

# International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies

ISSN: 2308-5460



## Free Online Translators: A Comparative Assessment in Terms of Idioms and Phrasal Verbs

[PP: 15-19]

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### ABSTRACT

Free online translators are in fact statistical machine translators that create translator models using parallel corpora. Although it's not a new subject and many works are reported on that in recent years, it still suffers from lots of shortcomings and has a long way ahead. While the literature on machine translators is vast, there are only a few that evaluate free online machine translators in specific terms like idioms. The aim of this paper is to evaluate and compare four free online translators in terms of translating English idioms (including idiomatic phrasal verbs) into Persian. To that end, ten chosen texts from the book "Oxford Word Skills: Idioms and Phrasal Verbs" were translated by four online translators, [www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com), [www.translate.google.com](http://www.translate.google.com), [www.freetranslation.com](http://www.freetranslation.com) and [www.targoman.com](http://www.targoman.com), and the obtained results were compared in a subjectively method based on Aryanpur English to Persian dictionary. Comparison of the results shows that [www.targoman.com](http://www.targoman.com) has a better performance in translating idioms from English to Persian and as a result, it can be the best choice if the aim is to do so.

**Keywords:** Machine Translation, Idioms, Phrasal Verbs, Online Translator

ARTICLE INFO	The paper received on	Reviewed on	Accepted after revisions on
	12/12/2017	12/01/2018	24/03/2018

### Suggested citation:

Taleghani, M. & Pazouki, E. (2018). Free Online Translators: A Comparative Assessment in Terms of Idioms and Phrasal Verbs. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*. 6(1). 15-19.

### 1. Introduction

Machine translation (MT) whose aim is to use software in order to translate texts is a subgroup of computational linguistics. Although it's not a new subject and many works have (Shao, Sennrich, Webber, & Fancellu, 2017; Guzmán, Joty, Màrquez, & Nakov, 2017; Kais A. Kadhim, Luwaytha S Habeeb, Ahmad Arifin Sapar, Zaharah Hussin, & Muhammad Muhammad Ridhuan Tony Lim Abdullah, 2013, Crabbe & Heath, 2017; Harrat, Meftouh, & Smaili, 2017) been done on that, it still suffers from lots of shortcomings and has a long way ahead.

We have different approaches to machine translation: rule-based approach, statistical approach, example-based approach and Hybrid MT. the first approach involves more information about the linguistics of the source and target languages, using the morphological and syntactic rules and semantic analysis of both languages ("wikipedia," 2018) and is mainly used in the creation of dictionaries and grammar programs while the others try to

generate translations using statistical methods based on parallel corpora.

On a basic level, MT performs simple substitution of words in one natural language for words in another, but that alone usually cannot produce a good translation of a text because recognition of whole phrases and their closest counterparts in the target language is needed. Solving this problem with corpus and statistical techniques is a rapidly growing field that is leading to better translations, handling differences in linguistic typology, translation of idioms, and the isolation of anomalies. (Albat, Thomas Fritz, 2012)

Although in recent years many works are reported on evaluation of machine translation (Chunyu Kit & Tak Ming Wong, 2008), (Goyal & Lehal, 2009), (Mitra Shahabhi, 2009), some of which use automatic evaluation systems (Kais A. Kadhim et al., 2013), (Mohammed N. Al-Kabi, Taghreed M. Hailat, Emad M. Al-Shawakfa, & Izzat M. Alsamadi, 2013), (Guzmán et al., 2017), (Shao et al., 2017)



most of them have just evaluated the quality of the whole texts considering terms like explicitness, clarity, fidelity, accuracy or intelligibility (Claire Ellender, 2012), (Goyal & Lehal, 2009) and only a few of them have worked on specific terms like register, lexis or idioms, just to name a few, (Stephen Hampshire & Carmen Porta Salvia, 2010). So it seems that more works are necessary to be done in these domains.

Free online translators are in fact statistical machine translators that use corpora in order to translate texts. The aim of this paper is to evaluate and compare four online translators in terms of translating Idioms (including Idiomatic phrasal verbs).

An idiom is a combination of words in common use, including some phrasal verbs, which have a figurative meaning. Since the meaning of idioms cannot be understood from the superficial meanings of the single words constituting them, so there are some problems in both processes of understanding and translating them (Amir Shojaei, 2012).

