

## Expressions Idiomatic in Teaching/Training of the Languages between Marginality and Recognition

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### Abstract

*Omnipresent in our daily life, effecient when the speaker wants to express certain subtleties of feeling, emotions or thought.... The idiomatic expressions are part of the informal language; one finds them in writing as well as in oral expression; they especially appear useful and very important in the message transmission when one seizes linguistic "original" combinations .... But for which reason are they regarded as "minor type"? Why are they perceived as a problem in language teaching/training (Arabic, French, English or any other language)? Which place do they occupy in the dictionaries?*

*In our intervention, we will try to answer these questions and many others, those which have a close relationship to the linguistic practices but more especially the foreign civilization and language teaching concerning the intercultural one. We will consider the literal meaning and the idiomatic meaning of some chosen expressions, pertaining to various languages and cultures, we will see the difficulties as for the acquisition of a idiomatism in a foreign language while trying to translate it into other languages. We will finally insist on the importance to have in each language a dictionary of idiomatic expressions, a true access not only to the foreign language but also an opening to the other cultures.*

*Teaching/training of a foreign language yet very did not draw. To acquire a language, its culture should, from now on, be also targeted. Such tasks require to lean still and more seriously on the idiomatic expressions. A back and forth between two languages, two cultures, the application of equivalences could, possibly, remove an number ambiguities and circumvent several obstacles.*

### For a cultural competence

Can one teach or learn a language without the culture which it conveys, without approaching the daily reality of its native speakers, their practices, and their own attitudes?

To know the meaning of the words, to master the orthography and the syntax rules, would it be enough to understand a language perfectly?.

- 1- It is true that in the Algerian curricula, no interest is given to the Other's culture, it is not the Priority or a Priority.
- 2- The recent methods of languages 'teaching/training rely on cultural competence and the discovery of other civilizations.
- 3- The teacher has sufficient freedom to even slip to exploit texts and expressions to forge cultural competence at his learning.
- 4- A learner motivated and curious enough will release convergences and the divergences between their culture and the other's culture.

### And the context...

In this respect, a coherent teaching considers the language and the culture in their context. It is this contextualization which makes it possible to release the topic approached and to determine the production situation.

Philippe Blanchet insists on the inherent relation between language and culture:

« ...rappelons que **culture et langue** sont une construction sociale permanente indissociablement liée, un **processus complexe** et non un produit fini, homogène et **tranché**. Une **culture** constitue ainsi, elle aussi, un **système complexe**, une **globalité ouverte** et **organisée**, **abstraction émergente** qui n'existe que par les **pratiques effectives des acteurs culturels** »

<sup>1</sup>Traduction: "... let us recall that culture and language are a permanent social construction closely dependent, a complex process and not an end product, homogeneous and clear-cut. A culture constitutes thus a complex system, an open and organized wholeness, emergent abstraction which exists only by the effective practices of the cultural actors."

In his work "*The Shock of Cultures*", Carmel Camilleri<sup>2</sup> borders the intercultural clash and the negative contacts between cultures:

"- *absence of taking into account of the difference* (ignorance of the existence of cultures to the non-elitist meaning);

- *ignorance of the cultural codes* (ignorance of the system of significance suitable for the culture – other - including the language or the lecte!);

- *ignorance of the reference field of the Other* (networks of sociability in which they live);

- *ignorance of the personal way of the Other to refer to their field* (reduction of its autonomy of individual, hyper-deterministic vision of their behavior);

- *judgement of the difference* (simplistic vision of the cultural groups in terms of sliced inside /outside and of evolution of primitive with civilized):

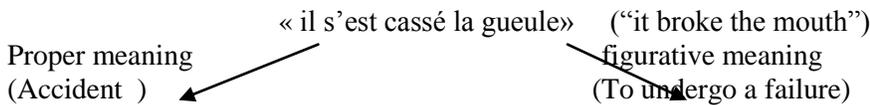
- *projection of illegitimate contents in the difference* (reduction of the individual to an abstract example of the cultural group without taking into account of its autonomy or social factors and conversely)."

Language and Culture ————— Idiomatic expressions (EI)

- a- EI: construction or set phrase by the use which does not have necessarily a literal equivalent in other languages.
- b- EI: particular to a language and often passes by an image.
- c- EI: carry a meaning by its whole and not by each word that composes it.

### Operation of the EI

- 1- The expression idiomatic put on the shift between the significance and the direction which is specific to the language.



There exists in Algerian Arabic dialect an equivalent expression to that one: “طاح على راسه”, whose literal translation in French wants to say another thing «tomber sur la tête» (“to fall on the head)

- 2- The principle of the language is to exploit the significances and the use which one - makes of it, the language becomes a very refined tool.
- 3- The EI cannot be translated literally in another language, because their meaning is closely related to the culture and the history of their own country.

