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## Idiomatic Expressions in English and Arabic: A Comparative Semantic Study

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### Abstract

Idioms are rich in eloquence and wisdom. They can be concentrated wisdom shaping for people in any language. They are also shaped into refined constitutions that embody the cultural heritage of a nation and its intellectual perspectives on life. This study conducts a comparative semantic investigation of idiomatic expressions in English and Arabic, focusing on their associative, connotative, and affective meanings. This research paper analyses how idiomatic expressions depict social attitudes, historical experiences, and cultural values. The study revealed that idioms in both languages (English and Arabic) share certain metaphorical bases, such as references to human behaviour, nature, animals, the human body and other themes. However, they also vary and diverge due to specific cultural concepts. The results indicate that the meaning of an idiomatic expression is not only linguistically encoded but also depends heavily on contextual knowledge, cultural background, and pragmatic knowledge. This research highlights the difficulties faced by language learners and translators in achieving a balance between English and Arabic. It contributes to the understanding of semantic theory by emphasising the cultural diversity of idiomatic expressions, their historical context, and the situations they represent.

**Keywords:** Idioms, semantic analysis, meaning, English idioms, Arabic idioms

### Introduction

Idiomatic expressions convey figurative meanings that go beyond the literal interpretation of their individual components; therefore, they are widely used in both spoken and written discourse. For communicative competence, whether in native or foreign language contexts, the ability to use idiomatic expressions is essential (Fernando, 1996) [6].

The meanings of idiomatic expressions are often ambiguous and difficult to analyse word by word, despite their widespread use. Cultural, historical, and pragmatic contexts play a significant role in their interpretation. For example, the English idiom "kick the bucket" cannot be understood by analysing the words "kick" and "bucket" individually, just as the Arabic idiom (بلغ السيل الزبي) "the flood reached the summit" cannot be decoded without cultural knowledge of its figurative use. These challenges underscore the need for cross-linguistic analysis and cultural understanding, as terminology remains one of the most complex aspects of language for learners, teachers, and translators.

Most previous studies on idiomatic expressions have focused either on analysing English idiomatic terms only (e.g., Moon, 1998; Nunberg, Sage, and Wasso, 1994) or on their educational, pedagogical, and translational challenges. In contrast, comparative semantic research on English and Arabic idiomatic expressions, particularly that which analyses layers of meaning such as association, connotation, and affective layers, remains limited. This gap hinders our understanding of how idiomatic expressions function as vehicles for cultural and historical knowledge and their role in shaping communication between the two languages.

### Research Questions

1. What are the semantic features of idiomatic expressions in English and Arabic?
2. How do you explain the similarities and differences in the idiomatic meaning between the two languages?

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## Research Aims

1. Conduct a comparative semantic analysis of idiomatic expressions in English and Arabic.
2. Study the meanings of expressive terms according to Leech's (1981) approach, like 'association', 'connotative', and 'affective' meanings as conveyed by idiomatic expressions in both languages.

## Literature review

This section reviews the relevant literature on idioms in both English and Arabic. It studies their definitions, classifications, functions, and sources, as presented by different scholars.

## Semantics

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that studies meaning in language. It concentrate on how words, phrases, sentences, and texts carry meaning, both literally and figuratively, and how these meanings are explicating by speakers and listeners within a particular context (Leech, 1981, p. 3) <sup>[10]</sup>.

Moreover, semantics is the study of meaning in language, analysing how words, phrases, sentences, and larger texts communicate information, ideas, and concepts (Lyons, 1995, p. 3) <sup>[11]</sup>. It investigates both literal meaning and nonliteral (figurative or associative) meaning, analysing how speakers grasp and carry meaning.

Semantics bridges language and thought, helping to understand how humans conceptualise reality. It is essential for language learning, translation, literature analysis, computational linguistics, and understanding figurative language such as idioms. In addition, semantics link with pragmatics to describe how context influences meaning.

Meaning is the idea, concept, or information that a linguistic form (word, phrase, sentence, or text) conveys to a speaker or listener, encompassing not only its literal reference but also its social, cultural, emotional, and contextual implications (Leech, 1981, p. 7) <sup>[10]</sup>. In other words, meaning is the relationship between language and what it represents or communicates in the mind of the language user.

