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Animal Idiomatic Expressions: A Contrastive Study between Arabic and English

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ABSTRACT

This study examines idiomatic expressions involving animals in English and Arabic. As a native Arabic speaker and an English university instructor, the researcher observed that both languages utilize animals in idiomatic contexts to convey specific connotations or messages that differ from the literal meaning of the expressions. The researcher identified these animal-related idioms in both languages and organized them into tables to highlight similarities and differences through a comparative approach. The findings revealed three key points: First, certain animal idioms are used in both languages to express the same indicative meaning; second, some English idioms have counterparts in Arabic that convey the same meaning but involve different animals; and third, some English animal idioms have no equivalents in Arabic. The study concludes that understanding the cultural context of idiomatic expressions fosters native-like linguistic competence. It contributes to cross-cultural understanding by systematically identifying, comparing, and categorizing animal idioms in Arabic and English, emphasizing their cultural significance and practical implications for language learners, translators, and educators.

Keywords: Animal Idiomatic Expressions; Arabic; EFL; English; Cultural Background

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1. Introduction

Acquiring a language within its authentic context, grasping its cultural background, and understanding individual behaviours and attitudes are regarded as valuable attributes that enhance language comprehension, as studying a language outside its natural context is impractical^[1].

The initial step in language mastery is acquiring its vocabulary. The most efficient method for acquiring vocabulary is to refrain from memorizing isolated word lists, as this approach fails to foster a natural linguistic context and does not facilitate effective communication^[2]. The optimal method for teaching and learning vocabulary involves utilizing word chunks, including proverbs, phrasal verbs, idioms, and collocations, which are commonly employed in everyday language^[3].

Given the mentioned argument, it is important to note that vocabulary in isolation, as discrete segments, possesses a different meaning than when it is incorporated into an idiomatic expression^[4]. Consequently, the subject of this paper is essential for EFL learners because of the connotative and figurative representations it embodies. Grasping and mastering idiomatic expressions in their appropriate pragmatic context allows learners to anticipate and understand both the underlying structure and the profound meaning of these expressions in practical application^[5].

Foreign language learners, especially educators, must comprehend the connotative meanings of idiomatic expressions in the target language, which will facilitate the attainment of native-like proficiency^[6]. The employment of idiomatic expressions illustrates the distinctiveness and variations inherent in each linguistic culture and heritage^[7].

This research will focus on the idiomatic expressions associated with animals only while translating them from Arabic to English because animals are commonly used in idioms worldwide since they embody human characteristics, behaviour, and roles^[6]. These expressions offer perspectives that enable cross-cultural comparisons as well as reveal values that are universal such as courage or loyalty, and reveal cultural practices that result from history, geography, and culture, which suggests the importance of this research^[7]. For the study's purpose, specific animals are selected in both languages. The study will comprehensively examine the following animals to derive generalizations and attain a valid conclusion: bird, horse, cat, dog, crocodile, lion, and bee^[8].

Both Chinese and English cultures possess a plethora of idioms. She asserts that language and culture mutually influence one another in a complementary manner. Her research exclusively examines the term “dog,” which possesses varying meanings contingent upon cultural context. She asserted that a flexible approach is essential when translating dog-related idioms, considering the specific challenges that may emerge. This guarantees that translations are precise and suitable, ultimately facilitating improved comprehension between cultures^[8].

This research examines the profound significance of animal nomenclature within Algerian society. Researchers developed a questionnaire comprising 20 well-known animal names and conducted a qualitative analysis of the responses. The results indicate that these names frequently possess diverse meanings shaped by context, personal beliefs, and experiences. Notably, certain names are distinctly linked to males or females, whereas others are unisex. The connotations of animal names pertain to characteristics such as physical appearance, size, and personality, fulfilling significant semantic and social roles that contribute to the diverse cultural landscape of Algeria.

Animal-related idioms are common in both Arabic and English; however, cultural disparities in history, tradition, and cognition may lead to misinterpretations during translation. Their research examines the difficulties translators encounter when rendering idioms from English to Arabic, emphasizing strategies for successful translation. The researchers employed Eugene Nida's idiom translation methods from 1964 to conduct a mixed-methods survey aimed at understanding the challenges and strategies utilized by Saudi translators. Results indicate that numerous translators frequently opt to render idioms as non-idiomatic expressions, despite the availability of equivalent idioms in Arabic^[9].

