

## Investigating translation strategies: EFL students' approaches to idiomatic expressions

Investigando estratégias de tradução: abordagens dos alunos de EFL sobre expressões idiomáticas

Investigando las estrategias de traducción: enfoques de los estudiantes de EFL ante las expresiones idiomáticas

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is focused on finding which translation strategies among literal, paraphrasing, and cultural equivalents are used by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students from the University "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova when translating English idioms into their native Albanian language. They understand that idioms are paramount to fluency and comprehending the target language's culture. In the study, the researchers explain the problems that idiomatic expressions cause because of their sources and cultural backgrounds. Using a mixed method – qualitative methods including questionnaires distributed to 57 students, the study's results have shown a noticeable tendency to overuse paraphrasing rather than literal translations. This tendency reveals most students' attitudes towards translation as targeted towards a system of linguistic forms and a particular meaning. The brand distribution of italicized lexical units highlights the students' approach to translations more in cultural and particularly idiomatic contexts rather than through words. The study highlights the role of idioms in communication in a second language and suggests a more in-depth study of idioms to obtain high-quality translations.

**Keywords:** EFL students, idiomatic expressions, translation strategies, paraphrasing, cultural relevance, English to Albanian translation, idiomatic competence, language fluency, cultural nuances.

### RESUMO

O foco deste artigo é descobrir quais estratégias de tradução entre literal, paráfrase e equivalentes culturais são usadas por alunos de inglês como língua estrangeira (EFL) da Universidade "Fehmi Agani" em Gjakova ao traduzir expressões idiomáticas do inglês para seu idioma nativo, o albanês. Eles entendem que as expressões idiomáticas são fundamentais para a fluência e a compreensão da cultura do idioma de destino. No estudo, os pesquisadores explicam os problemas que as expressões idiomáticas causam por causa de suas origens e contextos culturais. Usando um método misto - métodos qualitativos, incluindo questionários distribuídos a 57 alunos, os resultados do estudo mostraram uma tendência notável de uso excessivo de paráfrases em vez de traduções literais. Essa tendência revela a atitude da maioria dos alunos em relação à tradução como direcionada a um sistema de formas linguísticas e a um significado específico. A distribuição da marca das unidades lexicais em itálico destaca a abordagem dos alunos em relação às traduções mais em contextos culturais e particularmente idiomáticos do que por meio de palavras. O estudo destaca o papel das expressões idiomáticas na comunicação em um segundo idioma e sugere um estudo mais aprofundado das expressões idiomáticas para obter traduções de alta qualidade.

**Palavras-chave:** Alunos de EFL, expressões idiomáticas, estratégias de tradução, parafraseamento, relevância cultural, tradução do inglês para o albanês, competência idiomática, fluência no idioma, nuances culturais.

### RESUMEN

Este trabajo se centra en averiguar qué estrategias de traducción, entre literales, paráfrasis y equivalentes culturales, utilizan los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) de la Universidad «Fehmi Agani» de Gjakova al traducir expresiones idiomáticas inglesas a su lengua materna, el albanés. Entienden que las expresiones idiomáticas son fundamentales para la fluidez y la comprensión de la cultura de la lengua meta. En el estudio, los investigadores explican los problemas que causan las expresiones idiomáticas debido a sus fuentes y antecedentes culturales. Utilizando un método mixto - métodos cualitativos que incluyen cuestionarios distribuidos a 57 estudiantes, los resultados del estudio han mostrado una tendencia notable a utilizar en exceso la paráfrasis en lugar de la traducción literal. Esta tendencia revela la actitud de la mayoría de los estudiantes hacia la traducción como dirigida a un sistema de formas lingüísticas y a un significado concreto. La distribución por marcas de las unidades léxicas en cursiva pone de manifiesto que los alumnos se acercan a las traducciones más en contextos culturales y, sobre todo, idiomáticos, que a través de las palabras. El estudio pone de relieve el papel de los modismos en la comunicación en una segunda lengua y sugiere un estudio más profundo de los modismos para obtener traducciones de alta calidad.

**Palabras clave:** Estudiantes de EFL, expresiones idiomáticas, estrategias de traducción, paráfrasis, relevancia cultural, traducción del inglés al albanés, competencia idiomática, fluidez lingüística, matices culturales.

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The study emphasizes the importance of idiomatic competence for EFL learners and suggests enhanced idiom-focused curricula to improve translation quality and cultural understanding.

**Originality/value:**

The article offers relevant insights into idiomatic translation strategies, emphasizing cultural context and paraphrasing, enhancing EFL learners' translation skills and cross-cultural communication.

