



IRAQI
Academic Scientific Journals



العراقية
المجلات الأكاديمية العلمية



ISSN: 2663-9033 (Online) | ISSN: 2616-6224 (Print)

Journal of Language Studies

Contents available at: <https://jls.tu.edu.iq/index.php/JLS>

Challenges in Translating Iraqi Colloquial Color Expressions into English

Rawaa Fatah Haroush*

Tikrit University\College of Arts
rawaa.fatah.haroush@gmail.com

&

Asst.Prof.Dr. Marwah kareem Ali
Tikrit University\College of Arts
Marwakareem16@tu.edu.iq

Received: 18 / 12/2024, Accepted: 28/1 /2025, Online Published: 30 /9 /2025

Abstract

This study examines how color connotations vary across cultures, particularly focusing on Iraqi colloquial Arabic. It highlights that color expressions in this dialect often embody social, emotional, and environmental meanings that may not translate directly into English. By analyzing (6) specific color expressions used in everyday communication, the research involves translations provided by (5) MA candidates in translation department, college of Arts, University of Tikrit. The findings reveal the complexities translators encounter, as they must convey not just the literal meanings of these colors but also their cultural significance. This underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in translation, as understanding the context behind color terms is crucial for accurate and meaningful translation. Ultimately, the study contributes

* **Corresponding Author:** Rawaa Fatah Haroush, **Email:** rawaa.fatah.haroush@gmail.com

Affiliation: Tikrit University - Iraq

© This is an open access article under the CC by licenses <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>



valuable insights to the field of translation studies, emphasizing the need to appreciate the nuances of color terminology in different cultural contexts.

Keywords: challenges, color expressions, cultural connotations, Iraqi colloquial context, translation,

التحديات في ترجمة تعابير الألوان العامية العراقية إلى اللغة الإنجليزية

رواء فتاح حروش
جامعة تكريت/ كلية الآداب/ قسم الترجمة
و
أ.م.د. مروة كريم علي
جامعة تكريت/ كلية الآداب/ قسم الترجمة

الملخص

تدرس هذه الدراسة كيف تختلف دلالات الألوان عبر الثقافات، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على اللهجة العربية العراقية. وتسلط الضوء على أن مصطلحات الألوان في هذه اللهجة غالباً ما تجسد معاني اجتماعية وعاطفية وبيئية قد لا تترجم بشكل مباشر إلى الإنجليزية. من خلال تحليل (6) تعبيراً للألوان مستخدمة في التواصل اليومي وترجمها (5) من طلبة الماجستير في قسم الترجمة في كلية الآداب من جامعة تكريت. تكشف النتائج عن التعقيدات التي يواجهها المترجمون، حيث يجب عليهم نقل المعاني الحرفية لهذه الألوان بالإضافة إلى دلالاتها الثقافية. وهذا يبرز أهمية الحساسية الثقافية في الترجمة، إذ إن فهم السياق وراء مصطلحات الألوان أمر حاسم لترجمة دقيقة وذات مغزى. في النهاية، تسهم الدراسة في تقديم رؤى قيمة في مجال دراسات الترجمة، مؤكدة على الحاجة إلى تقدير الفروق الدقيقة في مصطلحات الألوان في سياقات ثقافية مختلفة.

الكلمات الرئيسية: التحديات، تعابير الألوان، الدلالات الثقافية، السياق العامي العراقي، الترجمة.

1. INTRODUCTION

Color is a universal phenomenon that is fundamental to the human experience and to people's daily lives. Individuals constantly utilize color expressions to convey their comprehension and ideas, such as He is blackened hearted (Taylor, 2004). As stated by Zhang (2007), color expressions are playing a more and more important role in

human communication, especially in bilingual communication. Color expressions in any language are not only expressing the colors themselves, but also are carved and endowed with rich cultural features of each nation. The relation between culture and language leaves a great effect on the connotations of color words (Wang, 2007). Color expressions play a vital role by expressing the word's meaning, strengthen languages' influence, can describe things, and have a wide range of cultural connotations; in other words, they may be employed literally or metaphorically to express meanings that associate with different colors (Rasekh, 2011).

