

# The Political Economy Translation Problems of The Iraqi Oil Wealth Conference

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## Abstract

Political economy is one of the important topics in translation. It accompanies two types of translation: political and economic translations.

The two fields( politics and economics)are inseparable. One completes the other. One may read an economic text and find many political terms within it. This proves the fact that the text is not only economic, but also political, i.e. political economy text whose vocabularies may have no equivalents in the TL (Target Language) and here a number of strategies are used.

This conference had been convened on 29 June/2005 . It is sponsored by The Open Society Institute and because of its large information, it is restricted to the two kinds of translation: political and economic translations. Finally , the conclusions have been drawn.

## 1-Introduction

### 1-1-Problem

We observe that a wide variety of specific words belonging to the field of political economy as well as a number of noun clusters and polysemous terms can be found in the SL (Source Language) text, but not in the TL text. This makes , if possible, the task of both the unspecialized reader and the translator even more □difficult.

### □1-2-Significance

The significance of this paper lies primarily in the fact that this paper is beneficial for the translators , since it provides them with a better understanding of the political economy translation problems, which can help the translators to deal □□with them efficiently

### 1-3-Aims

The paper aims to investigate the political economy translation

problems of the Conference entitled *Iraqi Oil Wealth* and analyze their implications in translation. Such analysis may help the translators to overcome the problems that they face during translation.

### 1-4-Hypothesis

The main hypothesis undertaken in this study is that the politics and economics are inseparable. One completes the other. One may read an economic text and finds many political words within it. These political economy words may have no equivalents in the TL and here a number of strategies are used to explain these terms.

### 1-5-Procedure

The procedure followed in this study is the political-economic division, that is, the problems are divided according to two types of translation: political and economic translations.

### 1-6-Limits□

The study is limited to finding out the political economy translation problems of the *Iraqi Oil Wealth*

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*Conference*. The paper deals with a uni-directional translation ( English – Arabic translation)

## 2-Politics

The term politics is derived from the Greek item *polis*, meaning the state or community as a whole (Free Essays\*, 2007 : 3 ). It occurs in all kinds of a community whether civil or political communities. In both of them, hierarchy politics must exist. In a company, for example a boss makes decisions. In a tribe, a leader makes decisions and the government is run by the politicians who form the decisions. It is concerned with devising a method of organization and attempting to implement that method of organization over which it acts(Ibid). Therefore, it refers to the activities or affairs engaged in by a government, politicians and political party. It is “ the art or science of government or governing, especially the governing of a political entity such as a nation and the administration and control of its internal and external affairs” (American Heritage Dictionary, 2006, s.v. politics). It is the process by which groups of people make decisions. Although the term is generally applied to behavior within civil governments, it is observed in all human group interactions, including corporate, academic, and religious institutions. It consists of "social relations involving authority or power <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics - note-0# note-0> and refers to the regulation of a political unit, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics - note-1# note-1>

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\* *Free Essays* is a site in which a number of university students' papers and reports are published under the name *Free Essays*.

and to the methods and tactics used to formulate and apply policy ”(Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2007:1). Authority is the underlying feature of politics and ensures its enforceability. Power underpins its experience, it is a prerequisite for political existence. Without authority, politics is not feasible(Free Essays, 2007:4).

## 2-1-Economy

The term *economy* is derived from the Greek word *oikonomia*(household management), i. e. the wise and legitimate government of the house for the common goods for the whole house(Sidney, 2007:1). In other words, it is used in the sense of management related to the science of economics(Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2007:21). It is the system of human activities related to the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of values like goods and services in a particular geographic region(Ibid), that is, it represents the relationship between production, trade and supply of money in a particular country or a region (OALD\*, 1995, s.v. economy). Economy refers also to the measure of how a country or region is progressing in terms of product(Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2007:2). It is an action that is used with production and distribution of economic goods(DEC\*, 1967, s.v. economy). It is "the science of human behaviour which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce resources which have alternative use" (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2007:5).

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\* OALD: Oxford Advance Learners' Dictionary.

\* DEC: Dictionary of Economics and Commerce.

Such scarce (limited) resources are allocated by the interplay of supply and demand (Ibid). In this case, all things are scarce related to the desire of people. Their wants are many, but the resources (i. e. the factors of production) that are required for producing things or goods to satisfy their wants are themselves limited in supply. It, therefore, impossible to satisfy all the wants of everybody. Here, a choice has to be made as to how factors of production will be employed and consumers must decide which of their wants are most impressing. So, Scarcity and choice are fundamental to economy. In market, what will be produced is left to consumers' choice, producers attempt to meet the consumers' demand (OEC, 1968, s.v. scarce).