In addition, meaning is the interpretation or sense that a language user assigns to a linguistic expression, enabling the communication of ideas, intentions, feelings, or information (Crystal, 2008) <sup>[5]</sup>.

## Semantics of idioms in English and Arabic

In semantics, idiomatic expressions are a central topic because their meaning cannot be fully deduced from their individual components, as they combine words into fixed expressions. Understanding idiomatic expressions requires studying their various meanings at different levels, such as literal (denotative), figurative, associative, and social meanings, among others, which together reflect the specific cognitive, cultural, and historical processes of each language.

### 1. Literal (Denotative) Meaning

The literal meaning is not enough to understand the idiomatic expression, but it remains an important component in semantic analysis.

The literal meaning of an idiom refers to the surface or dictionary interpretation of its component words. For example, the English idiom "kick the bucket" literally describes the act of striking a bucket with one's foot,

whereas the Arabic equivalent "مخرج الروح" literally means "the soul came out" (Fernando, 1996, p. 48; Abu Ali, 1988, p. 46) <sup>[6]</sup>.

### 2. Figurative Meaning

In idiomatic expressions, figurative meaning is of great importance because it reflects shared cultural and social knowledge, enabling speakers to encode and summarise abstract or complex ideas. For instance:

"Kick the bucket" = "to die"

"مخرج الروح" = "he died"

### 3. Associative Meaning

Idioms also carry associative meanings, which include connotative, emotive, stylistic, and collocative dimensions. These meanings are shaped by individual experience, cultural background, and context. For example:

Break the ice: "فكّ الحاجر", meaning "Initiating friendliness".

or

A wolf in sheep's clothing: "الذئب في ثوب الحمل", meaning "Deception, hidden danger".

Idioms:

'Idiom' is a term utilised in grammar and lexicology to indicate a sequence of words that is semantically and often syntactically bounded so that they function as a single unit. From a perspective of semantics, the meanings of the separate words cannot be collected to make the meaning of the idiomatic expression as a whole. From a syntactic viewpoint, the words often do not permit the usual variability they display in other contexts, e.g., it's raining cats and dogs does not permit \*it's raining a cat and a dog/dogs and cats, etc. Because of their absence of internal contrastivity, some linguists refer to idioms as 'ready-made utterances'. An alternative terminology refers to idioms as 'habitual collocations'. In this approach, the term 'idiom chunk' is also utilised for one part of an idiom that has been isolated from the rest through some syntactic process, such as "the basket in that basket", into which I've put all my eggs (I've put all my eggs into one basket) (Crystal, 2008, p. 236) <sup>[5]</sup>.

In addition, define Fromkin and Rodman (1988:181). "Fixed phrases, consisting of more than one word, with meanings that cannot be deduced by knowing the meanings of the constituent words". Notably, both definitions emphasise that an idiom is a semantic unit made up of various units whose meaning cannot be simply determined or inferred from the meanings of the units. An idiom is defined as an expression one cannot infer the meaning of which depends on the literal meaning or the outcomes of its units because it is figuratively utilised. Instead, the meaning is inferred during its common utilisation (Oxford English Dictionary. 2005).

### Reasons for Idioms Usage

Idioms are used because they combine efficiency, cognitive accessibility, cultural transmission, and expressive potential, making them essential tools in both everyday communication and literary or rhetorical contexts (Fernando, 1996; Gibbs, 1994; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Cacciari & Tabossi, 1993) <sup>[6, 7, 9, 3]</sup>.

Therefore, idioms introduce multiple linguistic, cognitive, and social functions. One primary reason idiomatic expressions are utilised is to carry complex meanings briefly. They let speakers to demonstrate abstract ideas,

emotions, or social commentary in a brief (Fernando, 1996, p. 45) <sup>[6]</sup>.

Second, from a cognitive perspective, Gibbs (1994, p. 220) argues that idiomatic expressions are stored as single units in the mental lexicon, enabling speakers and listeners to access meanings rapidly without decoding each word individually.

Third, pragmatically, idioms are utilised to reinforce social and cultural cohesion. They mirror shared knowledge, beliefs, and values within a community (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 57) <sup>[9]</sup>.