Many color expressions in English and Arabic have both literal and figurative meanings, such as red line, white flag, green light, black box, blue line, and red carpet. Some expressions convey idiomatic meanings only, like black market, blue-blooded, and the Arabic phrases (الأبيضان) the two whites, referring to salt and sugar or milk and water and (الأخضران) the two greens, meaning grass and trees. Central to culture and communication is the challenge of translating culture-specific expressions. Translating the cultural significance of expressions poses significant challenges, particularly for non-native speakers (Badawi, 2008: 3). Therefore, translating color expressions in colloquial Arabic represents a real challenge to all translators, especially when translation occurs from Arabic into English as it is problematic and poses serious difficulties for translators. Colloquial Arabic color expressions have an ambiguous context which is considered a necessary factor in creativity in translation and conveying the intended meaning of the colloquial Arabic expressions. Thus, translating color expressions used in the Iraqi colloquial context presents significant challenges due to the semantic ambiguity that stems from cultural, contextual, and linguistic factors. This in turn forms the problem statement which will be examined in this research. This study will investigate the concept of color expressions. It presents the factors that affect their meaning and cause the semantic ambiguity. Additionally, it investigates colloquialism, the challenges of translating color expressions and the strategies employed to overcome these challenges

2. THE CONCEPT OF COLOR EXPRESSION

As stated by Zhang (2007), color expressions are playing a more and more important role in human communication, especially in bilingual communication. Color expressions in any language are not only expressing the colors themselves, but also are carved and endowed with rich cultural features of each nation. The relation between culture and language leaves a great effect on the connotations of color words (Wang, 2007). Color expressions play a vital role by expressing the word's meaning, strengthen languages' influence, can describe things, and have a wide range of cultural connotations; in other words, they may be employed literally or metaphorically to express meanings that associate with different colors (Rasekh, 2011).

Ibn Manzoor (1993: 585) defines color as “a (form/shape property), such as as-Sawad (blackness) and Al-Humarah (redness)”. What sets one object apart from another is its color. The relationship that exists between color, darkness, and light is made clear by this definition of color. Color is the border that separates objects and gives them their

distinct shape. Color perception is limited to the presence of light and is not possible in complete darkness.

Arabic dictionaries define color terms by supplying general analysis of how people commonly perceive and associate colors, or define a color in relation to its opposite or through using systemic metaphors to describe the color's meaning and connotations such as: black is dark, white is associated with purity, green is linked to prosperity, red is connected to the 'Ajami, (meaning someone whose native language is not Arabic), or black can also metaphorically represent the jinn/devil or (Sawad al-Qawm) which refers to the great majority of people (Ibn Manzoor, 1993).

3. FACTORS AFFECTING THE MEANING OF COLOR

This section focuses on the main factors that have a role in the use of color expressions in different situations, as clarified in the following subsections:

3.1 Cultural Factors

Colors play an essential role in people's communication. Languages represent the gradation of colors found in nature by a series of distinct categories. These categories of color differ along with the different cultures. There is no single language is said to include all colour variations (McNeil, 1972: 21). As pointed out by Benner (1982: 9) that the differences between cultures are arised from their different reactions to physical colors that are, incidentlly, resulted from the cultural traditions and the different past experiences.

One color might be interpreted in one way in a language and in a totally different way in another, i. e. color expressions have an impact on human bilingual communication since they now encompass complex cultural connotations specific to each country, rather than only expressing the color itself. According to Kommonen (2011:1-2), people's connections with any color are influenced by the common experiences they have within their society. Then, it is continued to mention that a single color within a culture may potentially represent several ideas depending on the situation. White, for instance, is associated with purity, joy, and glory as in religious symbols, but a "white flag" seen during war times is viewed as a symbol of surrender.

3.2 Social Factors

Color vocabulary expands through experience and engagement in color-related hobbies. Typically, females spend more time on activities associated with color, such as selecting clothing and accessories (Lakoff, 1973). Similarly, males working in professional settings related to color use more specific terms that others may not.

Social differences within a culture influence how color expressions are understood. For instance, in an urban community, 'red' and 'pink' are categorized as distinct colors, whereas in a rural community, they are viewed as variations of the same color, with 'red' representing the darker shade and 'pink' the lighter one (Salim & Mohammed, 1982: 9).

Both Arabic and English possess a comprehensive set of eleven basic color expressions, reflecting their connection to complex cultures. However, speakers are not confined to these basic expressions; they can also describe colors using variations based on basic colors, similarities to tangible objects, and specific or descriptive terms (Simpson & Tarrant, 1992).

3.3 Religious Factors

Religion has a special effect in determining the connotations of colors, since some religions associate colors with specific meanings. Qurnia (1985: 93) identifies four functions of color in the Glorious Qur'an: expressive, symbolic, visual, and aesthetic. A single-color term can embody all these functions within a specific context. The expressive function relates to the emotional impact of color, conveying feelings such as fear, joy, or dread. The symbolic function involves using color as a representation of an object or idea. The aesthetic function highlights the beauty of God's creation through color. Lastly, the visual function refers to the basic ability to perceive color, which is linked to its physical properties, such as wavelength and frequency.