In economics, two elements are mutually operated: *supply and demand*. The former indicates the amount that will come on to the market over a range of prices. The higher the price prevailing in the market the greater the quantity of commodity that will be supplied. The latter shows that all prospective buyers will be prepared to purchase at each unit price of the goods, i. e. the good that will be bought at a particular price. Generally at a higher price less will be bought than at a low price (Ibid).

### **2-3-Political Economy**

*Political* in *political economy* refers to the interrelationships between political and economic institutions and processes, that is, it explains the ways in which various sorts of government affect the allocation of resources in society through their laws and policies as well as the ways in which the nature of economic system and the behaviour of people acting on their economic interest affect the form of government

and the kinds of laws and policies that get made (GPET\*, 1994 : 25). □

In brief, *political economy* refers to the interdisciplinary studies that draw on economics, law and politics in order to understand how political institutions, the political environment and capitalism influence market behaviour (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2006:50).

It enriches both people and sovereign. First, it supplies a plentiful revenue or product for people to supply means of subsistence for themselves. Second, it supplies the state or common wealth with a revenue sufficient for the public service (Ibid). Politics, therefore, is not limited to the institutional field of politics (e. g. parliamentary discourse, election campaigns, party programmes, etc.) only, but it is also overlapped with other fields such as economy (Chouliaraki, et al, 2003:7). In this regard, the SL text that the translator deals with belongs to both the political and economic fields. This makes the task of him/her more difficult. He/she needs to convey the meaning of the SL text as faithfully as possible depending on his/her intuition which can help him/her to translate this text in an appropriate way (Dominguez & Rokowisk, 2003:3). He/she has a deep responsibility to keep the translation as presented in his/her faithful to the original text (Keeffe, 2006:1). To put this in another way, he/she makes use of his/her previous knowledge of such fields which enables him/her to translate the text in an adequate way (Translation Journal, 2003 : 7). Some political economy terms need to be accompanied with the explanations, since their connotations may not be fully understood by the TL reader. For

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\* GPET: Glossary of Political Economy Terms.

example, *the inflation* may be fully understood if it is accompanied with its explanation:

(Al-Mawrid, 2002, s.v. inflation)  
 Other terms may not be followed by footnotes because they are too common to the TL reader. They become part of Arabic language nowadays (e.g. bonus, tender, taxes, etc).  
 The political economy text may imply not only economic words, but also political ones such as liberal, democracy and so on. As for *liberal*, it conveys a pejorative sense in the TL society which is not found in the English adjective (Aziz, 2000:27). It has the connotation of one who compromises with or encourages forces destructive to society perhaps a dangerous political agitator (Leech, 1974:1).

As far as democracy is concerned, it is an international term and this means that it is untranslatable, since it is already present in the lexis of many languages. It has the same phonological/graphical exponents in several languages and a common contextual meaning. The total range of situational features which are present in the same national and political situations, but absent from others. *Democracy* in America (people to people, by people) is not the same as in ex. Soviet Union (*central democracy*), it is also applicable to the concepts of liberalism and radicalism, each has a hazy core of meaning. They are strongly affected by the political tradition of their countries, not to mention the confusion of ideas that either identify or polarize socialism and communism (Newmark,

1988:100). Such examples manifest that despite of using the same item in both English and Arabic, it conveys different connotations.

### 3-The Political Economy Translation Problems of Iraqi Oil Wealth Conference.

The problems the translator encounters in translating such a conference are both political and economic.

#### 3-1-Political Problems

1-Over three days the participants of the conference explored political, economic and administrative approaches to managing Iraq's oil wealth in a way that would contribute to a development and democratic transition (TOSI, 2005:1)

The term *democratic* is derived from *democracy*. *Democracy* is an item that covers the decisions of both people and authority (Al-Araby, 1986:42). In spite of using this word in both English and Arabic countries (i. e. Iraq), it carries different connotations. However, no serious problem is involved here. Transliteration is used here.

3-1-2-There is a need to strengthen anti-corruption institutions including the Commission on Public Integrity and the Parliamentary Committee on Public Integrity(3)

The *Commission and Committee of Public Integrity* represent the government's check on the works of institutions and organizations. Its mission is to prevent the corruption. It

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The *Commission and Committee of Public Integrity* represent the government's check on the works of institutions and organizations. Its mission is to prevent the corruption. It



The word *parliament* exists in both English and Arabic, Iraq . Though it is used in both of them, it conveys various meanings. In the English country , parliament is made of two chambers : the House of Commons and the House of Lords (OALD, 1995, s.v. parliament). In each of them, a group of people meet with each other to discuss the government's plans for the year (Oxford Wordpower Dictionary, 2003 , s.v. parliament). Such a sort of division is absent in Iraq . In addition, the SL term *parliamentarians* is rendered into the TL as

□ . Here, the translator adopts the transliteration coupled with a morphological change (the morphological change of its use as plural) rather than literal translation □ □ (

Moreover, the phrase *policy makers* is rendered into the TL as .