The cultural influence on animal utilization in Arabic contexts. Al Issawi examined the influence of cultural heritage on the selection of the idiom. She determined that the nomenclature of animals mirrors the culture and context in which they are utilized. She underscored the importance of comprehending the natural context in which expressions are employed, as this comprehension will facilitate improved usage and communication in the target language^[10].

The interpretations of the concepts of wolves and sheep in Arabic and English proverbs, emphasize the parallels

between the two languages. The study utilized proverbs sourced from two references: “Majmac Al-Amthal” for Arabic proverbs and “The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs” for English proverbs. The study, utilizing Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and the Great Chain of Being (GCB) as analytical frameworks, demonstrated that wolves and sheep represent specific facets of human nature. The findings revealed that these symbolic meanings are reflected in proverbs from both cultures, despite their differing backgrounds^[11].

Idioms are essential in language, embodying the wisdom of various cultures. Every civilization possesses distinct characteristics influenced by history, geography, and traditions, resulting in differences in animal idioms and their interpretations. He examines English and Chinese animal idioms, classifying them into four categories. Although certain idioms possess analogous cultural significances, numerous others vary considerably between nations. He provides examples to elucidate translation strategies for Chinese animal idioms, proposing principles such as Equivalent Translation and Compromising Translation. These strategies are designed to assist translators in managing the complexities of idiomatic expressions that may possess metaphorical similarities yet have unique interpretations^[12].

Animal proverbs in Saudi Arabic and Tunisian Arabic. A cultural linguistic methodology was employed to examine proverbs, presenting scenarios that exemplify the overarching themes. Their research indicates that these proverbs embody their sociocultural contexts, frequently correlating situations with overarching concepts. Notably, the two cultures exhibit minimal shared themes, emphasizing distinct animals and their corresponding cultural knowledge. The research highlights the significance of the local environment and cultural heritage in influencing the linguistic and religious subtleties of both Saudi and Tunisian Arabic, demonstrating that although they may share identical animal nomenclature, their meanings and emphases can differ markedly. The cultural context is crucial for comprehending, defining, and articulating the intended meaning of the idiomatic expression. In other words, comprehending linguistic expressions outside their inherent context is challenging^[13].

Various expressions incorporating animal terminology in both English and Chinese. They examined the importance of comprehending the cultural context underlying the phrases

to grasp their meaning. He noted that comprehending the concept of phrases and expressions is challenging without an understanding of the cultural context underlying their usage^[14]. A portion of the expressive significance is derived from the animal’s conduct and the social insights it embodies. Despite potential cultural differences, significant commonalities can be observed. The implications conveyed by an animal may indicate its behavior and the cultural acknowledgement of that behavior.

The utilization of animals in idiomatic expressions in both English and Arabic. Sameer asserted that the comprehension of animal idiomatic expressions is inextricable from human culture. He emphasized the crucial significance of social background and the cumulative experiences of daily life. He asserts that recalling or predicting the meaning of any idiomatic expression is facilitated when it is employed in a contextual combination rather than as an isolated segment^[15]. Sameer determined that idiomatic expressions related to animals are universally present in all societies. Nonetheless, certain disparities lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding, as well as challenges in acquiring a foreign language, attributable to these cultural differences^[15].

Upon reviewing pertinent studies, it is observed that animal-related idiomatic expressions are universal. They are universally utilized across all languages and dialects. Nonetheless, there exist both similarities and differences in the meanings conveyed between languages and dialects of the same language in certain instances. This aspect of language learning warrants examination due to its significance for translators, educators, and learners, as it facilitates the attainment of native-like proficiency and effective communication, thereby conveying intended meanings with clarity in the target language.