### Let's take some examples

« Tomber dans les pommes »  
 - which means to lose consciousness, to faint,  
 translated literally into:

طاح ف التفاح

- It is deprived of any metaphorical load, considering only the proper meaning which wants to say to fall in an apple field.

**The origin of an expression : « Tomber dans les pommes » (“To faint” )**  
 attested only in 1889 according to Chautard, became extremely frequent.

<sup>1</sup> P. Blanchet. 2000. *La linguistique de terrain, méthode et théorie, une approche ethnographique*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires, pp. 113-114.

<sup>2</sup> C. Camilleri. 1989. *Le choc des cultures*. Paris : L'Harmattan.

Fault of knowing the origin, A. Dauzat had suggested that it was about a corruption of “swoon” (swoon), he was followed by others (Mr. Rat, P. Guiraud, French Phrases), but of swooning of it disappeared at the 15th century and is never attested in the form “to be in swoon” or “to fall into swoon” a slang philologist, specialist in Middle French which joined Dauzat and Guiraud qualifying the expression “To fall or To be into apples” of spontaneous creation, influenced by or to copy on another expression “Being in cooked apples” to indicate a state of tiredness or of explainable wear by the semantism of *to be cooked*.

### Idiomatic expressions and language teaching

- The lexicon of a language reflects the culture attached to this language. So that one warned learner (non naive) interprets an idiomatic expression correctly, an extralinguistic knowledge is essential, the establishment of analogies between two cultures is not enough.
- The cultural identity and natural associations on which the originality of the idiomatic statements relies represent obstacles for comprehension:
- « L’habit ne fait pas le moine » (dress does not make the monk) (“Do not judge a book by its cover”) and “تغطي الشمس بالغربال” (to hide the sun with a sieve): belong to three different cultures
- “Un coup d’épée dans l’eau » et « éclairer la lanterne “(A blow of sword in water) and (to light somebody’s lantern) just like “بالرزانة تتباع الصوف” (with patience the wool will be sold) or “ضربه بالفاس ولا عشرة بالقادومه” (a blow with a pickaxe is better than ten with the shovel) is obsolete EI.
- « Donner de l’éperon ou un coup d’éperon » (To give spur or a blow of spur( and “قفز” (jump) which would be equivalent to the speed in acting
- “A l’attente que l’herbe pousse, le bœuf meurt de faim» (In waiting that the grass grows, the ox dies of hunger) and “الى حج حج ولى عوق عوق” (who did the pilgrimage, it’s already pilgrimage): are also close to the expressed meaning: the hesitation in the long term does not carry out the discounted projects.

### For which teaching

The teaching of foreign languages can integrate as well idiomatic expressions in either the programmed teaching: translators training or we can literally translate constructions from the mother tongue to the target language. It is advised to teach the idiomatic expressions having an approximate correspondence between the two languages at the intermediate level

Examples: in French we have the expression « les bras m’en tombent » (you could have knocked me down with a feather) which has its equivalent in Arabic “ما تلى كراع و دراع” these two expressions indicate amazement and the great surprise; they use the same image of this part of the body that is the “arm”, its rupture or its inertia to express the impotence and the suppression of any reaction. This image of the “arm” corresponds deeply to the persistent phantasm of the “parcelled out body”.

- Other idiomatic expressions do not have any correspondence could be taught on a more advanced level:

Example: « Etre dans les bras de Morphée» (To be in the arms of Morphée): to sleep deeply, mythological allusion to the god of the sleep. The bringing together between the slim sleep and bodies is a literary and cultural topic worthy, at least in the graeco-latin tradition.

Whereas the expression « درا عها ميت » (its arm is dead) is used to nominate the person who does not achieve her duties and fact proof of laziness or laxism, (woman for the pieces of housework)

- One should not neglect the context in which the idiomatic expression is produced, that it is mother tongue, second language or foreign language, the contextualization is the most adapted means to learn how with learning to use the idioms in the speech while paying attention to the language register.