## INTRODUCTION

Translation as a procedure is when a message is transformed from one language to another. This procedure may include all oral and written forms that are rendering one into the other. A particular view is that it involves translating from speech to writing and from writing to speech. This contrasts with the professional translation literature, which makes the difference between translation (written) and interpretation (oral) (Malakoff, 1992). Idioms are among the most potent and colorful aspects of language. They give a sense of richness and reflect what is best in any given culture (Alotaibi, 2020). A complete knowledge of vocabulary is thus only possible by including idiomatic expressions. The ability to interpret and use idioms is an important indicator or measure of language fluency (Namaziandost et al., 2021). One of the features of idioms is that they are frequently unique to a particular culture and are difficult to translate literally into another language. An idiom only sometimes makes sense if it is taken literally. It is a phrase whose meaning is determined not by the specific meanings of the words but by its use. Students who are only taught the everyday grammatical use of language are missing out on the communicative use of language because of the exclusion of idiomatic expressions from the curriculum of our regular English grammar courses (Filladsen & Jordenzen, 2020). Idioms offer language learners a range of possibilities; nonetheless, educators often encounter challenges when teaching them.

### Literature Review

An idiom can be characterized as a group of words that becomes a unique combination, comprising different meanings when used together in a language. However, their meaning is not deduced from the separate meanings of the words alone. Idiomatic phrases consist of two or more words with a unique semantic meaning that differs from their dictionary definitions. Since idiomatic combinations have different meanings from the separate members of the string, idioms block comprehension and must be learned as a single unit. Numerous researchers agree with the previous claim and identify several characteristics of idiomatic combinations. Idiomatic phrases are semi-fixed word strings whose boundaries are clear-cut and do not have any flexibility in different styles. The founder of the theory of idiomaticity is who terms idioms as mini-grammars that cannot conform to the rules of the more extensive grammar (Dobrovolskij et al., 2021; Carrol et al., 2020; Aijmer, 2020; Rustamov et al., 2022).

The knowledge of idioms is part and parcel of any language teaching, and learners are expected to be familiar with them if they use a target language (Aijmer, 2020). There is no day on which anyone can claim that the use of idiomatic language is not witnessed, as every single day on earth, idiomatic language is used by those using the English language for various purposes, whether communicative or vocabulary extensions. Many EFL curricula nowadays explicitly include idioms in the syllabus, while those not explicitly present them to learners may lead teachers to deal with idioms implicatively. When it comes to translating idioms, the most recognized problem is the need for more equivalence between languages, which is why most translations are not understandable or the same. That is the case when translating across languages with different grammar rules and cultural expressions. Translators can use a new structural word to show the same meaning: the so-called modified cultural loss. So, the message is kept, but the exact words are changed. This can happen because of cultural loss if the idiom's cultural significance needs to be transferred in the translation (Vula & Muhaxhiri, 2024). The English language learners of today need to engage themselves systematically in learning idioms, given that idioms represent a perfect area for increasing the lexical knowledge of the English language. At the same time, they are culturally informative. A high development of idiomatic competence is a good sign of a high development of sociolinguistic competence. Mastering idiomatic phrases and sentences is a critical communicative skill, which is now considered one of the essential components of gauging a person's language proficiency (Carrol & Conklin, 2020).

### *Definition of Idioms*

What is an idiom? Idioms are fixed expressions whose meanings do not quickly grow from the individual words' meanings (Carrol & Conklin, 2020). According to Wang et al. (2023), idioms are phrases that are used both in speech and writing in the English language. As examples, these are "kill two birds with one stone", "call it a day" and "break a leg". Idiomatic expressions are fundamental to L2 learners who wish to become fluent in English like natives. Classifications of idioms are only sometimes agreed upon. However, there is a consensus about four main types of idioms in English: phrasal verb idioms, prepositional idioms, other verb idioms, and noun idioms. In addition, idioms are well-recognized for their linguistic characteristics (Dobrovolskij & Piirainen, 2021).

They are said to be fixed and non-compositional lexical phrases or expressions, highly constrained in terms of allowable lexical variability in their internal elements, and subject to currency changes. An idiom must be used as what native speakers of English call "frozen forms". This means that they cannot be arbitrarily changed. For example, the phrasal verb idiomatic expression "catch on" would not make sense if it were changed to "catch in, up, off". As well as idioms, we have other categories of figurative expressions, such as metaphors or similes, which are more grammatical and have more lexical

flexibility (Ataboev et al., 2020).

Furthermore, idioms are often said to be culture-specific. Thus, understanding idioms gives learners a clearer insight into a people's cultural preoccupations, beliefs, traditional knowledge, and wisdom, usually expressed in their proverbs. This is reflected in the fact that idioms often consist of components that seem unrelated to a native speaker or they are language-specific. They embody a serviceable mnemonic aphorism attuned to the collective wisdom for stating and inculcating the beliefs and norms, mores, and folkways of a society. Thus, they serve as "guiding principles, formulated in memorable verses or phrases and alliances of advice or admonition". Idiomatic expressions convey as much information as proverbs and even in greater detail. Native speakers of English use idioms frequently in a variety of contexts (Rustamov et al., 2022; Saleh, 2021; Carrol & Conklin, 2020). Since idiomatic expressions may not convey their literal meaning, they can confuse non-native speakers. Idiomatic expressions are potentially an obstacle for EFL learners in producing a good English translation into Albanian.