Literal translation is used here and its connotation is common to the TL readers nowadays(i. e. politicians). 3-1-8-Some participants suggested that Iraq's central authority should manage all the public revenues and the government of federal states or regions should have the power to impose taxes in order to strengthen its autonomy and balance the central government's power(13).

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The term *autonomy* (the right of a region to govern or control its own affairs) (Oxford Wordpower Dictionary, 1999 , s.v. autonomy) is

replaced by the TL equivalent

. Its connotation is explained clearly in terms of the SL text (the government of federal states). This phrase expresses that such states have self-independent government to govern them . Literal strategy is used here.

3-1-9-For several reasons, the Iraqi peoples are cautioned adopting shares allocation privatization like the one carried out in Russia after the fall of communism(16).

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*Communism* (a social and economic system in which the state owns the means of production on the behalf of the people. Its aim is to create a society in which everyone is paid and owns according to his/her needs and abilities). (OALD, 1995, s.v. communism)is translated literally □ . One has heard about it, but he/she does not know what it exactly means, i. e. he/she is unaware of its connotation and this is the reason for accompanying it with a footnote.

3-1-10-A state budget should reflect all its revenues □ □ approved by the national assembly(13).

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The phrase *the national assembly*, a legislative authority whose principal mission is to legislate and oversee the

\* الشيوعية:مذهب مبني على أساس الاشتراكية الماركسية مثال على ذلك الإيديولوجية الرسمية للاتحاد السوفيتي السابق. فهو نظام من أنظمة ميسيطر بموجبه حزب واحد على وسائل الإنتاج المملوكة من قبل الدولة ويعلن أصداه عن إقامة مجتمع متردد (Al-Murid, 2002, s.v. communism)

works of the executive authority and its laws must be issued in the name of people(Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2007:3), is rendered into the TL as

rather than

which had been used in the past regime . The phrase is a more familiar term to Iraqi peoples, especially the parliamentarians. Because of its familiar connotation to the TL reader, it is translated literally without a footnote. □

3-1-11-It is necessary to accelerate the adoption of the Petroleum Law, clear rules and regulations of privatization(3).

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The terms *rules and regulations* are replaced by one TL word : , for both refer to law in the SL text, an official statement that tells what one must do(Oxford Wordpower Dictionary, 1999, s.v. rule & regulation). Literal strategy is used here.

3-1-12-Participants spoke of the lack of transparency both in the production and export of oil and in the use its revenues during the occupation and of accounting practices at the US led coalition provisional authority(17).

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The two words *occupation* and *coalition provisional authority* are equated with □ and □

□ . Such translations are too expressive to the TL readers. The former which designates “the control of a country by army of another country” (Ibid, s.v. occupation)reflects the situation in which we live. The

latter which denotes “an authority of multinational forces”(Ibid, s.v. coalition)also mirrors our situation nowadays. After the occupation, there is a provisional authority which governs the occupied country. This authority comprises multinationalities which pretend to defend the country. Literal strategy is used here.

### 3-2-Economic Problems

3-2-1-It is necessary to accelerate the adoption of the Petroleum Law, clear rules and regulations of privatization(3).

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*Petroleum Law* ensures the stabilization of oil and secures a steady income to oil producing nations (O’Neill, n. d:1). *Petroleum Law* is rendered into the TL by its literal translation . Such a translation tends to be expressive to the TL reader, since its connotation is clear to him/her. Literal strategy is used here.

3-2-2-Transparency and accountability should apply equally to private and public sectors , domestic and international organization and ownership of the Iraqi Oil Industry . It is necessary to involve private companies in the servicing sectors(2).

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The terms *public* and *private sectors* are replace by . . □

and . The former refers to the part which the state acts as entrepreneur(DEC, 1968, s.v. public service). The latter points out to the part which is left to private enterprise(Ibid, s.v. private sector). The

two are too common to the TL reader. Literal strategy is used here.

3-2-3-All bonuses and payments(7).

The word *bonuses* ( money added to wages when workers produce more goods)(OALD, 1995, s.v. bonus)is rendered into in the TL despite of its being familiar to the TL readers nowadays. Literal translation rather than transliteration is used here.

3-2-4-This could squander the opportunity to set in a revenue management system that provide us with long-term economic growth(8).