Finally, idioms also participate to stylistic richness and rhetorical effects. Writers and speakers employ idiomatic expressions to evoke imagery, humour, irony, or emphasis (Cacciari & Tabossi, 1993, p. 7) <sup>[3]</sup>.

### Idioms in English

According to the American Heritage Dictionary (2000:1) the word idiom is derived from Latin *idios*, which means "own," "private," or "personal." Idioms are widely recognised as fixed expressions whose meanings cannot be fully determined from the meanings of their individual components (Fernando, 1996, p. 3) <sup>[6]</sup>. They function as conventionalised linguistic units that carry figurative, rather than literal, meanings, making them integral to both language comprehension and pragmatic competence.

From a structural perspective, idioms are often categorised as multiword expressions that exhibit syntactic and semantic concret. Siyanova-Chanturia, Conklin, and Schmitt (2011, p. 5) noted that idioms typically resist arbitrary modifications without losing their intended meaning, a feature that distinguishes them from free combinations of words. For example, an idiom that kicks a bucket cannot be understood by analysing the meanings of kicks and buckets individually.

Specifically, idioms are processed as single lexical units rather than as separate words, which facilitates fluency and speed in language comprehension. This perspective aligns with the view of idioms as "cultural scripts" that encode socially shared knowledge and values, highlighting the interaction between language, thought, and culture.

### Types of idioms in English and their functions

Seidl and McMordie (1988, p. 13) <sup>[13]</sup> categorise idioms into the following types on the basis of their structural and semantic characteristics:

1. Pure idioms: These expressions meaning cannot be conclude from the literal meanings of their components. These idiomatic expressions function primarily to implicate figurative meanings and convey culturally shared concepts.
2. Semi-idioms or (semi-idiomatic expressions): These expressions are partially transparent, meaning that their figurative meaning can be a little conclude from the literal meanings of the components. These idiom expressions function to assist cognitive processing while maintaining figurative meaning.
3. Phrasal verbs with idiomatic meaning: These verbs form of a verb combined with one or more idioms, where the meaning is often not literal.

These idioms are pragmatically significant multifunctions, allowing speakers to express actions, intentions, or attitudes concisely.

First, idioms serve a communicative and expressive function. According to Fernando (1996, pp. 31–33) <sup>[6]</sup>, idioms allow speakers to express feelings, attitudes, and evaluations in an alive and imaginative way that plain language cannot achieve.

Second, idioms have an important cognitive function, as they reflect the conceptual metaphors underlying human thought. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 5) <sup>[9]</sup> argue that idiomatic expressions embody the metaphorical structures through which people perceive and organise their experiences.

Third, idioms perform a pragmatic function by serving specific communicative purposes in discourse. They can mitigate statements, reinforce solidarity, or create humour and irony (Gibbs, 1994, p. 220) <sup>[7]</sup>.

In addition, idioms fulfil important sociocultural functions. They carry the collective memory, wisdom, and cultural identity of a community. As Seidl and McMordie (1988, p. 7) <sup>[13]</sup>, idiom expressions embody traditions, social, and historical values that are distinctive to English-speaking. Finally, idioms participate to stylistic and rhetorical richness in both spoken and written discourse (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2010, p. 12) <sup>[12]</sup>.

### Idioms in Arabic

Arabic idioms perform the condensed wisdom and lived experiences of people, expressed through eloquent and figurative language. They mirror the intellectual, social, cultural, literary, historical, and moral dimensions of Arab life. They are so deeply embedded in collective memory and function as linguistic and artistic markers that they often represent "symbols" of cultural identity.

Ancient Arab scholars appreciated the importance and influence of idiomatic expressions in Arabic literature. Al-Jahiz noted the Arabs' frequent utilisation of idiomatic expressions in both prose and poetry, attributing this to their clarity and wisdom. He observed that "an Arab man would stand in a gathering and utter a series of idiomatic expressions, and people would imitate him only because of their elegance and usefulness." Such expressions, rooted in daily practices, often carry moral lessons and practical advice. For example, the idiom "آخر الدواء الكي" ("the last remedy is cauterisation") derives from traditional medical practice and has come to symbolise resorting to extreme measures when all else fails.

