Arabic to English when they produce English idioms.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This research clearly has a number of potential shortfalls that should be considered:

- The sample size is not big to generalize the findings to all EFL master student.



- Many students refuse to answer the all questions and translate two or three idioms
- Because of the short of time , we did not conduct an interview with the EFL teachers.

### **Reccomendations for Future Studies**

Considering the results of this study, the following sugestions are made for future studies:

- Further studies should be conducted to examine the extent to which EFL learners transfer elements from the first language to learn foreing language (s).
- Researchers may examine the process of language transfer in other fields, like phonology, phonetics, and synatx.

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## Appendix

### *The influence of L1 on learning English idioms: The case of Master Student at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret*

Dear Master students, the questionnaire attempts to investigate the extent to which master students at Ibn Khaldoun University have mastered the English idioms. You are kindly requested to participate in our research. We would like you to translate the Arabic idioms mentioned below into English. When you translate the Arabic idioms try to use their English equivalent idioms. Your contribution is highly appreciated.

#### General Information :

Q1: Gender

Male

Female

Q2: Age? \_\_\_\_\_

Q3: Level:

Master 1

Master 2

Q4: Specialty:

Linguistics

Didactics

#### Section Two:

Q1: Translate the following passage into English.

- 1- على طرف لسانه.  
1.....
- 2- لا دخان بدون نار.  
2.....
- 3- كل الطرق تؤدي إلى روما.  
3.....
- 4- لا تحكم على الكتاب من غلافه.  
4.....
- 5- التقط أنفاسه.

5.....

6- عش ودع غيرك يعيش.

6.....

7-يقرا ما بين السطور.

7.....

8-بين نارين.

8.....

9-زلة لسان.

9.....

10-قرة عين .

10.....

11-الصديق وقت الضيق .

11.....

12-الطيور على إشكالها تقع.

12.....

13-ولد وفي فمه ملعقة من ذهب.

13.....

14-للضرورة أحكام.

14.....

15-اللييب بالإشارة يفهم.

15.....

16-يضرب عصفورين بحجر واحد.

16.....

17-يصطاد في المياه العكرة.

17.....

18-الجوع امهر الطباخين.

18.....

19-يقيم الدنيا ويقعدها

19.....

20- هذا الشبل من ذلك الاسد.

20.....

21- على قدر بساطك مد رجلك.

21.....

22- عاد بخفي حنين.

22.....

23- يزيد الطين بلة

23.....

24- يصنع من الحبة قبة .

24.....

25- افشي السر .

25.....

26- كالمستجير من الرمضاء بالنار.

26.....

27- الملدوغ يخاف من جرّة الحبل.

27.....



## Resumé

L'objectif principal de la présente étude est d'étudier l'influence de la L1 sur l'apprentissage des idiomes anglais. Cette étude vise à déterminer dans quelle mesure les étudiants en master EFL de l'Université Ibn Khaldoun maîtrisent les idiomes anglais, à découvrir le type d'idiomes anglais qui leur est facile à apprendre, et le type qui leur est difficile, et à identifier les cas d'interférence L1. Des données ont été collectées auprès de 72 étudiants en master EFL qui ont été invités à traduire 27 idiomes de l'arabe vers l'anglais. Les idiomes utilisés dans cette étude ont été classés en idiomes identiques, similaires et différents. Les résultats de l'étude ont révélé que les idiomes anglais sont, dans une certaine mesure, problématiques pour les étudiants en master EFL qui transfèrent généralement des éléments linguistiques de leur L1 à l'anglais lorsqu'ils utilisent des idiomes anglais. Les résultats ont également révélé que les idiomes identiques sont faciles à apprendre pour les étudiants en master EFL, tandis que les idiomes différents sont difficiles pour eux. L'étude se termine par quelques recommandations.

**Mots clés :** Transfer de la langue, expressions idiomatiques, langue maternelle, langue étrangère, types d'erreurs.

## المخلص

الهدف الرئيسي من هذا البحث هو دراسة تأثير ( L1 ) على تعلم الامثال الإنجليزية. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد مدى إتقان طلاب الماستر للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة ابن خلدون الامثال الإنجليزية ، ومعرفة نوع الامثال الإنجليزية التي يسهل عليهم تعلمها ، وأيها يصعب عليهم ، وتحديد حالات تداخل اللغة الإنجليزية مع لغتهم العربية . تم جمع البيانات من 72 طالب الماستر للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية . طلب من هؤلاء الطلبة ترجمة 27 مثل من العربية إلى الإنجليزية. تم تصنيف الامثال المستخدمة في هذه الدراسة إلى امثال متطابقة ومتشابهة ومختلفة. كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن الامثال الإنجليزية تشكل مشكلة

إلى حد ما بالنسبة لطلاب ال ماستر للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية الذين ينقلون عادةً العناصر اللغوية من (L1) إلى اللغة الإنجليزية عند استخدام الامثال الإنجليزية. كشفت النتائج أيضًا عن سهولة تعلم الامثال المتطابقة لطلاب الماستر للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ، بينما يصعب عليهم تعلم الامثال المختلفة. تنتهي الدراسة ببعض التوصيات.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** نقل اللغة، الامثال، اللغة الام، اللغة الاجنبية، انواع الاخطاء