Paterson (2003:40) states that white is used during Christmas and Easter as a symbol of purity, innocence and holiness. When one visits mosques or other sacred Islamic places, a lot of green colors would be probably noticed. This tradition has special importance in the Islamic culture and is often used to represent Islam to other religions. For Muslims, green also has favorable connotations and is considered to be the most beautiful color, since it is usually associated with Muslim believers and paradise as in:

﴿أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَيَلْبَسُونَ ثِيَابًا خُضْرًا مِّن سُنْدُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُّتَّكِنِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ نِعْمَ الثَّوَابُ وَحَسُنَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا﴾ (الكهف: 31)

(These! For them will be 'Adn (Eden) Paradise (everlasting Gardens); wherein rivers flow underneath them; therein they will be adorned with bracelets of gold, and they will wear green garments of fine and thick silk. They will recline therein on raised thrones. How good is the reward, and what an excellent Murtafaq (dwelling, resting place.)) (Al-Hilali & Khan,

Ameen (2009: 159-166) notes that the frequent references to colors in numerous verses of the Glorious Qur'an highlight the significance of color and its various meanings in Islam. A certain color may have a particular connotation in Islam or other faiths (De Bortoli & Maroto, 2011: 10-11). In Islam, for instance, some colors gather particular connotations from the Quranic text in which they occur, thus (white) usually connotes purity and good outcome as in:

﴿وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ابْيَضَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ﴾ (آل عمران: 107)

(And for those whose faces will become white, they will be in Allâh's Mercy (Paradise), therein they shall dwell forever) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1984:107).

4. COLLOQUIALISM AND COLOR EXPRESSIONS

Colloquialism, also known as colloquial language, is a general term used by linguists to denote informal communication and to stand in for all forms of informal language, including jargon, slang, vernacular, and vulgar language (when occurring in informal context). McCrimmon (1972) states that informal conversations might contain a lot of slang words, phrases, and statements at times or very little of them. This indicates that the amount of slang used in informal conversations depends on the situation and context of the exchanges. According to Leech and Svartvik (1975: 24), colloquial language is thought to be the first language that a kid learns and serves as a wide concept that encompasses all forms of informal language variations. This lends credence to the theory that human language is easiest and most natural in colloquial form. Partridge (1990: 262) claims that the term "colloquialism" originates from the Latin word "colloqui" (to speak). Colloquialism is a phenomenon in language that is related to both informal language use and verbal interactions more so than written ones.

In Iraqi Arabic, the Arabic spoken in the country, is renowned for its vibrant and varied vernacular. There are many colorful expressions and idioms in Iraqi Arabic that frequently employ color terminology, in addition to the formal, literary Arabic used in writing and other formal contexts. The cultural and linguistic subtleties of this Arabic dialect are revealed through these color-based colloquialisms. In Iraqi colloquial, the colour black is associated with the darkness, death, funerals, mourning as well as grief, mischief and animosity. Therefore, (أسود من خلقته قدر إشنان لا يبيضه) means the negativity feature in someone's nature cannot be changed no matter how the person tries to change the community's opinion about it; the same applies to (خبر الأسود ما يطلع جذب) which signifies that people should believe in bad news). Iraqi people use this phrase (كليه أسود) to describe someone as spiteful (Mahdi, 2019).

4.1 Challenges of Translating Color Expressions

Newmark (2001: 328) suggests that while some view culture as fundamental to translation, he regards it as the greatest obstacle to achieving accurate and satisfactory translations. Translation is fundamentally a human activity that facilitates the exchange of ideas and thoughts among people, regardless of their diverse languages and cultures.

Many color expressions in English and Arabic have both literal and figurative meanings, such as red line, white flag, green light, black box, blue line, and red carpet. Some expressions convey idiomatic meanings only, like black market, blue-blooded, and the Arabic phrases (الأبيضان) the two whites, referring to salt and sugar or milk and water and (الأخضران) the two greens, meaning grass and trees. Central to culture and communication is the challenge of translating culture-specific expressions. Translating the cultural significance of expressions poses significant challenges, particularly for non-native speakers (Badawi, 2008: 3).

According to Mustafa and Ali (2024: 201) expressions of culture-specific nature have no one-word to one-word equivalent meaning in the TL, making their translation a difficult task for translators. This in turn requires translators to comprehend the meaning

of the source text and the context in which it is used to find an appropriate translation for it.