Idioms also preserve local knowledge and geographical associations. The expression "كناقل التمر إلى هجر" ("like carrying dates to Hajar") refers to the Arabian city of Hajar, famous for its abundance of palm trees and superior dates, and highlights the futility of bringing something to a place already rich in it.

### Types of idioms in Arabic and their functions

According to Abu Ali (1988, p. 46), idioms can be divided into two main types:

1. Common Idiom – A short, widely accepted saying characterised by frequent use and adaptability to various contexts without change in form.  
Example: "جزاء سنمار" ("the reward of Sinimmar") — meaning ingratitude toward someone who has done good.
1. Standard idiom—A type of extended metaphor or complex simile that involves representational imagery. As Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani (d. 471 AH) explained,

“When representation follows meaning or appears in summary within its context, it gains prominence, refinement, and power to move the soul” (Al-Jurjani, 2001, p. 88).

Example: “*اتقى شر من أحسنت إليه*”.

Idiomatic expressions in the Arabic language have numerous linguistic, cultural, and historical functions:

1. Cultural and historical function: Idiomatic expressions preserve the cultural and historical cohesion of Arab society. They reflect the culture of a people and their ancient memory, such as cauterisation in medicine or tribal customs, and serve as a linguistic record of Arab civilisation.
2. Moral and didactic functions: Idiomatic expressions summarise collective wisdom in a memorable and eloquent manner. They represent moral lessons and enduring principles. Expressions such as “The last medicine is cautery” depicted ethical insights drawn from experience.
3. Aesthetic and Rhetorical Function: The language of idiomatic expressions enriches expression, giving the Arabic language its distinctive beauty and eloquence. Idiomatic expressions add rhythm and imagery and enhance both prose and poetry. (Al-Suyuti, p. 486).
4. Social and communicative unity: The shared meanings of idiomatic expressions give a sense of belonging and continuity in Arab society. They encapsulate the culture and enhance understanding among.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for analysing idiomatic expressions is Leech's (1981) theory of meaning. Leech's model provides a comprehensive view of how meaning operates through seven different levels of language. His division of meaning provides valuable tools for understanding the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of idiomatic expressions, which are of seven types: conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic.

**1. Conceptual (or Denotative) Meaning:** Leech explains that conceptual meaning describes its reference or idea (the literal, dictionary-like meaning of a word), and he said conceptual meaning plays an enormous role in linguistic communication. According to Leech, this is linking with “two principles of all linguistic patterning” (1981, 9), i.e., the principle of structure and the principle of contrastiveness (1981,9).

Example: “dog” = a domesticated canine.

In the term “spill the beans”, the conceptual level of “beans” is literal, but the idiomatic mean (“to reveal a secret”) ignores it.

**2. Connotative Meaning:** “Connotative meaning is the communicative value an expression has by virtue of what it refers to, over and above its purely conceptual content.” (Leech 1981, 12) <sup>[10]</sup>.

For example, “Dog” might connote loyalty or, in a derogatory sense, contempt.

The phrase “cold feet” connotes fear or hesitation, not the literal condition of having cold feet.

**3. Social Meaning:** According to Leech, the social meaning involves all the social circumstances regarding the utilisation of a segment of language (1981, 14).

Example: formal vs. informal address (sir, buddy).

The idiom “hit the road” is informal and often used among peers, marking a casual social tone.

**4. Affective (Emotional) Meaning:** This term expresses the speaker's feelings, attitudes, or emotions.

For example, “Oh dear!” expresses concern or surprise.

Saying “I’m fed up to the back teeth” carries frustration more vividly than simply saying “I’m tired.”

**5. Reflected Meaning:** When one sense of a word affects the interpretation of another meaning of the same word.

Example: “Cock” can have the primary meaning of a male bird, but other meanings (vulgar slang) influence interpretation.

The expression “kick the bucket” humorously reflects death, although the literal sense of “bucket” remains.

**6. Collocative Meaning:** The associations a word acquires from habitual co-occurrence with other words.

Idioms depend strongly on fixed collocations that form their unique identities.

Example: “Blond hair” or “strong tea” — certain adjectives are conventionally paired.