### *Role of Idioms in Language Proficiency*

Considering proficiency tests to be a holistic construct, there has been an emphasis on including idiomatic languages. Even a native speaker is known to use dozens of idioms in a single day (Rorty, 2020). Using idioms in any language tells the speakers' fluency and shows the depth of the culture behind that language. Idiomatic language significantly enhances communication and makes it more vibrant and alive (Van Ginkel & Dijkstra, 2020). Learners who can use idioms are usually perceived as having a higher command of a language because they can manage excellently in a language with quirky phrases not found in the beginning vocabulary list. Learners are perceived as more fluent and natural in the language when they use idiomatic expressions; therefore, idiomatic expressions play a significant role in enhancing key capabilities such as fluency and naturalness. As listening ability is considered a crucial macro skill in language learning, idiomatic language has also gained more attention in listening (Ayers, 2021; Boers, 2021).

Idioms play an important role in listening and speaking. Idiomatic language has a very significant role in enhancing the listening capability of the second or foreign language. The command of idiomatic language helps enhance listening skills, not only because idioms are full of multi-word chunks but also because idioms add unique flavor to understanding the culture and enhance the veracity of this 'continuous' multi-word chunk (Ballard, 2022). Learners who get a good grip on the idiomatic requirements of a specific culture in their listening experiences usually have a better grasp and a nuanced understanding of the script. The language patterns of the script are more easily understandable and, therefore, bring a better understanding of the communicative channel. Learners adept at using idioms can more easily gain the confidence of native speakers in their speaking capabilities (Briskilal & Subalalitha, 2022).

### *Challenges in Translating Idioms*

Idioms can cause problems when translating L1 to L2 and vice versa for EFL students. Based on Vula (2022) there are highlighted many challenges that students face when translating idioms from English to Albanian, such as:

(i) Differences in the various meanings of words and word collocations between the two languages: An idiom is a collection of words that have a meaning when used together that is distinct from the meanings of the individual words in the phrase; this definition emphasizes an idiom, as a cohesive unit conveying a singular idea or concept. The explanation refers primarily to an idiom as a unit with a unitary meaning. Even when an idiom has been translated as such by a more experienced EFL student or, indeed, by a professional translator, although the translation gives the unitary meaning, the translation is not likely to be a literal one of the source language text since most idioms belong to informal spoken language and cannot be idiomatic in both L1 and L2 if translated literally. The informal language of the English-speaking world is full of idioms, often rich in nuances of meaning and context (Jan-Petter & Gumperz, 2020).

(ii) Differences in cultural reference and practice: Specific national and regional idioms tend to reflect national or regional peculiarities of whatever has been made an idiom. This particular aspect holds weight. This should significantly impact any educational or training sessions encompassing colloquial English (source: Banton's study in 2020). Idiomatic language, moreover, can often have humor as its primary function rather than the communication of meaning, even when the listener may know about or be a member of the culture from which the idiom originates, so that jokes or witticisms using idioms or idiomatic expressions may still need explaining because a translation is not possible (Wang & Luo, 2021).

Differences of this kind or the first kind produce syntactical and lexical problems in the translation of the L1 idiom and, whether part of such problems or autonomous from them, an obstacle in renderings of equivalent or functional equivalents in the L2 (Al-Jarf, 2022). This relates to accuracy and effectiveness in either translation using a target language or bilingual equative tools or translation. If a simple lexo-syntactical shift is to be used, translation-literal tends to produce misunderstandings; i.e., 'locked door' will usually be translated as 'çelësi në derë' instead of 'dye me kandat të mbyllur,' which is the actual equivalent or 'functional equivalent' used instead of translating an L2 idiom as a bunch of keys'.

## *Strategies for Translating Idioms*

The most common strategy for translating idioms has been literal translation, which involves translating the entire expression word-for-word into the target language (Manipuspika, 2021). Due to its simplicity and ease, students often resort to this strategy in the initial stages of the learning process, where using such strategies is often encouraged as it enables the students to say something in the target language instead of saying nothing (Chew & Cerbin, 2021). Trying to convert expressions into language directly can sometimes result in comical and illogical interpretations of the phrases, which can be an excellent way to grasp idiomatic expressions in the new language more effectively. However, learners need to be cautious about translating every word precisely as it could obscure the real message conveyed by the idioms.