When translating an idiom we may (Chiara Grassilli, 2013):

1. Try to find an idiom in the target language which uses the same words, the same structure and has the same exact meaning. This is the top notch solution, but you often will not find it.
2. Try to find an idiom in your language which uses different words, but has the same structure and the same exact meaning.
3. Try to find an idiom in your language that has different words, different structure but the same exact meaning.
4. Try to find an idiom in your language that has different words, different structure and a slightly different meaning, and complete it with a short explanation.

Idiomatic translation is a key factor in quality of the statistical machine translation output. As automatic evaluation metrics are not efficient tools in assessing the quality of idiomatic terms. Therefore, subjective evaluation is the better approach.

In order to conduct the research first, according to the paper's desires (the text length and available languages) four target online translators, [www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com), [www.translate.google.com](http://www.translate.google.com), [www.freetranslation.com](http://www.freetranslation.com) and [www.targoman.com](http://www.targoman.com) were chosen among translators that were proposed machine translation page of Wikipedia. Then the sample texts were chosen from book "Oxford Word Skills: Idioms and Phrasal verbs" using the systematic sampling method. In the next step the English source

texts were given to the target online translators and the results were obtained. Then Meaning of the idioms in translated texts was compared to the correct meanings according to Aryanpur English to Persian dictionary and results were collected. At last the target online translators were ranked according to their performance in translating idioms from English to Persian. (Appendix 1)

## 2. Design of the Study

### 2.1 Research Question and Hypotheses

Although machine translation is not considered as a new subject in translation domain, it couldn't win the place which deserves due to some major problems. Only in recent years machine translation has gotten settled as part of the translation world.

As it was mentioned, online translators are examples of statistical machine translation which works based on parallel corpora. Nowadays there are many online translators which are designed to translate in different languages based on different corpora among which there are some that can translate from English to Persian.

One of the main problems of MT is detectable when it comes to translate idioms (a combination of words in common use, including some phrasal verbs, which have a figurative meaning.)

The question that arises here is how successful online translators perform in translating idioms.

Here in this paper four online translators are chosen and compared in terms of translating idioms and the purpose is to find which one performs the best?

### 2.2 Choosing Translators

In order to find the ultimate online translators this paper tried the list of online translators presented in machine translation page of Wikipedia. The list consists of fifteen online translators among which the translation.babylon.com was filtered so unavailable. Since the purpose was to compare online translators in terms of translating idioms from English to Persian the translators that didn't have the possibility of translating in to Persian were crossed out and the list ended up in 8 online translators.

As we were looking for translators that were able to translate long texts, in the next step we crossed out those who had limitations for the number of the words in a text and got the list of five online translators.

*Table 1: List of Ultimate Translators*

Primary list of online translators	English to Persian translators	Unlimited translators	Final list
1. <a href="http://www.translate.google.com/">http://www.translate.google.com/</a>			
2. <a href="http://www.translate.reference.com/">http://www.translate.reference.com/</a>			
3. <a href="http://www.translation.babylon.com/">http://www.translation.babylon.com/</a>	###	###	###
4. <a href="http://www.transoftware.info/scripts/w ebtrans2.dll">http://www.transoftware.info/scripts/w ebtrans2.dll</a>			
5. <a href="http://www.turkceingilizce.ingilizceturk ce.gen.tr/">http://www.turkceingilizce.ingilizceturk ce.gen.tr/</a>			
6. <a href="http://www.bing.com/translator">http://www.bing.com/translator</a>			
7. <a href="http://www.englishdictionaryonline.org">http://www.englishdictionaryonline.org</a>			
8. <a href="http://www.freetranslation.com">http://www.freetranslation.com</a>			
9. <a href="http://www.freetranslations.org">http://www.freetranslations.org</a>			
10. <a href="http://www.ingilizceeviri.org">http://www.ingilizceeviri.org</a>			
11. <a href="http://www.reverso.net">http://www.reverso.net</a>			
12. <a href="http://www.spanishenglish.com">http://www.spanishenglish.com</a>			
13. <a href="http://www.turkce.cevirsozluk.com/">http://www.turkce.cevirsozluk.com/</a>			
14. <a href="http://www.systranet.com/translate">http://www.systranet.com/translate</a>			
15. <a href="http://www.targoman.com/en.php">http://www.targoman.com/en.php</a>			

Further checks showed that [www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com) and [www.freetranslations.org](http://www.freetranslations.org) use the same datasets and as a result their translations are exactly the same so we chose one of them, [www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com) and came to the final list of four translators.