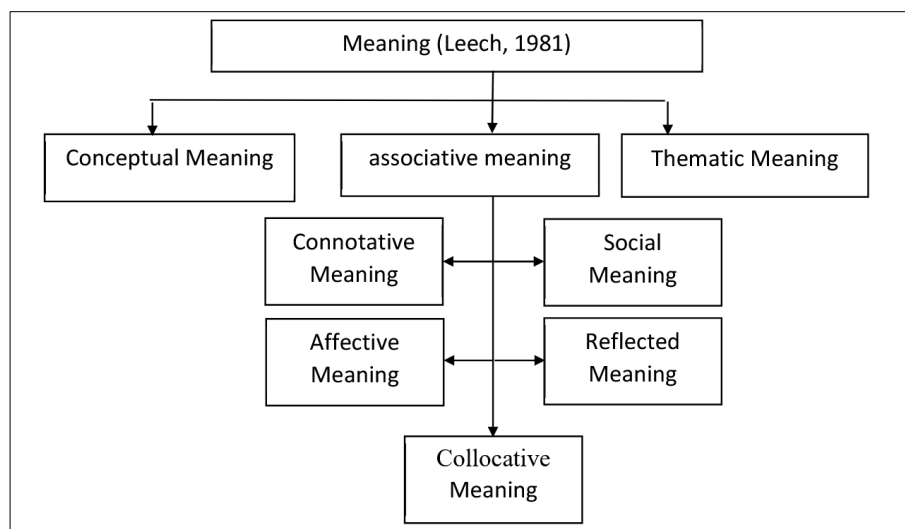
The expression “make up your mind” is a fixed collocation; substituting “create” or “build” would break the idiomatic meaning.

**7. Thematic Meaning:** The way in which the message is organised, emphasising the focus or flow of information in discourse.

Example: In the sentence “John gave Mary a book”, emphasis can change depending on what is foregrounded (theme/rheme structure).

In the expression “All that glitters is not golden”, the theme centres on appearance versus reality, emphasising warning.





**Fig 1:** Seven types of meaning by Leech (1981)

### Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach, aiming to analyse and interpret the meanings of idiomatic expressions according to levels of meaning within a semantic-pragmatic framework. The analysis and interpretation of meaning, as proposed by Leech (1981), was adopted, with a focus on how idiomatic expressions carry multiple levels of semantic and pragmatic significance.

### Data collection

The data used in this research was collected from English and Arabic sources. The English idiomatic expressions were compiled from the Oxford English Dictionary of Idioms, while the Arabic idiomatic expressions were collected from the "Majma' al-Amthal" (معجم الأمثال) (Collection of Proverbs). These idiomatic expressions were chosen for their frequent use, cultural significance, and rich figurative language. They represent typical examples of idiomatic expressions in both languages.

### Data analysis

#### Analysis of English Idioms

##### Idiom 1: "Break the Ice" (Siefring, 2004).

The phrase "break the ice" is utilised to describe the process of mitigating initial social embarrassment or initiating a friendly interaction for the first time. According to Leech's (1981) seven types of meaning, from a conceptual standpoint, the phrase literally points out the physical process of breaking ice, removing the removal of a solid, cold barrier. The term refers to symbolising the mitigating of tension or hesitation in social situations and reflects the openness and communication in societies, which form its connotative meaning. From the social meaning perspective, the phrase is informal or semi-formal, usually utilised when discussing introductions, meetings, or group interactions where participants are trying to shift the situation from discomfort to familiarity. Its affective meaning involves positivity, kindness, and optimism, as the speaker usually expresses satisfaction or encouragement upon initiating successful communication. The reflected meaning appears over the symbolic association between "ice" and coldness, rigidity, or emotional distance, which enhances the metaphorical sense of creating warmth and fluid communication through conversation. In terms of collocative meaning, the verb "break" is often associated

with abstract concepts such as "silence", "habit", or "tension", making it a natural and effective metaphor for removing interpersonal barriers between people. In the thematic meaning, the phrase focuses on the action of "breaking", which focuses on initiative, effort, and social courage. These interconnected layers of meaning, taken together, illustrate how this term encapsulates both a linguistic metaphor and a social behaviour that enhance communication and understanding within a cultural context.