### *Literal Translation*

In the study on translating idioms in texts, one approach considered is a literal translation, which involves converting words and phrases, along with their grammatical structures, from the original language to the target language as long as the expression remains straightforward and every day without becoming idiomatic. Literal translation is a matter that learners of foreign languages face regularly; in some circumstances, it is unintentional. They mean that in direct translation, one has to avoid concerning idiomatic meaning. However, sometimes, students learning a foreign language use direct translation, which has many cases of translating that can make the idiom relevant to the occasion in the target language, even though misunderstandings usually occur.

Although literal translation is almost always used in translating idioms, the fact is that not all idioms can be equally translated or understood directly. Adapting the translated text or finding other meanings in the target text is the best choice when the idiomatic meaning is lost while transferring from the mother language that idioms express (Ruslan et al., 2020). When we should fix literal translation depends on varying circumstances, especially in some instances. University students often become scientific researchers and must compile research papers during their studies.

This phase produces in them frequent use of official language, academic or colloquial language, with idiomatic expressions being accepted according to the translator and the situations of the translated text. Sometimes idiomatic expressions are more exact than simple ones; even vulgar expressions are easily assimilated and are often more significant and stimulating. From this, it can be derived that what we should use depends on the concrete situation, and we have to behave reasonably in each given stage (Fathi & Mahmood, 2020). Dealing in detail with internal causes for accepting the dogmatic can play an essential role in academic language because of internal dynamics. In addition, EFL students should be given paraphrastic translations/training that treat idiomatic expressions differently from conventionalized constructions of ordinary use, homonyms, etc.

### *Paraphrasing*

When students wanted to grasp the meaning of idioms, they tried a strategy—paraphrasing them. This technique involved putting the idiom into words that made sense in their culture while keeping the idea a clever way to hold onto the original message. Idiomatic paraphrases proved to be handy and creative in avoiding mix-ups (Fathi et al., 2020; Yahia et al., 2023). Paraphrasing requires using vocabulary related to the matter of the language material.

Paraphrasing plays a role as it serves as a technique in translating idioms effectively to enhance the translation quality over time by adhering to culturally accepted norms and practices deeply ingrained in the language we translate from and into for effective communication and understanding purposes through consistent practice.

### *Cultural Equivalents*

Cultural equivalents are idioms in the target language that are similar in meaning, scale, and context to those in the source language (Fathi & Mahmood, 2020). They also help maintain the idiomatic meaning and promote more of a functional instead of a literal translation. The finding is important because translators and all professional language users should aspire to find the appropriate context for a natural and accurate translation. Being used by a particular society, idioms are mirrors of the nation's culture that uses it and, thus, are part of the culture. Also, every country has its people's culture, so there are idioms in this case, which serve the same functions as other traditional language patterns.

Cultural equivalents refer to loanwords in the target language that effectively convey the same socio-cultural meanings as the original idioms. For example, 1. "get someone's goat" can be paraphrased as "get on someone's nerves" or "someone's wick", which means extreme irritation. 2. "keep one's fingers crossed" translates to "hold one's thumbs", which is to hope for good luck. Culture also impacts the development and usage of expressions in academic language and educational materials. When a group of people frequently incorporates phrases into their conversations across contexts, the idiomatic expressions become ingrained in their language skills, with both existing and evolving meanings. The first step is the proper transposition of cultural equivalents; otherwise, doing so results in a loss of meaning. The translation may sound unnatural and ineffective in the case of disregard for cultural nuances.

## METHODS

This research will use a mixed-method approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative data, facilitating a complete understanding of translation strategies. Participants are EFL students enrolled in the English language program at the University "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova, Faculty of Philology, Department of English Language-Translation and Interpretation.

### Research objectives

1. This research aims to investigate which translation strategies among literal, paraphrasing, and cultural equivalents EFL students use for translating idiomatic expressions from English to Albanian.

### Research question

1. Which translation strategy has been used mainly by EFL students when translating English idioms to Albanian?

### Research Hypothesis

1. The most used translation strategies for translating English idioms into Albanian are paraphrasing and cultural translation.

### Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure involved distributing a questionnaire to students enrolled in the English language program at the University "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova, specifically within the Faculty of Philology, Department of English Language-Translation and Interpretation. The questionnaire, which was distributed during the first semester of the lectures, more specifically during the fourth week of the lectures, was delivered online via Google Forms. It consisted of 20 different idioms for translation. Participants had three days to respond to the questionnaire. The target group comprised first, second, and third-year students, totaling 57 participants. They were informed in detail about this survey and consented to participate in this research anonymously. After gathering data, a qualitative analysis of the 1140 versions describing in detail the students' choice and the result for each selected option is presented in the questionnaire.