4.2 Strategies for Translating Color Expressions

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995:21) conducted a study of translation from a linguistic perspective, proposing their translation strategies through a comparative stylistic analysis of English and French. This approach has since been applied to various languages by numerous researchers. Their model includes two main strategies, which can be further divided into seven specific strategies that will be discussed individually. This model of translation strategies focuses on the concept of the "translation unit," which moves beyond word-level translation. It is defined as "the smallest segment of the utterance whose signs are interconnected in such a way that they should not be translated separately" (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995:21).

Abood and Ali (2024: 235) recommend that the translator should understand the context when translating a text from English into Arabic, since it is quite difficult to understand the intended meaning of an expression out of its context. Ni (2015:58) states that Vinay and Darbelnet's classification of translation strategies is quite comprehensive. They identify two primary strategies—direct and oblique translation—which encompass a total of seven specific procedures. The strategies of translation suggested by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) are clarified in the following table:

Table 1: Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) strategies for translation

Direct strategy	Oblique strategy
Borrowing gives the target text a stylistic effect by borrowing cultural terms from the source language, e.g.: dollar is translated into Arabic as (دولار).	Transposition is the translation of one class in the source language into another class in the target language while retaining the meaning, e.g.: in this sentence (I want to meet him), the verb (meet) can be translated as noun (مقابله) into Arabic as (أريد مقابله).
Calque is a type of borrowing where expressions are taken from the source language and translated word for word into the target language, e.g.: play a role is translated into Arabic as (لعب دوراً).	Modulation means translating the source language information into the target language from a different perspective, e.g.: (The Scarlet letter) is translated into Arabic as (الشاره القرمزيه).

<p>Literal translation is the direct translation of a source language text into a grammatically and idiomatically appropriate target language text, e.g.: (Ali is a student) is translated into Arabic as (علي يكون طالب).</p>	<p>Equivalence refers to the use of a quite different structure with different meaning. For example, (Open the door) is translated as (الطقس حار جدا).</p>
	<p>Adaptation occurs when a concept or situation in the source language does not exist in the target language and the translator needs to create a corresponding situation. It can be described as a special kind of equivalence, e.g.: (I am frightened) is translated into Arabic as (ابق معنا).</p>

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach, analyzing a total of (6) color expressions used in daily communication collected from official publications and specialized websites for Iraqi Arabic expressions. These expressions are translated by (5) MA candidates in Translation Department, College of Arts, University of Tikrit. This study adopts Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model of translation which offers a systematic approach to have appropriate strategies of translation when translating color expressions under study. Providing contextual examples demonstrating how color expressions are used in various situations. This aids in understanding the cultural connotations of the expressions, guiding more accurate translations. As for organizing the samples for analysis, the source sentence is identified by using the abbreviation (SS) with the number of the text concerned, i.e., SS1, SS2, SS3...etc., while the target sentences are identified by this abbreviation (TSs). The translations are numbered in sequence as T1, T2, T3... etc. The unit of analysis is the color expression used in the Iraqi Arabic colloquial context. The color expression is underlined in both source and target texts to be easily recognized as a unit of analysis. Concerning the analysis of data, the focus is on defining the context in which the color expression concerned is used by clarifying its meaning and usage.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis started with presenting the source sentence containing color expression followed by its translations. Then, these translations were analyzed according to the translation model adopted in this study. The translation model was used to identify the strategies and procedures of translation according to Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) model of direct and oblique translation as employed by translators when translating these color expressions. Then, these color expressions and their translations were discussed in order to clarify the appropriateness of translations in relation to the meaning of the source color. Finally, a table including these details was presented after discussing each color expression, followed by a suggested translation to be adopted as an appropriate translation for the expressions concerned.

SS1: شعر ج اخضر

TSs:

T1: Your hair is green.

T2: Your hair is damp.

T3: You are a fashionable person.

T4: Your hair is green.

T5: Your hair is damp.

Context:

The color expression (اخضر) used in this Iraqi Arabic colloquial sentence reflects different meanings, as it can be used for indicating the color of something or it can be used for indicating dampness. Therefore, it causes a lexical ambiguity for the translator in terms of identifying its meaning in the target language. In this sentence, this expression (اخضر) is not a real or basic color, but it is an adjective derived from a color. In the Iraqi colloquial context, (اخضر) is used for signifying (dampness), as it can be used with such a sentence as (الملابس بعدها خضرة) meaning that the clothes are still wet or damp and need more time to dry. In order to remove the ambiguity related to the meaning of this expression (اخضر), it can be understood from the context in which this sentence is said, e.g. when washing hair alone or taking a shower; hence, it can be said that this (اخضر) is not used for showing color but it reflects dampness.