The aforementioned studies focused on the utilization of such expressions concerning phrases, proverbs, translation perception, and the connotation of animal behavior. However, this study differs from the previous studies in terms of examining the specific idiomatic expressions involving animals in Arabic and English. It establishes a comparative matrix that examines the similarities, differences, and the presence or absence of identical expressions in both languages to convey the same intended meaning. The study examines the cultural context and heritage significance of animals in Arabic and English cultures. This study aimed to

systematically categorize the expressions examined, specifically: expressions featuring animals that are analogous in both languages and convey identical meanings (e.g., “lion’s share”); expressions that share meanings but utilize different animal terms (e.g., “black sheep” / “ءادوسلا قطبلا”); and finally, animal idiomatic expressions lacking equivalents in Arabic (e.g., “to smell a rat”).

This study is distinctive in its focus on Arabic colloquial idiomatic expressions involving animals, as opposed to standard Arabic expressions, highlighting the use of colloquial language in its authentic context. The conveyed meaning is spontaneous and subconscious, reflecting the cumulative experiences of language, culture, and heritage. Thus, by examining these idioms in cultural contexts, this research not only promotes learners’ awareness of the meaning and use of idioms to help them achieve the goal of mastering the English language at the native-like level but also offers valuable information to translators. By studying these cultural differences, the accuracy of translation and the efficiency of cross-cultural communication can be enhanced, which makes this work useful for language specialists.

In light of the current limited evidence about the cultural and linguistic aspects of animal idiomatic expressions, the present study aims to fill the existing gap in the comparative analysis of such expressions between Arabic and English. To the best of our knowledge, few studies addressed the contrastive analysis of animal-related idioms in an Arabic-English linguistic context^[8]. However, no study has systematically examined this issue focusing on both cultural and colloquial dimensions in the context of cross-cultural language acquisition^[9–11]. Thus, the study aims to provide answers to the following research questions:

- 1) What are the similarities and differences in animal idiomatic expressions between Arabic and English?
- 2) How do these idiomatic expressions reflect the cultural and linguistic contexts of each language?

The significance of the present study is manifested in providing cross-linguistic comparisons and cross-cultural contrast between the Arabic and English languages that would benefit four types of beneficiaries: language learners, language teachers, language translators, and language analysts. Proverbs especially the ones that imply animals, reflect cultural presuppositions and provide useful recommendations when it comes to mastering the speaker’s native-like

fluency, as well as improving intercultural communication. For example, the knowledge of the fact that the English idiomatic expression ‘to kill two birds with one stone’ reflects cultural values like efficiency in contrast to the Arabic expression يضرب عصفورين بحجر. Alike interpreters, there are challenges that translators meet in trying to provide for idiomatic meanings that may not have a correlated bureaucracy, for instance, the “bee’s knee” which does not have a companion in Arabic.

When incorporated into language instruction, learners are not only equipped with language acquisition, but they are also made aware of cultural praxes, so as to improve interaction. This study also supports the observation made by^[12] regarding the centrality of cultural context in idiomatic translation, and^[6] concerning the relevance of pragmatic context in foreign language acquisition.

Further, future research studies could extend this research by examining the relationship between idiomatic language and psychological dimensions. Such understandings therefore render the study valuable to curriculum developers and translation practitioners who would wish to respond to the dynamism of idiomatic expressions in multicultural environments.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Sample

The sample for this study was derived from the researcher’s extensive knowledge and experience as a native Arabic speaker and EFL university instructor. The researcher specifically selected idiomatic expressions involving animals in both Arabic and English, focusing on expressions that are commonly used and culturally significant in both languages. This purposeful sampling method allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the linguistic and cultural characteristics of idiomatic expressions in both Arabic and English. In this study, the inclusion criteria were set to include only the PHs that are known and used frequently in both languages and incorporate animals that are known and culturally relevant. The idioms in the study only had connotative meanings, involved different animal types, and were used in real-life scenarios. If the translation requires expressions related to colloquial Arabic or colloquial English, these were prioritized to ensure high relevance in the language people use in

their daily lives. On the other hand, regional idioms, idioms that do not involve animals, and idioms that are specific to Modern Standard Arabic were not included to simplify the study. Thus, it is possible to avoid the inclusion of idioms that are not relevant to any significant linguistic or cultural phenomenon in the language concerned.