### Participants

The participants chosen for this questionnaire were students in their first, second, and third years at the University "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova, Faculty of Philology, Department of English Language-Translation and Interpretation. The sample comprised 57 students. All participants had attended the course/ tutorials on translating idioms, so they were all prepared.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

57 EFL students were surveyed and asked for a translation of 20 English idioms, which means 1140 versions. Each of the idioms' percentages is presented. The paper offers information on various transition techniques employed for idiomatic expressions. The questionnaire introduces three different versions of translation to which strategies are employed, and their respective percentages correspond to how often each tactic was chosen.

The following are the percentages of each translation strategy (literal, paraphrasing, and cultural) and the analysis for each English idiom specifically.

### 1) *It's raining cats and dogs*

**Table 1.** Results of the idiom – "It's raining cats and dogs"

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| " <i>Bien mace dhe qenë</i> "                                   | Literal translation  | 5.4  |
| " <i>Po bie shi i rrëmbyeshëm</i> "                             | Paraphrasing         | 71.4 |
| " <i>Nuk po e mban toka shiun</i> "                             | Cultural             | 23.2 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

Based on the analysis of 57 translations of the idiom "It is raining cats and dogs," as observed in Table 1, only 5.4 % of students chose the first option, "Bien mace the qenë." The translation of the idiom "It is raining cats and dogs" by using the first option, which had a literal translation in the Albanian language, is not coherent and does not imply the real meaning of

the idiom. The 4.5% of students who chose the first option said they lacked knowledge of translating the idiom in Albanian since its meaning is entirely figurative and does not deal with the 'cats and dogs' in any way. The idiom's meaning is to describe that it is raining very heavily, and its translation to Albanian differs from what 5.4% of students thought. Whereas 71.4% chose the second option, which had a paraphrase translation strategy as "Po bie shi i rrëmbyeshëm." The second option used the paraphrasing translation strategy, which uses different words to describe the exact meaning of the idiom in English. 23.2 % of the students chose the last version of the translation of the idiom "It's raining cats and dogs" as "Nuk po e man toka shiun" (Albanian), which has been translated via cultural translation strategy since the Albanian language is used to refer the heavy raining figuratively.

#### II) *It's a piece of cake*

Regarding the translation of the second idiom presented in the students' questionnaire, as observed in Table 2, it was found that only 3.6 % chose the first option as "Është një copë torte". The English idiom "It is a piece of cake" refers to something simple to accomplish, and the first option does not give any coherent translation in Albanian language, meaning 3.6 % of students failed to realize a meaningful translation of the idiom to Albanian. 75 % of the students considered paraphrasing the best translation of the idiom. They chose the second option, which describes its meaning but does not use any cultural or figurative language in Albanian. Whereas 21.4% of the students chose the third option by using the cultural translation strategy of the idiom "It is a piece of cake" to Albanian as "Është punë hajgare". In Albanian, when people want to describe something straightforward, they use the third option, as presented in the questionnaire. So, with their selection, 21.4% of students decided to give the correct and meaningful translation of the idiom in the Albanian language.

**Table 2.** Results of the idiom – "It's a piece of cake"

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| "Është një copë torte"  | Literal translation  | 3.6  |
| "Është shumë e lehtë"   | Paraphrasing         | 75   |
| "Është punë hajgare"  | Cultural             | 21.4 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

#### III) *Dig a hole for yourself*

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the English idiom "Dig a hole for yourself" means "to take an action that will cause you much trouble." The first option given in the students' questionnaire is not used in Albanian to express the same meaning as it is in English, as noted in Table 3, which means 7.2% of students made a wrong choice in using the literal translation strategy. On the contrary, 65.5% of students picked the second option, primarily used in Albanian, to refer to the same meaning as in the English language, which indicated that most students considered that using the paraphrasing strategy would give the best-translated version in Albanian. On the other hand, the third option was chosen by 27.3% of students. It is crucial to mention that both options, the second and third, can be accepted as translation versions of the idiom to the Albanian language since both describe the exact meaning of the English idiom. Furthermore, as long as the translation is considered coherent and meaningful, it is a matter of style and favorable translation strategy that students choose or pick.

**Table 3.** Results of the idiom – "Dig a hole for yourself"

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy         | %    |
|---|------------------------------|------|
| "Hap një gropë për vete"  | Literal translation strategy | 7.2  |
| "Bëja vetit gropën"   | Paraphrasing                 | 65.5 |
| "Ka rënë me këmbët e veta"                                      | Cultural                     | 27.3 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

#### IV) *Back on your feet*

The expression "Back on your feet" is ubiquitous in English. It's a phrase of health and the whole process of getting better. In the context of the translation into Albanian, the study's findings give students' views on using this phrase and how it is created.