Analysis:

The Iraqi Arabic colloquial expressions are considered to be difficult when dealing with them in the context of translation. This is because they can have different meanings and connotations that are highly dependent on the cultural context in which they are used. In terms of translation, it can be noticed that almost all subjects (1, 3, and 4) failed to provide an appropriate translation for this expression (اخضر). This could be attributed to their misunderstanding of the real meaning of this expression when it is used in a colloquial context. Thus, all of them used direct translation strategy through applying literal translation procedure and translated it as a color (green), except for the subject (3) who used oblique translation strategy through applying modulation procedure by changing its grammatical structure from an adjective to a noun phrase and translated it as (a fashionable person), indicating modernity and imitating those living abroad or in Western or East Asian countries by dyeing the hair green, which is something they are familiar with, but it is unfamiliar to see an Iraqi girl with her hair dyed green. On the contrary, only (2) out of (5) subjects represented by (2 and 5) succeeded in providing appropriate English translation for it. They used oblique translation strategy through applying equivalence procedure and translated it as (damp), which is its correct meaning in this sentence. This indicates that these subjects understood the real meaning and use of this expression (اخضر) in the Iraqi Arabic colloquial language and therefore they succeeded in translating it into English. The following table summarizes the analysis of this expression in terms of its meaning, subjects' translations, strategy and procedure of translation applied by the subjects and the appropriateness of these translations.

Table 2: The analysis of the first color expression (اخضر)

SS	Meaning in SL	TSs	Strategy and of procedure translation	Appropriateness of translation
شعرج اخضر	Damp	T1: Your hair is <u>green</u> .	Direct: literal	-
		T2: Your hair is <u>damp</u> .	Oblique: equivalence	+
		T3: You are <u>a fashionable person</u> .	Oblique: modulation	-
		T4: Your hair is <u>green</u> .	Direct: literal	-
		T5: Your hair is <u>damp</u> .	Oblique: equivalence	+

The Suggested Translation:

Based on the analysis of this expression (اخضر), the following translation is suggested for it:

- Your hair is damp/ wet.

SS2: إزرگ الولد

TSs:

T1: The boy has choked.

T2: The boy got beaten.

T3: Blue boy.

T4: The boy has been blue.

T5: He is going to die.

Context:

In the Iraqi Arabic dialect, the expression "إزرگ" is a somewhat idiomatic or colloquial term that does not directly correspond to a basic color term. It is a verb derived from the color "blue" but its usage has evolved beyond just describing the color blue. Primarily, "إزرگ" is used to convey the sense of something being "choking" or "suffocating". This usage stems from the idea that when someone is choking on something, their airway is blocked and they feel a sensation of "blueness" or difficulty breathing. So, "إزرگ" became associated with the experience of choking or having one's breathing obstructed. For example, the phrase "(إزرگ الطفل)" would mean "the child is choking", not that the color of child is blue. Similarly, this sentence "(إزرگ من الدخان)" would mean "choking/suffocating because of the smoke", not that the smoke is blue in color. The lexical ambiguity arises because the root word is connected to the color blue, but the actual usage has shifted more towards this idea of choking or suffocating. The ambiguity is removed once this expression "إزرگ" is put in the context as in the examples above.

Analysis:

In terms of translation, it is clear that the subject (1) succeeded in giving the appropriate English translation for this expression (إزرگ), using oblique strategy through applying equivalence procedure and translating it as (choked) which is its correct meaning. This indicates that the real meaning and the use of this Iraqi colloquial

expression (ازرگ) are understood by this subject. While the rest of the subjects (2,3,4, and 5) failed in rendering the exact meaning for it. This could be ascribed to their misunderstanding of the real meaning and grammatical structure of this expression when it is used in a colloquial context. Thus, most of them used oblique strategy through applying modulation procedure and translated it as (got beaten, going to die) as the subjects (2 and 5) did, changing the point of view of the meaning of color expression as indicating a physical appearance and being in a state of choking. The rest of subjects (3 and 4) used direct strategy through applying literal procedure and translated it as (blue). The following table summarizes the analysis of this expression.

Table 3: The analysis of the second color expression (ازرگ)

SS	Meaning in SL	TSs	Strategy and of procedure of translation	Appropriateness of translation
ازرگ الولد	choked	T1: The boy <u>has choked</u> .	Oblique: equivalence	+
		T2: The boy <u>got beaten</u> .	Oblique: modulation	-
		T3: <u>Blue boy</u> .	Direct: literal	-
		T4: The boy <u>has been blue</u> .	Direct: literal	-
		T5: He is <u>going to die</u> .	Oblique: modulation	-

The Suggested Translation:

Based on the translations of this expression (ازرگ) and their appropriateness with its real meaning, the following translation is suggested for it:

- The boy is choked.