2.2. Data Collection Procedure

The researcher systematically compiled idiomatic expressions involving animals from both Arabic and English languages. This compilation was based on the researcher's professional experience, linguistic resources, and relevant literature. The expressions were then categorized into three main classifications to facilitate analysis. The first category comprised expressions that are analogous in both languages, utilizing the same animal while conveying identical connotative meanings. The second category encompassed expressions that convey the same connotative meanings in both languages but utilize different animals. Lastly, the third category included idiomatic expressions that are utilized in English but lack direct equivalents in Arabic.

To reduce the risk of selection bias, the idiomatic expressions collected in the study were compared with the existing linguistic portfolios and prior research findings (citations here). In some places, input from bilingual professionals was taken to make culturally and linguistically acceptable versions.

2.3. Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis aimed at an in-depth qualitative examination of the identified idiomatic expressions. The researcher employed a contrastive analysis approach to compare and contrast the expressions from both languages. This analysis was structured around the three classifications to determine the similarities and differences in connotative meanings and cultural significance. The findings were systematically organized in tables, supported by discussions that highlighted the cultural and linguistic implications of each category. Through this analytical framework, the researcher was able to delineate generalizations and draw conclusions regarding the cross-cultural usage of animal idiomatic expressions in Arabic and English.

3. Results

This section will delineate the three categories of the expressions under examination. To enhance the readability and comprehension of this analysis, tables were created, accompanied by a thorough discussion.

3.1. Shared Animal Idioms with Identical Meaning

The researcher will present and analyze a set of expressions that are analogous in both languages and convey the same connotative meaning. **Table 1** below displays those expressions.

Table 1. Animal idiomatic expressions used in both Arabic and English that have the same connotative meaning and the same animal word.

The Animal in English and Arabic	English Expression	Arabic Expression	Connotative Meaning
Bird / عصفور	To kill two birds with one stone	يصيد عصفورين بحجر واحد	To accomplish two tasks at once.
horse / حصان	Dark horse	الحصان الأسود	Higher than expected
Horse / حصان	Hold your horses	الجم حصانك	To wait
Cat / القطه	The cat got your tongue	القطه اكلت لسانك	Unusually quiet
Dog / كلب	Dog eat dog	الكلاب تنهش بعضها	People harm each other to win.
Crocodile / التماسيح	Crocodile tears	دموع التماسيح	Fake tears.
lion / الأسد	To have the lion's share	يمتلك نصيب الأسد	To have the largest amount of something.
Wolf / الأسد	A wolf in sheep's clothing	ذئب بملايس حمل	Tricky/deceptive person.
Bird / العصفورة	A little bird told me	حكنتلي العصفورة	To know about something without mentioning the source.

Table 1 above delineates the following animals: bird, horse, cat, dog, crocodile, lion, and wolf. Every expression in **Table 1** in English contains the identical animal term and conveys the same connotative meaning in Arabic. The idiomatic expression “To kill two birds with one stone” in English signifies the accomplishment of multiple objectives with a single action. The identical meaning is likewise conveyed in Arabic. This signifies the universality of such expression. This facilitates the use of this expression for EFL and AFL learners, as well as translators. An additional example that employs the same animal expression in both languages is “A little bird told me” in English and its Arabic equivalent ضرب عصفورين بحجر which illustrates the universality of this expression by utilizing the same animal motif to convey the same meaning.

3.2. Shared Idioms with Different Animals

As shown in **Table 2** above the animals used in the English idiomatic expressions are: bee, chicken, goose, cow, dog, ant, sheep, worm, eagle. While the Arabic animals used are: النملة, الأرنب, الجمال, كدش, الدبابير, الفار, البطة, نحل, الصقر.

All the expressions in this category express the same connotative meaning in both languages but the animals used are different in each language. Each expression will be discussed in accordance with the used animal word and its connotative meaning in each language.

The first expression “To make a bee line” is an English one which indicates moving quickly with purpose while in Arabic the used expression that matches this expression is “مثل النملة النقاله” has a different animal “ant”. This Arabic colloquial expression used the insect ant because it is a hard worker, disciplined and devoted to its work and group. The same applies to the bee that is used in the English expression. Although the animals used in the two expressions are different, they are similar in that they are insects, and they symbolize hard and devoted workers.