### 2.3 Sampling

As the focus of the paper is on comparing online translators in terms of translating idioms, texts were needed that include a wide range of idioms in English. So the book "Oxford Word Skills: Idioms and Phrasal Verbs (Intermediate)" was chosen as the source of the texts. The book consists of 60 separate lessons, each lesson focusing on a group of idioms through one or more texts.

In the next step, based on the assumption that 10 lessons out of 60 could be a good representative, through systematic sampling 10 target texts were chosen. In order to perform systematic sampling first we divided 60 by 10 and reached the interval of 6, then randomly chose a number among 1 to 6 (we put each number on a piece of paper and chose among them), which was 2, and the sample text numbers which were: 2, 8, 14, 20, 26, 32, 38, 44, 50 and 56 were obtained.

I decided beforehand that if a lesson was consist of more than one page just the texts of the first page be included in the research.

Concentrating on the chosen texts, I realized that lesson 56 just focuses on phrasal verbs and no idiom of other sorts is included so we changed it to lesson 55.

### 2.4 Research Procedures

In order to conduct the research, first the texts of the chosen lessons were typed then each text was given to each translator separately and the translations were obtained. Obtained results of each translator were saved separately.

### 2.5 Assessing the Outcomes

There were all in all 110 idioms in the selected texts. We first find the definition of

these idioms according to Aryanpur English to Persian dictionary, 5 idioms were omitted in this stage as no matches were found for them. So we came to the total number of 105.

Then looking at the definitions made by each translator in the translated texts the accurate definitions were found and the number of correct translations was calculated. Finally, the percentage of correct answers for each translator was calculated. (appendix 1)

Here some examples of the translations of each translator are presented.

Table 2: Examples of Translations of the idioms by Google Translator

Idiom	Correct Translation	Google
More or less	کم و بیش	کم و بیش
First of all	قبل از هر چیز، اول از همه	اول از همه
Have the situation under control	تحت کنترل	وضعیت تحت کنترل است
I couldn't care less about money	من به پول اهمیت نمی دهم	من نمی توانستم در مورد پول مراقبت کمتر
If need be	اگر لازم باشد، اگر نیاز باشد	اگر نیاز باشد

Table 3: Examples of Translations of the idioms by Targoman

Idiom	Correct Translation	Targoman
More or less	کم و بیش	کم و بیش
First of all	قبل از هر چیز، اول از همه	اول از همه
Have the situation under control	تحت کنترل	وضعیت را تحت کنترل دارد
I couldn't care less about money	من به پول اهمیت نمی دهم	من به پول هیچ اهمیتی نمی دهم
If need be	اگر لازم باشد، اگر نیاز باشد	اگر لازم باشد

Table 4: Examples of Translations of the idioms by Free Translation

Idiom	Correct Translation	Free
More or less	کم و بیش	بیشتر یا کمتر
First of all	قبل از هر چیز، اول از همه	اول از همه
Have the situation under control	تحت کنترل	اوضاع تحت کنترل است
I couldn't care less about money	من به پول اهمیت نمی دهم	من هم در مورد نگهداری پول کمتر
If need be	اگر لازم باشد، اگر نیاز باشد	اگر لازم باشد

Table 5: Examples of Translations of the idioms by Bing

Idiom	Correct Translation	Bing
More or less	کم و بیش	بیشتر یا کمتر
First of all	قبل از هر چیز، اول از همه	اول از همه
Have the situation under control	تحت کنترل	وضعیت تحت کنترل است
I couldn't care less about money	من به پول اهمیت نمی دهم	کمتر در مورد پول برام نیست
If need be	اگر لازم باشد، اگر نیاز باشد	می تواند نیاز

## 3. Results and Discussion

The obtained results of each translator are gathered in a table (appendix 1) where

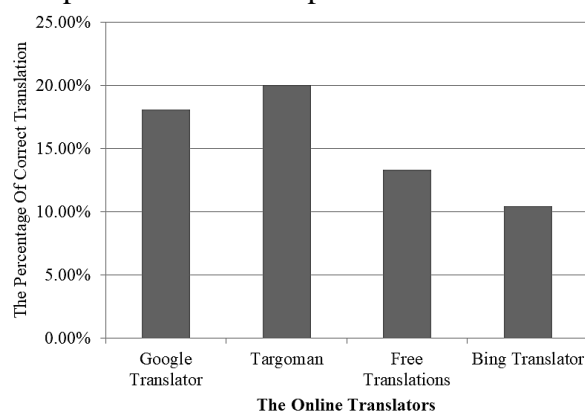


the initial word of the name of each translator represents that.