SS3: وجهك مصفر

TSs:

T1: Your face is yellow.

T2: Your face is as white as sheet.

T3: You look pale.

T4: Your face is yellowish.

T5: Your face is as white as sheet.

Context:

In the Iraqi Arabic colloquial context, the color expression "مصفر" is also used in an idiomatic way that goes beyond just describing the color yellow. It is adjective derived from the standard Arabic noun of color yellow (أصفر). Here, (مصفر) is used to convey the sense of being pale, sick, or jaundiced in appearance. This usage is often applied to describe the complexion or skin tone of a person who is not feeling well or is experiencing a health issue. Therefore, (وجهه مصفر) would mean "his face looks/is pale", implying that the person has an unhealthy, yellow-tinged appearance, rather than simply being the color yellow. Additionally, "مصفر" can also be used idiomatically to describe a state of worry, fear, or anxiety. The idea is that intense emotion can cause one's face to take on a paler, more sickly hue. So, a sentence like (كان مصفر من الخوف) would mean "he was pale with fear", emphasizing the person's anxious, unsettled state rather than a skin

color. The usage of "مصفر" in these non-color related senses is quite common in the Iraqi Arabic colloquial context.

Analysis:

As clarified earlier, dealing with the Iraqi colloquial expressions denoting colors is challenging because they have cultural references which lead to ambiguity in understanding the associative meaning whether they simply refer to color or mean something else. With regard to translation, it is clear that the subjects (1 and 4) failed to convey the meaning of this expression (مصفر), using direct strategy by applying literal procedure and translated it as (yellow). That means they didn't understand the intended meaning of color expressions when it is used in a colloquial context. While the subjects (2,3, and 5) succeeded in rendering its meaning appropriately. They all applied the oblique strategy, with (2 and 5) used adaptation procedure and translated it as (as white as sheet) changing the cultural reference by replacing a color by another, (3) used equivalence procedure and translated it as (pale) which is adequate translation. The table below provides a summary for the analysis of this color expression.

Table 4: The analysis of the third color expression (مصفر)

SS	Meaning in SL	TSs	Strategy and of procedure translation	Appropriateness of translation
وجهك مصفر	look pale	T1: Your face is <u>yellow</u> .	Direct: literal	-
		T2: Your face is as <u>white</u> as sheet.	Oblique: adaptation	+
		T3: You <u>look</u> pale.	Oblique: equivalence	+
		T4: Your face is <u>yellowish</u> .	Direct: literal	-
		T5: Your face is as <u>white</u> as sheet.	Oblique: adaptation	+

The Suggested Translation:

Based on the translations of this expression (مصفر) and their appropriateness with its real meaning, the following translations are suggested for it:

- You look pale.
- Your face is pale.

SS4: احمرت البنية

TSs:

T1: The girl blushed.

T2: The girl is shy.

T3: The girl felt shy.

T4: The girl got red.

T5: The girl turned red.

Context:

The Iraqi Arabic colloquial expression "إحمرت" is used idiomatically to convey meanings beyond describing the color red. The root word is "أحمر" which is the standard Arabic term for the color red. In the Iraqi dialect, "إحمرت" is used to describe a state of embarrassment or shyness. In this context, "إحمرت" implies that the person's face has become blushed, flushed or reddened, as a visible physical manifestation of their embarrassment. For example, the sentence (إحمرت البنية من الخجل) would mean "The girl blushed". The reddening of the face is used to signify the internal emotion of embarrassment or shyness. Another usage of "إحمرت" is to convey a sense of anger or annoyance. Similar to the previous example, the reddening of the face is seen as an outward sign of the person's inner state of irritation or aggression. A sentence like "إحمر وجهها من الغضب" would be translated as "her face flushed with anger." The verb "إحمرت" reflects the flushed appearance associated with feeling angry. So, "إحمرت" stems from the basic color expression (red), and in the Iraqi Arabic colloquial context, it is more often employed to describe emotional states like embarrassment and anger, where the physical reddening of the face is taken as an indicator of the internal feeling. A lack of awareness of these cultural nuances can lead to misunderstanding in translation in translation, affecting communication and the perceived meaning of expressions.