*Long-term* is an expression that is used in economic text to refer to a long period(ten years or more). It is translated into . . .

tends to be more appropriate than literary translation in the TL economic text. Paraphrasing strategy is adopted here.

3-2-5-Developing expertise in oil operations, including geological engineering and management(5).

The term *geology* becomes part of Arabic language nowadays and this is the reason for transliterating it in the TL text. Transliteration is used here.

3-2-6-The manufacturing and petrochemical activities(10).

The same is happened with *petrochemical*. It is transliterated because it is familiar to the TL readers nowadays.

3-2-7-The State Oil Company, along with the Oil Ministry should advise the

government on the possible privatization of companies(11).

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Privatization refers to the reduction of the institutions of a state by means of integration, i. e. a number of minor branches of an institution are integrated into main branches. It concentrates the productive efforts on a rather limited range of tasks ( GPET , 1994 , s.v. privatization). In other words, It turns a public sector into private sector. Such a word is heard too much in our country nowadays that is why its literal translation does not form any difficulty for the TL reader.

3-2-8-Iraqi's currency overvalued and this may be symptomatic of the so-called Dutch Disease . This is a condition arises in an oil state when the large inflow of revenues from oil exports raises the exchange value of the state's currency making the products of industries outside the Oil Sector uncompetitive in terms of price on world markets and reduces the availability of financing outside the Oil Sector (11).

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Despite of translating *Dutch Disease* literally, it is expressive to the TL reader. Its economic implication is explained clearly in the SL text.

3-2-9-The State Oil Company receives an initial capital budget (10).



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*Capital budget*, a budget which covers the items of current revenues and expenditure (DEC, 1968, s.v. capital budget), is rendered into the TL as . Though the connotation of the word *capital* is political (the capital system of a country used by private owners rather than by the state for profit) (OALD, 1995, s.v. capital), it is used along with another item *budget* in an economic text to indicate a sort of budget which is capital as it has been explained later. Literal strategy is used here.

3-2-10-One way of overcoming some elements of the resources curse is to establish a special fund for collecting and managing oil revenues.

It includes:

A stabilization fund designed to insulated the national economy and state budget from currency appreciation caused by flow of oil revenues as well as the effects of volatility on world oil prices and revenues flow(12).

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The word *affiliate* is equated with rather than □ or (a firm which is associated with another, generally as its subsidiary) (OEC, 1968, s.v. affiliate). The SL term *affiliate* is used here in the sense of *branch*, a branch of the Central Bank. Paraphrasing strategy is adopted here. As far as *the Central Bank* (a bank which carries out the monetary policy

Despite of translating fund literally , it is not used in the sense of the box. Instead, it is used metaphorically to designate a sum of money collected for a particular purpose□ □ (Oxford Wordpower Dictionary, 1999, s.v. fund). This is explained clearly in the SL text “fund for collecting oil revenues”.

*Currency*, appreciation’s connotation (a rise in the value of a currency in terms of others on the foreign markets) (DEC, 1968, s.v. currency appreciation), is expressive to the TL reader. It is our situation in Iraq. *Flow* (continuous movement of money) (Oxford Wordpower Dictionary, 2003, s.v. flows), *volatility* (changing suddenly of prices) (Ibid, s.v. volatility) and *revenues* (the total annual income of state and organization) (Ibid, s.v. revenues) are translated literally. They are being familiar in an globalized world.

3-2-11-Some participants referred to the example of Norway’s oil fund which is administrated by an affiliate of the Central Bank and is used to separate oil revenues from the □ non-oil government income and expenditures(12) □

The text is full of economic terms *fund*, *currency appreciation*, *flow*, *revenues* and *volatility*. All these words are translated literally( .

□ and . ).

Let’s explain them one by one.

of a country)(Ibid, s.v. central bank) is concerned, two strategies are used: Transliteration and literal translation. It is rendered into .

rather than .

though no big difference between the two. Nowadays  is usually heard in Iraq.

Also the equivalents  and  for income (the money one receives as payments for work) and  for expenditures (amounts of money are spent) (Ibid, s.v. Income and expenditures) are clear to the TL reader. There is no need to accompany them with footnotes. Literal strategy is used here.

3-2-12-It allows the government and the public to be aware of the size of the non-oil organization deficit and amounts borrowed or reinvested in the country's wealth in the case of surplus(12)

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The TL equivalent الفائض for the SL item *surplus* (an amount of money that is extra more than what one needs) (Oxford Wordpower Dictionary, 1999, s.v. surplus) is very expressive to the TL reader. Its meaning is clear, i. e. it is something which is extra.

3-2-13-There was agreement on the need to develop a transparent, fair, well-publicized tender(14).