The second English expression “chicken out” indicates fearing something/body. The Arabic equivalent counterpart expression is “ليد مثل الأرنب”. Those two expressions indicate the same meaning but different animal words. In English “chicken” while it is “rabbit” in Arabic. Again, this is an expression used in colloquial Arabic where the animal rabbit is a symbol of fear and cowardness. The same refers

to chicken in English culture. Another difference is noticed here, in Arabic it is a mammal while in English it is a bird.

The next example is “A wild goose chase”, the word goose is replaced by camel in the colloquial Arabic expression “زي حراث الجمال”. Both expressions deliver the same connotative meaning that is pointless task/without specific purpose. The cultural wisdom reflected in those two expressions is derived from their normal everyday life in the past. In Arabic people do not use camels in plowing the earth due to the large size of the camel toes so it is useless efforts, and in English chasing wild geese for hunting is a useless effort too. Another difference is noticed here, in Arabic it is a mammal while in English it is a bird.

“Until the cows come home” this English expression has an equivalent one in Arabic “عيش يا كدش”. The animal word cow in English is replaced by horse in Arabic. The two are mammals and they are farm animals. كدش is a horse that is used to plow the earth in Arabic. The two expressions have the same meaning never ending length of time/ false promises.

“In the doghouse” in English has the same meaning of “دخل عش الدبابير” in colloquial Arabic. Both expressions mean to be in trouble. In Arabic the wasp/hornet is a dangerous insect that causes serious harm to people if they come close to their nest. And the same applies to dogs if anyone comes close to their houses. In Arabic it is an insect while in English it is a mammal.

The next English expression “ants in my pants” has the colloquial Arabic equivalent “الفار بلعب بعبي” those two expressions give the same meaning that is to feel uncomfortable/restless. The mouse in Arabic الفار symbolizes disgust, annoyance, damage, and it is very difficult to locate its place to catch it. On the other hand, ants in English also cause annoyance, hurt, and it is difficult to get rid of them. In Arabic it is a mammal while in English it is an insect.

“Black sheep” in English matches البطة السوداء in colloquial Arabic. Both expressions indicate the same meaning “to bring shame to family”. The black color in Arabic and English is associated with bad luck and pessimism. It is noticed here that in Arabic it is a bird while in English it is a mammal.

The next English expression is “open a can of worms” and its equivalent in colloquial Arabic is “على حاله مدبره”. Both expressions use insects that are annoying

Table 2. Animal idiomatic expressions used in both Arabic and English that have the same connotative meaning but different animal word.

The Animal in English and Arabic	English Expression	Arabic Expression	Connotative Meaning
Bee / النملة	To make a bee line	مثل النملة النقاله	To move quickly with purpose.
Chicken / الأرنب	Chicken out	لبد مثل الأرنب	Feeling scared.
goose / الجمل	A wild goose chase	زي حراث الجمل	Pointless task.
Cows / كدش	Until the cows come home	عيش يا كدش	Never ending length of time.
Dog / الدبابير	In the doghouse	دخل عش الدبابير	To be in trouble.
Ants / الفار	Ants in my pants	الفار بلعب بعبي	To feel uncomfortable/ restless
Sheep / البطة	Black sheep	البطة السوداء	To bring shame.
Worms / نحل	Open a can of worms	فتح على حاله مدبره نحل	To create more problems.
Eagle / الصقر	Eagle's eye	عيون الصقر	Sharp vision

and may cause harm to people if they contact them.

Eagle's eye is the last English expression in this category and the colloquial Arabic equivalent expression is عيون الصقر. Both expressions indicate sharp vision, farsightedness, and wisdom. Both birds eagle and falcon الصقر fly on high levels and they can see sharply from a far distance. However, it is worth mentioning that the falcon has a privilege over the eagle in Arabic culture.

From the above discussion, it is evident that there is a universality in the use of idiomatic expressions with animals. For instance, the black color of the animals is associated with a negative attribute in both languages. Also, the birds' visionary sights in both languages indicates seeing beyond things and high perception of reality. Moreover, the use of certain insects such as ants and bees to indicate hard work and devotion is common in both languages. Furthermore, it is noticed that the idiomatic expressions reflect the culture of that language. Thus, the camel is used in the Arabic expressions while they are not used in the English ones as they

are related to the Arab world and culture.