##### Idiom 2: "Bite the Bullet" (Siefring, 2004).

The term "bite the bullet" refers to carrying on and enduring a painful or unpleasant situation with courage and determination. According to conceptual meaning, the expression points out the historical practice of soldiers biting a bullet during surgery without anaesthetic. The connotative level extends this image to represent moral power, patience, and acceptance of suffering. This phrase is evident in both informal and formal contexts and is often utilised as advice or guidance in professional or personal situations, which form its social meaning. From an affective perspective, the term carries an emotional tone of appreciation for those who brave difficulties. The reflected meaning of the word 'bullet' evokes images of pain, violence, and endurance. In terms of collocative meaning, "bite" is typically associated with unpleasant experiences. The term emphasises personal ability and personal control—the action ("bite") highlights the individual's choice to confront the disaster.

##### Idiom 3: "spill the beans" (Siefring, 2004).

In English is usually utilised the term "spill the beans" that means uncovering a secret. From a conceptual perspective, it literally refers to the process of unintentionally disclosing secrets. On the connotative level, the term carries the idea of accidentally revealing a secret that is related to negligence or haste. In terms of social meaning, the phrase is informal and reflects its colloquial tone. Its affective meaning depends on Context: it might express mild disapproval when a secret is violated or amusement occurs. The reflected meaning emerges through the word "spill", which evokes the idea of loss, exposure, and lack of control. For collocative meaning, "spill" is a verb that combines liquids or contents (e.g., spill water, spill wine). Finally, the term focuses on the action of "spilling", symbolically

representing an unintentional act of communication. This level represent the thematic meaning.

#### Idiom 4: “the ball is in your court” (Siefring, 2004).

The term “the ball is in your court” refers to the responsibility for taking action or making a decision now being another one’s. From a conceptual perspective in sports, especially tennis, it is inferred that the presence of the ball on one side of the court indicates that the players turn towards it to respond. This term is used to encompass various areas of life, such as responsibility, communication, negotiation, and decision-making, which form its connotative meaning. The social meaning of this term makes it proper for semi-formal contexts, such as workplace discussions or diplomatic exchanges. The emotional level of this phrase is often neutral but relies on polite pressure, according to tone and context. From a reflective standpoint, the word “ball” refers to movement, participation, and cooperation. In the collocative sense, the word “ball” is naturally paired with the word “playground”, evoking both real and metaphorical play. The objective meaning highlights the transfer of power; the focus on “your playing field” emphasises the transfer of responsibility and underscores duty and leadership.

#### Analysis of Arabic idioms

##### Idiom 1: “اتقي شر من أحسنت إليه” (Al-Maydani, 1955).

The Arabic idiom “اتقي شر من أحسنت إليه” literally translates as “Beware the evil of the one you have done good to,” and it conveys a moral example rooted in social experience. On the conceptual meaning, the term indicates a warning of potential harm from someone who has received a favour. According to the connotative meaning, the meaning of this term extends beyond the literal meaning to recall thoughts of human betrayal and distrust that reflect an empirical truth derived from life. This idiom is utilised in both formal and informal contexts to express collective wisdom and to warn in personal relationships, which forms its social meaning. The affective meaning carries a tone of disappointment, sadness, or warning, revealing emotional awareness of the pain caused by betrayal. The reflected meaning from the word “شر” (evil) evokes moral and ethical associations within Islamic and Arabic cultural heritage and clarifies that evil sometimes comes from the person you support, which reinforces the moral seriousness of the warning. For the collocative level, “شر” frequently cooccurs with moral terms such as “خير” (goodness) or “اتقي” (beware), which emphasises the reflected meaning, and the pairing of these words has become common in Arab culture and the moral message intended to be conveyed to the proverb. Finally, the thematic meaning emphasises the word “اتقي” (beware), which focuses on caution and self-protection rather than blaming yourself in the future, thus making the idiom come to give advice rather than condemnation.