As the results show Targoman has translated 21 idioms out of 105 correctly which means 20 percent of the whole where Google translator, free translation and Bing translator each respectively translated 19, 14 and 11 Idioms correctly which means 18.09%, 13.33% and 10.47% of the whole.

As you can see the results demonstrate that Targoman performs the best when it comes to translate idioms from English to Persian which was somehow predictable beforehand as this translator is specialized in translating English to Persian and V.s; in fact it is bilingual while the other translators in this research are multilingual. It worth mentioning that Google translator stands in second place with a small difference from Targoman which was also predictable as Google translator is supported by Google company which has powerful search engines and as a results has access to various, up to date, vast corpora.

The result of this study brings about two implication. The first implication is that the online translators' users who wants to get the best results in idiomatic translation must use dedicated bilingual tools such as Targoman translator or tools that is a vast idiomatic parallel corpora such as Google translator. The second implication of the study is that the online translators' designers must apply more specialized corpora in this domain concerning a vast number of idioms and phrasal verbs to improve their function.



*Figure 1: Percentage of the Correct Translation of Online Translators*

#### **4. Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate and compare four online translators in terms of translating English idioms into Persian. For this purpose 10 English texts from the book "Oxford Word Skills: Idioms and phrasal verbs" were chosen and translated by these four online translators. After studying the Idioms and their corresponding translations the number of correct translations was obtained. The obtained

results demonstrate that Targoman performs the best in terms of translating Idioms from English to Persian so it is the best choice when our aim is to do so.

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**Appendix 1: List of idioms and phrasal verbs**

Idiom	Meaning	G	T	F	B
1. Bright and early	صبح زود				
2. Take advantage of something	بهره بردن، استفاده کردن	*	*	*	*
3. Don't ask me	نمی دانم				
4. A piece of cake	مثل آب خوردن				
5. Famous last words!	????	???	???	???	???
6. Change somebody's mind	تصمیم خود را عوض کردن، تغییر نظر دادن، پیشرفت نداشتن، به جایی نرسیدن		*	*	
8. In that case	در این صورت، در آن صورت	*	*	*	*
9. In charge (of somebody/something)	مسئول	*	*	*	*
10. Get through	تماس گرفتن				
11. Thanks heavens	تشکر خدا				
12. A stone's throw	در نزدیکی، نزدیک به				
13. More or less	کم و بیش	*	*		
14. To laugh something off	به خنده رد کردن				
15. Better late than never	دیر رسیدن بهتر از هرگز نرسیدن	*			
16. Be supposed to do something	قرار بودن	*			
17. First of all	قبل از هر چیز، اول از همه	*	*	*	*
18. Go over something	مرور کردن				
19. Leave something out	کنار گذاشتن، حذف کردن، قلم گرفتن				
20. Rub something out	پاک کردن				
21. Take it in turns	به نوبت، نوبتی				
22. Swap place (with somebody)	جا به جا شدن، جای خود را عوض کردن				
23. Finish something off	تمام کردن، کامل کردن				
24. Hand something in	تحویل دادن				
25. Put something away	چیزی را سر جایش گذاشتن				
26. Call it a day	تعلیل کردن				
27. Break the news	خبر دادن				
28. Be in touch with somebody	در تماس بودن	*			
29. Get hold of somebody	تماس گرفتن با کسی از طریق تلفن				
30. Hear from somebody	از کسی خبر داشتن				
31. Give somebody a ring	به کسی زنگ زدن				
32. Drop somebody a line	به کسی پیام فرستادن				
33. Keep quiet (about something)	درباره چیزی سخن نگفتن، چیزی را لو ندانن				
34. Be common knowledge	????	???	???	???	???
35. Keep somebody in the dark	بی خبر گذاشتن				
36. Not breath a word (about/of something)	به کسی حرفی نزنن، یک کلمه هم حرف نزنن				
37. Put something out	ببیرون گذاشتن		*		
38. By the way	به هر حال، راستی، ضمناً	*	*	*	
39. Something to do with	در رابطه با				
40. (I) must dash	من باید برم				
41. After all	با وجود اینکه، بر خلاف قرار قبلی				
42. Crop up	به نفعه اتفاق افتادن				
43. Get out of something	از دست چیزی خلاص شدن		*		
44. Have something on	مشغول بودن				
45. Get together	ملاقات کردن				