Analysis:

Concerning translation, the subjects (1, 2, and 3) succeeded in translating this expression and gave a relevant English translation. All of them used oblique strategy by applying equivalence procedure and translated it as (blushed) which is a correct translation, except for the subjects (2 and 3) who applied transposition procedure and translated it as (shy), by changing the grammatical structure of the word from verb to adjective, denoting the emotional state that when the girl feels shy, her face turns red. The rest subjects (4 and 5) failed to render the meaning. They used direct strategy by using literal procedure and translated it as (red) which means that they are confused by the real meaning of the expression. The table below clarifies the analysis of this color expression.

Table 5: The analysis of the fourth color expression (إحمرت)

SS	Meaning in SL	TSs	Strategy and of procedure translation	Appropriateness of translation
إحمرت البنية	Blushed	T1: The girl <u>blushed</u> .	Oblique: equivalence	+
		T2: The girl is <u>shy</u> .	Oblique: transposition	+
		T3: The girl <u>felt shy</u> .	Oblique: transposition	+
		T4: The girl <u>got red</u> .	Direct: literal	-
		T5: The girl turned red.	Direct: literal	-

The Suggested Translation:

The following translation is suggested for this expression (إحمرت):

- The girl blushed.

SS5: ساعة السودة

TSs:

T1: Black time.

T2: The black hour.

T3: The black hour.

T4: A terrible hour.

T5: The dark hour.

Context:

The color expression (ساعة السودة) used in the Iraqi Arabic cultural context reflects several meanings as it could be used for indicating the color of something or it could be used for indicating badness. Therefore, it poses a semantic ambiguity for the translators who are unaware of the real meaning in the target language. This expression (السودة) neither refers to a real color, nor means a specific 60-minute time period, but it is an adjective derived from a color. In this example, (السودة) is used for signifying (badness), as in this sentence (ساعة السودة اللي عرفتك بيها), indicating that you met someone in a certain time and then you regret the moment when you met him. To resolve the ambiguity of the exact meaning of this expression (السودة), it can be comprehended from the context in which this sentence is said that it expresses the regret felt by someone in a bad moment.

Analysis:

As it is evident that this expression "ساعة السودة" is confusing and poses ambiguity when being translated into English. Specifically, this expression has many connotations to be considered as mentioned earlier. Concerning translation, the subjects (1, 2,3, and 5) failed in translating this expression correctly. This attributed to the lack of knowledge of the translated when they deal with color expressions in the colloquial context. They used direct strategy through applying literal procedure and rendered it as (Black), excluding subject (5) who applied the modulation procedure and translated it as (dark), changing the point of view of the meaning of color expression, they may consider (dark) is the same as black. While subject (4) succeeded in giving a relevant meaning for this expression, using oblique strategy through applying equivalence procedure. The following table summarizes the analysis of this color expression.

Table 6: The analysis of the fifth color expression (السودة)

SS	Meaning in SL	TSs	Strategy and of procedure translation	Appropriateness of translation
ساعة السودة	A bad moment/ terrible hour	T1: <u>Black</u> time.	Direct: literal	-
		T2: The <u>black</u> hour.	Direct: literal	-
		T3: The <u>black</u> hour.	Direct: literal	-
		T4: <u>A terrible hour</u> .	Oblique: equivalence	+

		T5: The <u>dark</u> hour.	Oblique: modulation	-
--	--	---------------------------	---------------------	---

The Suggested Translation:

Based on the translations of this expression (السودة) and their appropriateness with its real meaning, the following translations are suggested for it:

- What a terrible hour!
- A bad moment.

SS 6: لا تحجيلي رمادي گلي لو ابيض لو اسود

TSs:

T1: Don't choose gray, you choose either black or white.

T2: Be clear.

T3: Don't tell me it's gray, say white or black.

T4: Don't tell me it's all gray, even if it is white or black.

T5: Don't beat around the bush, get to the point.

Context:

This sentence (لا تحجيلي رمادي گلي لو ابيض لو اسود) is often used when someone is trying to get a clear, unambiguous answer or response from another person, but is not referring to the colors (gray, white and black). The use of (رمادي) suggests an unwillingness to take a firm stance or provide a definitive response. Asking the other person (گلي لو ابيض لو اسود) is a way of demanding a clearness and preciseness rather than a vague or evasive one. This Iraqi Arabic expression reflects cultural preferences for direct, unambiguous communication, especially in difficult or ambiguous situations that require a clear position or answer. It is a pragmatic and rhetorically powerful expression used to cut through vagueness and evasiveness. Thus, it can be rendered into English as (Make it clear and do not be vague) and (Don't beat around the bush, get to the point).