3.3. Animal Idiomatic Expressions Used in English That Do Not Have Arabic Equivalents

There are some English animal idioms for which there are no direct Arabic translations as follows the differences in cultural and functional arenas have prevented idioms from developing in the same way in these two contexts. While English idioms imply certain cultural or historical narratives associated with certain animals, Arabic idioms may tap into general human experiences or the environment in which people find themselves without using animals. These differences are ascribed to the differences in cultural symbolism; the priority of different societies; and climates that have different interpretations and uses for these sayings because of the underlying cultural factor that should be taken into consideration when translating or comprehending idiomatic expressions. This brings out the aspect of culture in the use of idiomatic language and the importance of culture when transposing the language as shown in **Table 3** below:

Table 3. Animal idiomatic expressions used in English that do not have equivalents in Arabic.

The Animal Word in English	The Idiomatic Expression in English	Connotative Meaning
Duck	Sitting duck	Easy target
Bull	To take the bull by horns	To face the problem directly.
Horse	To horse around	To act in a silly way.
Cat	To let the cat out of the bag	To reveal a secret.
Fish	To have a bigger fish to fry	To have more important things to
Bee	Bee's knees	Highest quality.
dog	To let sleeping dogs lie	To leave the situation as is.

Table 3 above illustrates that the animals employed in English idiomatic expressions include the duck, bull, horse, cat, fish, bee, and dog. The idiomatic expressions listed in **Table 3** are utilized in English, yet they lack equivalents in Arabic. Nonetheless, there exist alternative expressions in colloquial Arabic that convey the same meaning, yet lack any animal terminology, unlike their English equivalents. The phrase “sitting duck” is analogous to “على قد الايد”. Both terms signify a vulnerable target. The subsequent expression “to take the bull by the horns” may be analogous to الحروف حط النقاط على يتولى زمام الأمور.

Both expressions convey the identical notion of confronting challenges directly. They do not incorporate any animal terminology, yet they convey the same meaning as the English expression. The expression “to horse around” has an equivalent in Arabic colloquial language: بتولدن, which signifies behaving in a foolish, childish manner. The phrase “to let the cat out of the bag” is analogous to the colloquial Arabic expression يفضح الطابق, both signifying the act of revealing a secret. It is noteworthy that the Arabic idiomatic expression يفضح الطابق consists of words that do not convey the same meaning when considered in isolation, even in Arabic. The meaning will differ entirely unless combined. يفضح تعني الكشف بينما الطابق تعني الشقة. Collectively, they intend to disclose a secret.

To have a more significant matter to address This English expression conveys the same meaning as the colloquial Arabic phrase في براسي مليون دواية, which signifies being extremely busy and having significant tasks to attend to. The expression “bee’s knees” is equivalent to the colloquial Arabic phrase من راس النبع, which signifies the highest quality. Ultimately, the phrase “to let sleeping dogs lie” corresponds to the colloquial Arabic expression الطابق مستور خلي, which signifies leaving the situation unchanged.

4. Discussion

Idiomatic expressions in any language embody the beliefs, experiences, heritage, and social behaviors of individuals, as well as the temporal context of their usage^[16]. For example, the idiomatic expressions of animals could be examined in a culturally relevant context to create a robust framework for comprehending the true meaning and usage

of vocabulary within the targeted culture^[17]. This comprehension fosters a native-like competence and proficiency in the target language.

The use of animals to express figurative meanings in language is common across cultures depending on historical, environmental, and social factors; for example, lion symbolizes courage in both Arabic and English as it is a predator in many cultures, and camels in Arabic idioms are linked to the regions’ desert culture of patience^[18]. For instance, the concepts of loyalty and faithfulness are immediately associated with dogs, irrespective of the listener’s cultural background^[19]. The connotative meaning is suggestive for comprehending the ultimate intended message behind the use of idiomatic expressions, as it is culturally indicative^[20]. The depiction of lions is frequently associated with the representation of courage and elevated status. The term ‘fox’ is employed to denote cleverness and deceitful behavior^[21]. In Arabic culture, specific animals are linked to particular connotations: deer symbolize agility and beauty; camels represent patience; cats denote curiosity; dogs signify loyalty; donkeys embody hard work; and pigeons are associated with peace^[22].