46. Give my love to	سلام منو برسون				
47. Next door(to somebody/something)	مجاور، چسبیده به، در همسایگی				
48. Move in	نقل مکان کردن، اسباب کشی کردن	*		*	*
49. Break the ice	پیش قدم شدن				
50. Get along	کنار آمدن، با کسی ساختن				
51. Have a lot in common	نقاط مشترک داشتن		*		
52. Help (somebody) out	کمک کردن	*	*	*	*
53. Get locked out	بسته در ماندن				
54. Give somebody a lift	رساندن				
55. All by herself	به تنهایی				
56. Get out and about	????	???	???	???	???
57. Keep somebody company	همنشینی کردن، مصاحبت کردن، همراهی کردن				
58. Have a good night	شب خوبی داشتن				
59. Fall asleep	به خواب رفتن		*		*
60. Not sleep a wink	چشم روی هم نگذاشتن				
61. Drop off	به خواب رفتن				
62. Toss and turn	غلت زدن		*		
63. The night before last	پیش شب				
64. Wide awake	کاملاً بیدار				
65. Worried sick (about something)	نگران بودن، دلشوره داشتن				
66. Have an early night	زود خوابیدن				
67. Have a lie-in	????	???	???	???	???
68. Get something back	پس گرفتن				
69. On sale	برای فروش				
70. Send off for something	خرید بستنی				
71. Rather than	به جای (ایکه)	*	*	*	
72. Shop around	(بین مغازه ها) جرخ زدن				
73. On special offer	حراج/تصفیه قیمت				
74. Splash out (on something)	ولخرجی کردن				
75. Wrap something up	کادو کردن، بپیچیدن				
76. For nothing	مجاناً				
77. Sell out (of something)	همه را فروختن و تمام کردن				
78. Could do with something	احتیاج داشتن به				
79. If need be	اگه لازم باشه	*	*	*	
80. Do without something	زندگی کردن، بدون چیزی ادامه دادن				
81. I Feel like something /doing something	دلم می خواد، دوست دارم		*		
82. Be dying to do something	بی صبرانه منتظر بودن				
83. Set your heart on something	مشغول بودن				
84. Make do with something	با چیزی کنار آمدن				
85. Couldn't care less	بی تفاوت بودن/ اهمیت ندانن			*	
86. Pick and choose	به (هفت) انتخاب کردن، دست به انتخاب زدن			*	
87. Count up	جمع کردن				
88. In all	روی هم رفته				
89. Add something up	حساب کردن، جمع زدن				
90. Take something away	کم کردن، بیرون کشیدن				
91. Come to something	رسیدن به				
92. I Lose count (of something)	حسابش از دستم در رفته				
93. As many as	به اندازه ی				
94. At the very most	حد اکثر، خونه ی یرش				
95. Dozens of something	ده ها		*	*	*
96. Quite a few	تعداد نسبتاً زیادی، تعداد ایل ملاحظه ای				
97. Round about	تقریباً، در حدود، حدود	*		*	
98. Count out	????	???	???	???	???
99. Out of tune	ناهماهنگ				
100. In tune	هماهنگ				
101. Off duty	سر کار نبودن، خارج از خدمت، مرخص				
102. On duty	سر کار، سر خدمت، مشغول کار				
103. By accident	تصادفی	*			
104. On purpose	از روی عمد				
105. In theory	در تئوری	*			*
106. In practice	در عمل	*			*
107. In working order	سالم				
108. Out of order	خراب				
109. Out of control	خارج از کنترل	*	*	*	*
110. Under control	تحت کنترل	*	*	*	*
	The Rate of Correct Translation to The Whole Samples	19/105	21/105	14/105	11/105
	The Percentage of Correct Translation	18.09%	20%	13.33%	10.47%