- Ultimately, we believe that teaching/training of a mother tongue, second language, foreign language and thus of the culture which it vehicles must go through the lexicon where the phraseology of the expressions is idiomatic, expressing the feelings, the feelings or a popular wisdom. Example: “**lever ou soulever le cœur**” ( to raise or raise the heart) / قلبه طلع: to express nausea and the dislike

### Approach of equivalences of meaning in the idiomatic expressions

I- Idiomatic expression translated literally

II- =

Different meaning

meaning1 ≠ meaning2

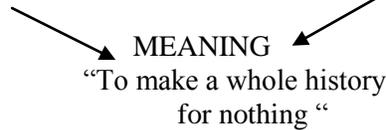
III- EI/French: “**En faire tout un fromage** » (to make a whole cheese of it “ translated into Arabic : دار قاع جين  
 EI/Arabic: “ دار قفة حس»: ( He produced a shopping cart of noise) translated into French “ Il a produit un panier de bruit”

IV- **Approaches** of **direction**  
 French = idiomatic expression

Arabic = idiomatic expression:

1) **En faire tout un fromage** = Il a produit un panier de bruit  
 Translated into English : ( In making a whole cheese) = ( It produced a shopping cart of noise)

دار قاع جين = دار قفة حس



The expression « **Habiller quelqu’un pour l’hiver**» (To equip somebody for winter) means to say evil of him. The gossiping or calumny is what recovers “Equips”, that which one says evil. This image is that to put on the back of somebody ` , to charge it. Another expression in French language comes to support the latter: « Tailler un costard, un costume ou une veste à quelqu’un», (To cut a suit, a costume or a jacket for somebody), little attested in the written, but current in the spoken language, this recent expression carries out also the image to put on the back, to endorse and charge.

Two equivalent expressions in Algerian Arabic approach the same topic: gossiping and calumnies:

يقطع فيه (literally: it cuts out it, it parcels out it)

يأكله في لحمه (literally: he eats his flesh of him): the pomposity used here with the pronoun attached in لحمه comes to support the meaning and to insist on the fact, in the literal translation also arise “him” and “its” to avoid any confusion with the pronominal form “« (se) manger sa chair » : eating its flesh” يأكل في لحمه

**Idiomatic expressions and dictionaries**

By definition, the idiomatic expressions have a great rigidity (freezing of structures or fixity) which is specific to the lexicalized units which constitute a special part of the lexicon. Constant associations of these lexicalized units represent the recurring use and the verbal practice and go through two inevitable stages:

- 1 the process of freezing (stability in significance)
- 2 the frequency of employment (the use)

Examples: “ pas de photo / graphie » (no photos)

“Le vêtement ne fait pas le curé ou le prêtre” (Clothing does not make the priest or the priest)

**Which dictionary for the idiomatic expressions?**

The frequency of use of the idioms is responsible for their freezing, considering their pragmatic aspect, but this frequency, is it sufficient to insert them into the dictionaries?. The use of the idiomatic expressions in the speech is justified by the need for the speaker and his expectations needing to summarize a situation, taking in consideration the statute of their addressee and their various capacities with being able to well receive the speech which is often adapted to the receiver and the register shared between the interlocutors.

**Appropriate language register**

- One cannot allow oneself to employ the EI with no matter with whom or anywhere, one can employ « casser sa pipe», ( “to break his pipe), « faire du boudin» (to make roll) for *to die*
- « Laisser tomber» (To let fall), « baisser les bras» (lower the arms) for *to give up*
- That will be suitable and possible familiarly in a register of language which indicates a sufficient familiarity or a usual intimacy between the interlocutors.

**Which entry for the idiom?**

- EI is a complex, connotative and fixed lexical item in a language by the cultural tradition
- The EI are indecomposable groups of lexical items that represent a good reason so that they constitute specific entries in the dictionaries.
- Which would be the principal criterion to see clear how to distinguish a keyword in a EI and to insert it in a dictionary article.

- In 1978, Biderman questions the lexicographical practice which makes it possible to insert the EI in the entry of the first verb or substantive which composes them.

Three possibilities are offered to us:

To classify the phrases according to their forms.

B-To classify the phrases by semantic and metaphorical fields.

C- To classify the phrases according to the field of origin of the words which forms it (names of the parts of the body, animals, colors...??)

A- An alphabetical ranking offers more convenience whereas the rankings below (2 and 3) are more subjective and arbitrary.

- The phrase is classified following the first substantive that it comprises, unless the meaning effect relates to a verb, an adjective or a second substantive.

In the expressions formed on:

-*Langue de bois* (Set language) (fixed language)

-*Langue de vipère* (Venomous tongue) (malicious gossip, gossipping)

- The second which is used as reference mark. The nomenclature is thus nominal.

The world of the idioms has its laws: it implements regular semantic transfers, the concrete one with the abstract, from physical to psychic one; it approaches social judgments, expresses coherent contents (pleasure and pain, success and failure, health and disease, life and death, interhuman relations ...)

"chanter comme une casserole" (to sing like a casserole) and; to envy a deaf person "in: (يا سعدك يا لطرش) correspond to sing false in the two cultures.

The intercultural one can be approached differently to serve languages teaching/training. While respecting and applying the official curricula, the teacher must distinguish the social aspect from the functional aspect of a target language thanks to his know-how.

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