A series of observations can be derived from the current study. Initially, certain animal idiomatic expressions exhibit cross-cultural similarities between Arabic and English regarding the connotative meanings conveyed and the specific animal terminology employed in these expressions^[23]. Crocodile tears and lion’s share are compelling examples that exemplify this argument.

Secondly, certain animal idiomatic expressions exhibit cross-cultural similarities between Arabic and English regarding their connotative meanings, yet they utilize different animal terminology^[24]. The phrases “in the doghouse,” “قطيلاء ادوسلا”, “black sheep,” and “شع ريبايدلا”, “لخد” serve as clear illustrations of this argument.

Third, certain animal idiomatic expressions exist solely in English and lack equivalents in Arabic^[25]. Nonetheless, there exist equivalent expressions in colloquial Arabic that convey the same meaning as those expressions, yet they do not incorporate any animal terminology. Engaging in frivolous behavior illustrates vividly such an argument.

The Arabic expressions utilized in this study were derived from colloquial Arabic rather than standard Arabic, which may enhance learning, as this is the everyday spoken

language of the learners, thereby facilitating their acquisition of corresponding English expressions efficiently and effectively. Standard Arabic is predominantly utilized in formal written contexts, by educated individuals, or for academic purposes. The spoken language (colloquial) embodies the authentic communication of ordinary individuals and the informal context of daily life.

Based on the preceding discussion, it is advisable for educators and university instructors to instruct on such expressions by emphasizing the similarities and differences in vocabulary instruction, as there are common expressions in both cultures and languages that enhance the learning process.

It is advisable for young learners to employ animations, video games, and other intelligent audio-visual applications that foster learning in a relaxed and enjoyable environment, facilitating the retention, recall, and mastery of expressions.

This study might help translators when encountering idioms in translation tasks as it provided a profound insight into the idiomatic expressions and potential errors likely to be committed if translated literally. For instance,^[9–12] demonstrated that the cultural aspects that are not addressed can cause difficulties for the translators, though^[12] pointed out that if systematic approaches aimed at interpreting idiomatic expressions in across cultures can increase the accuracy of translations, the results of which correspond to the results obtained in this study. Literal translation may accurately convey meaning in certain expressions; however, it often leads to misunderstanding or miscommunication. Therefore, it is essential for translators to recognize the disparities between their own culture and the target culture.

This study assists translators in efficiently accomplishing their tasks. Some translators exhibit competence, talent, and skill in cognitive processes and translation techniques; however, they struggle to convey the precise meaning due to their reliance on literal translation, lacking awareness of the cultural context and social heritage associated with expressions in the source language.

The findings of this study are confined to specific animal expressions; it is advisable to replicate this research with additional expressions and languages to explore further similarities and differences on a global scale. As already indicated, the study benefited from the researcher being a native Arabic speaker; still, the use of idiomatic expressions

that were randomly selected by the researcher may have accommodated bias. For future studies furthering objectivity, the group of experts could be broader, or specific inclusion of experts based on some standard linguistic corpora used. Additional research can investigate the correlation between certain textual factors associated with animal idiomatic expressions in Arabic and English^[26].

5. Conclusions

This research therefore aims at identifying animal idiomatic expressions in both Arabic and English languages and as a result offers a prospect toward the culture and language of both languages through a contrastive analysis and cross-cultural pragmatic approach by exploring, comparing and analyzing cultural and linguistic aspects of these idioms which have not been extensively investigated in Arabic-English languages. Idiomatic expressions have cultural implications which include affirmative reflections of a particular culture's values, beliefs and behaviors. However, idioms closely associated with animals tend to have specific cultural implications and, therefore can be considered as an important focus of cultural pragmatic investigation. In this course of study, how animals were incorporated into idioms was analyzed and several important conclusions were made concerning their incorporation into language and society.