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The term *tender* (a formal offer to supply goods or do works at a certain price) (Ibid, s.v. tender) is rendered into

the TL as . This item becomes familiar to the TL reader and that is why its literal translation seems to be very clear to the TL reader. Literal strategy is used here.

3-2-14-It also creates opportunities which foster smuggling and black market activities(16).

The phrase *black market* is equated with .

Its equivalent tends to be a bad market for the TL reader. The black colour represents the badness of this market. So, its connotation (an illegal market in which the buyers offer much higher price for the commodities than the controlled price when the demand for the commodities is greater than the available supply) (DEC, 1968, s.v. *black market*) becomes clear to the TL reader. Also literal strategy is adopted here.

3-2-15-Some participants suggested that the Iraqi government should relinquish its monopoly on fuel imports, transfer responsibility for importing refined products to retailers who will sell their goods at world market prices without trade restrictions(16).

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The term *retailers* (person or company who sell goods in a shop) (Oxford Wordpower Dictionary, 2003, s.v. retailer) is equated with

) and the item *world market* is replaced by the TL

equivalent . Both of them are very comprehensive to the TL reader. They become part of daily spoken language, especially in the market.

3-2-15-Some participants suggested that Iraq's central authority should manage all the public revenues and the government of federal states or region should have the power to impose taxes in order to strengthen its autonomy and balance the central government's power(13).

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*Taxes*(compulsory payments by individuals and companies to the state) (DEC, 1968, s.v. tax)are rendered into the TL as □ are familiar to the TL reader.

## The Political Economy Translation Problems and Strategies in The Data

<b>Strategies</b>																	
<b>Transliteration</b>						<b>Literal Translation</b>						<b>Paraphrasing Translation</b>					
with footnote			without footnote			with footnote			without footnote			with footnote			without footnote		
F	P	E	F	P	E	F	P	E	F	P	E	F	P	E	F	P	E
1	1		6	3	3	1	1		31	8	23				2		2

F: Frequency

P:

Political

E: Economic

This table has been done by the researcher

This table illustrates that the economic translation problems are larger than these of political , i.e. the economic problems are about 32, whereas the political ones are about 14. So, this text is economic, but the presence of political terms whether more or less within it proves that the text is not only economic, but also political, i.e. political economy text.

The most dominant strategy is the literal strategy without footnote. Most of political economy items becomes part of Arabic language that is why one does not accompany them with footnotes. Only some of political words are coupled with footnotes (bureaucratic and communism) to convey their connotations which are unclear to the TL readers.

## Conclusions

The present study has been found out the following conclusions:

1-Though the text is economic, it includes a number of political words within it (democratic, federal, parliament, the central government, rules and regulations, bureaucratic, policy makers, communism, autonomy, national assembly, occupation, provisional coalition). Thus, one can call this text as political economy text.

2-The strategies followed in translation are as followed:

- a-transliteration
- b-literal translation
- c-paraphrasing translation

3-The most frequently used strategy in this respect is that of literal translation without footnotes because political economy terms' meanings are clear to the TL reader (e. g. policy makers, flows, national assembly, revenues, privatization, currency appreciation, the central government, etc.).

4-Using footnotes with some strategies for the political economy words' meanings (communism and bureaucratic), since their connotations are not totally expressive to the TL reader.

5-Though some transliterated items are used in both English and Arabic societies, they convey different connotations (democracy, parliament).

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## مشاكل الترجمة السياسية الاقتصادية في مؤتمر "الثروة النفطية العراقية"

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### الخلاصة

الاقتصاد السياسي هو احدئ المواضيع المهمة في الترجمة. حيث يجمع نوعين من الترجمة: الترجمة السياسية و الترجمة الاقتصادية.

فالمجالان (السياسة والاقتصاد) هما غير منفص ن. حيث احديهما يكمل الآخر. فقد يقرأ المرء نصاً اقتصادياً و يجد عدة كلمات سياسية ضمنه. وهذا يثبت حقيقة الأمر بأن النص ليس فقط اقتصادياً بل ايضاً سياسياً، بمعنى آخر، نص اقتصاد سياسي الذي تكون مصطلحاته ليس لها مرادفات في لغة الهدف وهنا قد نستخدم عدة استراتيجيات.

وقد انعقد هذا المؤتمر في ٢٧ - كانون الثاني- ٢٠٠٥ برعاية معهد المجتمع المفتوح. وبسبب معلوماته الكثيرة فقد اقتصر على نوعين من الترجمة: الترجمة السياسية والترجمة الاقتصادية. واخيراً ختمت الدراسة بذكر النتائج المستخلصة من البحث.