Among the whole list of answers, most chose around 51.8% of the translation of the mere translation "Kthim në normalitet." On the one hand, this strategy is more of an interpretative one, and it is a choice that seeks to capture the idiom's meaning rather than adhere to the literal translation of words. As a result of the practical application of the central narrative theme - a return to normalcy- by the students showing this preference, they are likely to be the ones who recognize

the subtle nuances of using that idiom in English. This indicates their realization that context and cultural implications are important in meaning in a language different from the source.

Respectively, 21.4% of the students have chosen the literal translation "Përsëri në këmbët e tua." The fact that some prefer this option means that a group of people is quite aware of the idiomatic equivalency between the English language and Albanian. Those who selected this answer might feel that through direct translations, the message departs with no loss of originality, emotional charge, or texture. Their preference suggests faith in keeping the expressive form of idioms virtually unaltered, which can be regarded as a positive approach in translating idioms when the idioms' core meaning is left unchanged.

**Table 4.** Results of the idiom – "Back on your feet"

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| "Përsëri në këmbët e tua"                                       | Literal              | 21.4 |
| "Kthim në normalitet"   | Paraphrasing         | 51.8 |
| "U kthye shëndoshë e mirë"                                      | Cultural             | 26.8 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

#### V) Break a leg

"Thyeje këmbën" (Literal Translation)—The literal translation strategy received a 0% response, indicating that respondents do not favor a direct translation of "Break a leg" into its literal equivalent. This suggests that the literal meaning may not resonate culturally or contextually within the target language.

Paç fat (Paraphrasing) – This variation achieved the highest percentage with 85.5%. The translation "Paç fat," which means "Good luck," is a paraphrase since it translates the idea of wishing someone good by not including the literal words. From this perspective, it follows that the respondents would prefer to employ idiom expansions that are culturally acceptable more often than not when translating - from more effective and accurate ways of expressing the concept of translation than the original wording.

As noted in Table 5, 14.5% of respondents chose the third translated version, "E shkefsh" via cultural translation strategy. This translation represents an informant's cultural adaptation of the expression. It indicates an appreciation of the contextual sense of 'Break a leg' as used in a performance situation; however, it is not as popular as the paraphrased version.

The data evidences the desirability of paraphrasing an idiom rather than translating it literally, which indicates that physical equivalence in translation is only sometimes ideal because the intended meaning and emotion should be considered instead. This is an important point for translators who try to make sense of the context that the target idioms are aiming to convey.

**Table 5.** Results of the idiom – "Break a leg"

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| "Thyeje këmbën"   | Literal              | 0    |
| "Paç fat"   | Paraphrasing         | 85.5 |
| "E shkefsh"   | Cultural             | 14.5 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

#### VI) Hit the books

Regarding the translation of the idiom "Hit the books," the first option, "Goditi librat" (Literal Translation), is chosen by a mere 3.6% of respondents, which implies reservations against literal translation, which might be due to the inability of such translations to reflect the figurative connotation attached to this phrase relating to studying hard.

This type makes a closer approximation to the exact wording of the phrase taken from the source language. However, it may sound wrong, or the phrase was intended to convey in the translated language.

The second, "Studio shumë" (Paraphrasing), has been chosen by most respondents with 60%. This shows that the respondents prefer the paraphrasing translation strategy, which is as close as compliant with the original version, to be delivered in the utmost essence of the expression.

The third option, "Bëje ujë" (Cultural Translation), utilizes a cultural approach that could liken studying to nurturing knowledge. However, the low endorsement of 6.4% shows that this cultural rendering did not resonate meaningfully with respondents, likely because of its ambiguity about the original phrase.

The data indicates a strong preference for paraphrasing as the most effective strategy in translating "hit the books." This finding underlines the need to preserve meaning in translation while prioritizing comprehensibility over literal or culturally specific interpretations. The findings are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Results of the idiom – "Hit the books"

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %   |
|---|----------------------|-----|
| "Goditi librat"   | Literal              | 3.6 |
| "Studio shumë"  | Paraphrasing         | 60  |
| "Bëje ujë"  | Cultural             | 6.4 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

#### VII) *In hot water*

The data from students' experiences translating the English idiom "in hot water" into Albanian were fascinating. Indeed, it was a rare thing that revealed their knowledge and how to deal with idioms.

Most of the responses, 80%, included the phrase "Me i hy telasheve." This choice suggests that students were more willing to explain the idiom's meaning in different words than try to rephrase it- which people immediately relate to the original idiom. Instead, they think of changing the wording through paraphrasing and entering the scope of trouble and difficulty through humor. The changes were of this sort, one in hot water or other challenges, and the new translation was sitting near the meaning of the original idiom.

On the other hand, only 5.5% of the participants decided to insert a word-for-word translation of "Në ujë të nxehtë." This small percentage signals that the students comprehend those direct translations are not always the best/proper way to interpret idiomatic expressions, especially when a literal interpretation may not effectively convey the intended figurative meaning in the Albanian context.