A main finding of the research is that some animal idiom expressions give similar connotative meanings in Arabic and English. Phrases like crocodile tears and lion's share prove that people of different cultures use identical phrases to describe different ideas, for instance, deceit and supremacy. However, other idiomatic expressions are of the same nature, yet different animals are used, depending on the culture. For instance, while the English version refers to the "black sheep" meaning individuality the Arabic version is "السوداء القطة" (the black duck); therefore, it is clear that different animals may embody similar concepts. However, some English idioms borrow from the world of animals and have no counterpart in Arabic such as 'being in the doghouse' Even though Arabic colloquialism is expressive, most of the time has a similar idea that is non-animal related. I recently came across such examples which prove how it is not possible to inter- translate idioms from one language to another while stressing the significance of perfect and thorough cultural

interpretation.

This study shows that idiomatic expressions convey shared cultural beliefs and understandings, and as such, help uncover how Arabic speakers, and English speakers, in particular, think about human characteristics and societal concerns. In this way, by highlighting these cultural premises the research contributes to intercultural understanding and overcoming of communication discrepancies. For educators, the conclusions call for the inclusion of idiomatic expressions in the language curriculum, particularly when they are linked to culture. Alertness to both cross-cultural expressions and cultural-specific forms will enhance the student's understanding and lead to near-fluency in the adopted language. Furthermore, it would also help translators since translating idioms almost always results in communication breakdown and or confusion. Thus, their problem rests in the fact that they tend to look for register and cultural parallels and fail to understand that if a phrase is an idiom in the source language it may not be an idiom in the target language but an oddity which is quite unidiomatic in the target culture.

Nevertheless, the study is not devoid of limitations and they include the following: The analysis was specific to only a few selected idiomatic expressions; this may limit the generalization of the study results. Language as we know is ever-changing and dynamic; thus, idiomatic expressions may quite differ not only between languages but within dialects and regions of a particular language. However, since this study samples only casual conversation in Arabic, the results may not reflect the use of idioms frequently employed in Standard Arabic commonly used in official and educational settings. However, the utilization of colloquial Arabic has some advantages since it tends to focus on the common language in use, making it easier for the learner to understand English idioms.

There is also the problem of no experimental data obtained from native listeners. Though the study gives a relative measure of the difference between two groups of idiomatic expressions, the investigation of how the L2 learners and native Arabic and English speakers understand such idiomatic expressions and how they can be used effectively has not been ascertained sufficiently. Using samples of native speakers when administering questionnaires or interviews would return more detailed data on how idioms are used and how they are understood as embodiments of culture. Moreover,

the shortcoming of this approach is that many significant types of idiomatic expressions are excluded; for example, only idioms associated with animals were analysed in this study. Extending the study could contribute to a better definition of idiomatic language and its relation to culture.

Therefore, cultural sensitivity in both language education as well as translation should embrace the use of idiomatic expressions. To teachers, the use of idioms as a teaching tool together with support pictures and the use of storytelling as well as interactive learning tools can help the knowledge and understanding of culturally bound idioms. One of the issues presented to translators is that of dealing with idioms, where a lot of thought must be given to how an idiom can be translated into another culture, which could be an area that translation training might usefully focus on, namely cross-cultural awareness. The result also provides the implication for AI translation tools, showing that the consideration of cultural context might enhance the translation performance as well as the user experience. Another study should extend the research to other idioms, use both colloquial and modern standard Arabic and address native speakers for detailed information. In sum, enlarging idiomatic expressions' role in international communications and laying a theoretical and practical groundwork for language learning, translation, and development of AI serves as the general implications of the study.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

This study did not involve any human or animal subjects and therefore did not require approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB). The research was strictly linguistic in nature, focusing on the analysis of idiomatic expressions in Arabic and English, which does not entail interactions with human participants or personal data collection. Consequently, an IRB statement is not applicable for this study.

Informed Consent Statement

Since the study does not involve human participants, interviews, or collection of personal information, no informed consent was necessary. The research was conducted solely through linguistic analysis of publicly accessible idiomatic expressions and did not interact with or affect any individual participants.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting this study's findings comprise idiomatic expressions collected from available linguistic resources, previous literature, and the author's extensive knowledge as a native speaker and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructor. These data sources are openly accessible within published literature and language repositories, which are cited in the manuscript's reference section. Additional data are available upon reasonable request to the corresponding author, subject to any necessary conditions for privacy or confidentiality of third-party sources.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in this study.

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