##### Idiom 2: “يَدٌ واحدة لا تصفق” (Al-Askari, 1988)

The Arabic expression “يَدٌ واحدة لا تصفق” can be translated to “One hand cannot clap”. Conceptual meaning: the expression of the term literally indicates the impossibility of making the sound of clapping with only one hand. On the connotative meaning, this expression symbolizes cooperation in Islamic and Arab culture and social unity. From the social perspective this phrase is characterized by flexibility, as it appears in formal and informal contexts,

especially in the areas of teamwork, education and community life. From the affective perspective, this phrase refers to positive and motivational things and is often utilised to inspire and unite group participation. The reflected meaning arises from the word يَد (hand), which recalls associations with work, assistance, and human agency. In terms of the associative level, the word “يَد” (“hand”) often appears in Islamic and Arabic culture with terms relating to assistance or unity, such as “يَدُ الْعَوْنِ” (“the helping hand”), creating a strong cooperative dimension. Finally, the thematic meaning focuses on the phrase “يَدٌ واحدة” (“one hand”), which emphasises cooperation between the individual and the group to reinforce the moral lesson about the necessity of cooperation and collective effort.

##### Idiom 3: “عاد السهم إلى النزعة” (Al-Maydani, 1955)

According to Leech's seven meanings, the conceptual perspective points out the literal image of “السهم”, “an arrow”, flying and returning to its intended target. We find that the connotative perspective extends this literal meaning to symbolise justice and the ultimate return of the deserving, i.e., the return of the right to its owners, and it often refers to its natural position. The social meaning of the term is used in several places in formal and informal discourse, particularly in literature and political or judicial commentary. Its affective meaning expresses satisfaction and a sense of fairness for the right to be restored to its owners, which evokes positive feelings related to achieving justice. The reflected meaning arises from the imagery of the arrow “السهم”, which evokes ideas of focus and human action, reinforcing the idea of achieving truth or justice. In terms of collocative meaning, “سهم” “arrow” refers first to speed and second to accuracy or result, while “النزعة” “target” evokes the idea of the desired goal or destiny. According to the thematic meaning, it focuses on the return of the arrow, picking out and emphasising the restoration of balance and correctness as a natural consequence.

##### Idiom 4: “إن من البيان لسحراً” (Al-Maydani, 1955)

The Arabic idiom “إن من البيان لسحراً” literally translates as “Indeed, eloquence is a kind of magic” and focuses the power of speech to fascinate, persuade, or influence an audience. From a conceptual perspective, the idiom compares eloquence (البيان) to magic (السحر), implying that both have the ability to influence minds and emotions. The connotative meaning is that eloquence here is not merely about clarity but about the power to fascinate, persuade, and emotionally move an audience. The social meaning of this idiom is prominent in formal, literary, and religious discourse and is often used to praise someone’s articulate speech and marks of wisdom, leadership, and social prestige. In terms of affective meaning, the idiom recalls charm and respect for individuals whose words are almost magical in their effect. The reflected meaning arises from the term سحر (“magic”), which carries dual associations: one of wonder and another of warning, as magic can be deceptive. This duality can be used for both truth and manipulation. The collocative level shows how البيان eloquence frequently occurs alongside words such as فصاحة (fluency) and بلاغة (rhetoric) in classical literature. Finally, the thematic meaning focuses on بيان (speech or expression) as the major concept, stressing the idea that eloquence is

both a skill and a power capable of influencing minds and hearts.

## Conclusion

Idiomatic expressions distinguish semantic and grammatical complexities, and accurately predicting their meaning is difficult because there is no direct correlation between the original meaning of each word and its intended cultural or historical meaning. This is true in both Arabic and English.

This study reveals that both languages share metaphorical similarities in their idioms. Many of idiomatic expressions originate from shared human experiences and social traditions. Moreover, The study showed that many idiomatic expressions have historical and cultural roots in both languages, reflecting the wisdom of previous generations, their worldviews, and the lessons learnt from their experiences. In addition, when analysing idiomatic expressions, unique structural and semantic patterns appear in their language, and this is evident in both languages. Finally, the process of translating or understanding idiomatic expressions is a major challenge for non-native speakers, due to their semantic and grammatical complexity.

## 2. Recommendations

This article recommends the following:

1. It recommended that language teaching and translation should incorporate idiomatic expressions and cultural competence to increase learners' communicative and intercultural recognition.
2. It advised that the curriculum should involve idiom-based semantic investigation in teaching materials to deepen the understanding of metaphorical thinking.

## 3. Further studies

1. Idiom studies of a pragmatic perspective to grasp how idiomatic expression meanings are processed contextually.
2. The conceptual metaphor analysis of idioms from a cognitive perspective to understand how idiomatic expression meaning is processed mentally.

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