Also, 14.5% of the students picked the cultural translation "Të fresh në ujëra të turbulente." This option displays an understanding of cultural specifics, allowing the partners to comprehend better and appreciate the new language. One such example is the transformation of the idiomatic statement, which is better adapted to the native speakers of that language. By unanimous decision on this point, the students had already explained that the translation is multifaceted and the culture of the people, its point of contact, is another important aspect of the communication process, of which the translation into Albanian is, thus, incidental.

In summary, the student's choices point to an in-depth analysis of language, where the meaning takes priority over the direct translation. The findings are presented in Table 7 following.

**Table 7.** Results of the idiom – "In hot water"

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| "Në ujë të nxehtë"  | Literal              | 5.5  |
| "Me i hy telasheve"   | Paraphrasing         | 80   |
| "Të futesh në ujëra të turbullta"                               | Cultural             | 14.5 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

#### VIII) *Spill the beans*

The English idiom "Spill the beans" is used when someone reveals secrets, often by mistake. Based on data, 15.6% of respondents made the first choice, "Derdhe paulin," using literal translation. This translation strategy transmits a different meaning in Albanian since it is not coherent and meaningful. In addition, it obscures the idiom's meaning in the target language, potentially confusing readers.

In the meantime, 71.9% of responses are for the version "Më shpëtoi fjala" (paraphrasing), the second option listed. For this idiom, the paraphrasing translation strategy is very effective as it gives meaning without the literal translation. This is the best method judging by this percentage. Most of the time, this means that responders care more about getting the spirit of an idiomatic expression than its literal correctness — they are getting at cultural meanings. Moreover, 12.5% of respondents have thought that the final non-literal translation would be the cultural translation strategy, with a figure of speech from another culture often used as an expression conveying much the same message, like in "Më shpëtoi goja" (cultural), which changes it to fit cultural contexts. This implies that idioms should be translated in such a way as to make their meaning and context clear, enabling more transparent communication between languages. They focus on higher contextual and cultural elements to reproduce the underlying message faithfully. These findings are presented in Table 8.



**Table 8.** Results of the idiom – “Spill the beans”

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| “Derdhe pasulin”  | Literal translation  | 15.6 |
| “Më shpëtoi fjala”  | Paraphrasing         | 71.9 |
| “Më shpëtoi goja”   | Cultural             | 12.5 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

#### IX) *Cost an arm and leg*

The data collected from students' questionnaires regarding the idiom “Cost an arm and a leg” (Table 9), provides insight into how this expression is understood and translated in different contexts.

Only 1.8% of respondents chose the literal translation strategy (Kushtoi një krah e një këmbë). This low percentage indicates that the literal rendition of the idiom may not resonate with students as a meaningful or effective translation. It suggests that a direct translation might fail to capture the figurative meaning behind the idiom, which reflects the high cost or expense of something.

Most of the respondents, 54.5% in this case, rephrase the statement (Ishte shumë e shtrenjtë). Therein lies the ability of this phrase, ‘that it was said to be costly,’ to capture the essence of the figurative language: There are such languages where one can try and decode the phrase for the language’s sake, but the intention behind it never changes. Such an interpretation, which aims to put across the message contained in the original idiom and can be simpler than a direct translation, seems to be a favorite among the students when it comes to translation.

According to 43.6% of participants, the translation strategy (U bë një dreq e gjysmë) was chosen. A more appropriate phrase is the substitution strategy, which explains how the original phrase was changed culturally. A more appropriate phrase is the substitution strategy that explains the process of cultural changes made in the original phrase. Although it may not be the direct translation of the sentence, it still translates what it meant within the context; this reflects a student's veneration of language and construction as the universal element.

The data supplied for translating the idiom “Cost an arm and a leg” suggests that students comprehend idiomatic expressions and their interpretation styles well. This underscores the fact that the sense of meaning, and the manifestation of cultural expression are more important than literal word translation.

**Table 9.** Results of the idiom – “Cost an arm and leg”

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| “Kushtoi një krah e një këmbë”                                  | Literal              | 1.8  |
| “Ishte shumë e shtrenjtë”                                       | Paraphrasing         | 54.5 |
| “U bë një dreq e gjysmë”  | Cultural             | 43.6 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

#### X) *Hold your horses*

Translating the English idiom “Hold your horses” into Albanian caused the students to use various translation techniques, consequently attracting different student responses.

The alternative translation, “Ndali kuajt”, received 0 % of the student's preference points, meaning zero students chose this approach (Table 10). There are no options for a literal translation, which means the students recognized that the first option, asking someone to be patient or to wait, would not be the correct one to describe the idea.