Analysis:

This Iraqi expression (لا تحجيلي رمادي، گلي لو ابيض لو اسود) with these three colors is difficult to understand because it denotes different meanings. In terms of translation, there are several mistakes. For example, the subjects (1, 3, and 4) failed in giving an appropriate English translation. They used direct translation strategy through applying literal translation procedure and translated these colors as (gray, white and black) because of misunderstanding the accurate meaning of this Iraqi expression. While the rest of the subjects (2 and 5) succeeded in giving an appropriate English equivalence for it by using oblique translation strategy. The subject (2) applied the equivalence procedure, describing the same situation by different structural means, and the subject (5) applied adaptation by employing culture reference.

Table 7: The analysis of the seventh color expression (لا تحجيلي رمادي گلي لو ابيض لو اسود)

SS	Meaning in SL	TSs	Strategy and of procedure translation	Appropriateness of translation
لا تحجيلي رمادي غلي لو ابيض لو اسود	Don't beat around the bush, get to the point	T1: Don't choose <u>gray</u> , you choose either <u>black</u> or <u>white</u> .	Direct: literal	-
		T2: <u>Be clear</u> .	Oblique: equivalence	+
		T3: Don't tell me it's <u>gray</u> , say <u>white</u> or <u>black</u> .	Direct: literal	-
		T4: Don't tell me it's all <u>gray</u> , even if it is <u>white</u> or <u>black</u> .	Direct: literal	-
		T5: <u>Don't beat around the bush, get to the point</u> .	Oblique: adaptation	+

The Suggested Translation:

Based on the translations of this expression (لا تحجيلي رمادي غلي لو ابيض لو اسود) and their appropriateness with its real meaning, the following translations are suggested for it:

- Make it clear and do not be vague.
- Don't beat around the bush, get to the point.

7. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the challenges faced by translators when translating color expressions used in the Iraqi Arabic colloquial context into English are related to the semantic structures of color expressions. Semantically, most of the translators neglect the semantic forms and functions of color expressions in relation to the cultural context, thus they rendered them inappropriately. The color expressions have a cultural-specific nature that should be dealt with carefully, especially when selecting the appropriate vocabulary and context in the TL, as they do not have a one-word equivalent. According to the results of data analysis, it can be said that the appropriate translation strategy to be employed for translating these color expressions is the oblique strategy with its procedures (equivalence, adaptation, modulation and transposition) rather than the direct strategy.

References

- Abood, A. & Ali, M. (2024). The Arabic Translation of Cohesive Devices used in *The Midnight Library Novel*. Journal of Language Studies 8, 3, 2024, Pages (226-236).
- Al-Hilâl, M. & Khân, M. (1983). *Translation of the meanings of The Noble Qur'an In the English Language*. Madinah, K.S.A.: King Fahd Complex for the Printing of The Holy Qur'an.

Ameen, A. (2009). *Maḥloom Al-lawn wa Dilalatuhu fi Ad-Dirasat At-Tareekhiya*. Baghdad: Dar Ash-Shu'oon Ath-Thaqafiya.

Badawi, M. (2008). *Investigating EFL prospective teachers' ability to translate culture-bound expressions* [PhD thesis], Teachers' College, University of Tabuk, KSA.

Ibn Manzoor. I. (1993). *Lisan Al-Arab* (3rd Ed.). Beirut: Dar Sader.

Leech, G. & Svartvik, J. (1975). *A communicative grammar of English*. London: Routledge.

Mahdi, A. (2019). *A cognitive study of color terms in English and Iraqi Arabic* [MA thesis]. University of Tikrit.

McCrimmon, J. (1972). *Writing with a Purpose*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Mustafa, H., & Ali, M. (2024). Problems of Translating Informal Greeting Expressions Used in Iraqi Arabic into English. *Journal of Language Studies* 8, 9, Pages (193-204).

Partridge, E. (1990). *Colloquialisms in the Encyclopedia Americana*. U.S.A.: Grolier Incorporated.

Rasekh, A. (2011). *Basic Colors and Their Metaphorical Expressions in English and Persian: Lakoff's Conceptual Metaphor Theory in Focus*. University of Isfahan, Iran.

Taylor, J. (2004). *Linguistic Categorization: Prototypes in Linguist Theory*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Vinay, J. P., & Darbelnet, J. (1995). *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation*. Amst erdam/Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Wang, J. (2007). Analysis on the connotations of Color Terms in English and Chinese Language. *Asian Social Science*, vol 3, 4, pp.46-48.

Zhang, (2007). *A Cultural Comparison of Color Terms and Their Translation. US-China Foreign Language*, 4, 5, pp.28-32.