The students' preferred paraphrasing strategy was “Prit një moment,” which secured a 63.6% rating. On the downside, this method is deemed to be quite literal. It is, by definition, a standard way of saying your point without mentioning more details. The students must have understood the need to use a language that is both more natural and comprehensible to Albanian speakers.

In the scenario where “Merr frymë” 36.4% of respondents have chosen as the representing cultural translation strategy, by this option, this study demonstrates that a culturally relevant idiom refers to the fact that some students chose to adopt a phrase that is strongly linked with the culture but incorrect the face of the original English idiom. This choice reveals a language consciousness that involves communication in another language by breezily using common expressions in the context. Overall, the students' evident preference for paraphrasing conceptually links their attempts to render the idiom accurately and accessible in Albanian.

**Table 10.** Results of the idiom – "Hold your horses"

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| "Ndali kuajt e tu"  | Literal              | 0    |
| "Prit një moment"   | Paraphrasing         | 63.6 |
| "Merr frymë"  | Cultural             | 36.4 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

### XI) *The apple of one's eye*

The students' questionnaire findings on the idiom "The apple of one's eye" in Albanian exhibit refreshing outlines regarding their translation preferences and strategies.

It is a fact that no respondent used the literal translation. This lack indicates the shared realization that idiomatic expressions cannot be translated literally word by word and are always a challenge to translate. A direct translation can frequently become misleading or less clear and, in the process, undergo the loss of the phrase's emotional weight. The students are aware that a word-for-word translation can create a counter-productive aspect and, thus, be unable to win in the given cultural space of Albanian speakers.

An insignificant portion of the respondents (11.1%) decided on another method of conveying the meaning: paraphrasing. Its essence is to be in the reshaping of "The apple of one's eye" to render its significance in different words, not just by replacement. While paraphrasing can provide a real sense of the speaker's idea, it may not incorporate the emotional depth or cultural meaning that goes with the idiom in English. This reflects some learners' attempts to convey the idea even if it might lose some cultural aspects.

The most eye-catching point is that 88.9% of the participants strongly preferred "cultural translation." This particular one, namely "Si Drita e syrit" (Like the light of the eye), is one on which everyone has reached a consensus. By going for this solution, most students show themselves as a group who deeply understand the significance of translating the right cultural element. Regularly called upon expressions that dig deep into the Albanian culture's inner core, this choice not only keeps with the metaphorical meaning of the original idiom but also brings about the feeling of cultural familiarity and emotional relation. The students' practice of drawing a parallel between linguistic meanings and cultural truths is, therefore, a tool that increases the communicative force of the translations.

In the final analysis, the questionnaire results clearly show an inclination to cultural relevance, mainly when it comes to idiomatic expressions. The fact that cultural translation is more popular with students than other types would help them understand that word-for-word communication is just the first step in the translation process. These findings are presented in Table 11 following.

**Table 11.** Results of the idiom – "The apple of one's eye"

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| "Bebja e syrit"   | Literal translation  | 0    |
| "E mrekuallueshme"  | Paraphrasing         | 11.1 |
| "Si drita e syrit"  | Cultural             | 88.9 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

### XII) *Out of the blue*

Based on the Cambridge Dictionary, the meaning of the idiom "Out of the blue" is that it is entirely unexpected. According to the questionnaire results, only 1.8% of students chose the first option, "prej të kaltërtës." The reason is the same as for the previous idiom: the direct translation is so evident that it cannot be an idiom. This lack indicates the shared realization that idiomatic expressions cannot be translated literally word by word and are always a challenge to translate. A direct translation can frequently become misleading or less clear and, in the process, undergo the loss of the phrase's emotional weight.

A high percentage of the students (61.8%) chose the second option, "diçka e papritur," which is very close to the right meaning of this idiom-something. The third option of translating this idiom as "si prej qiellit" was chosen by 36.4% of the students' respondents since, culturally, we use this idiom with the same meaning. These findings are presented in Table 12.

**Table 12.** Results of the idiom – “Out of the blue”

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| “Prej të kaltërtës”   | Literal translation  | 1.8  |
| “Diçka e papritur”  | Paraphrasing         | 61.8 |
| “Si prej qiellit”   | Cultural             | 36.4 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

### XIII) *Drag one's feet*

Regarding the translation of the idiom “Drag one's feet” presented in the students' questionnaire, 14.6 % chose the first option as “Të tërheqësh këmbët zvarrë.” The idiom refers to delaying doing something or doing it very slowly because you do not want to do it, and 14.5 % of students failed to realize a meaningful translation of the idiom to Albanian.

43.6 % of the students considered paraphrasing the best translation of the idiom. They chose the second option, which describes its meaning but does not use any cultural or figurative language in Albanian. Meanwhile, 41.8% of the students chose the third option by using the cultural translation strategy of this idiom to Albanian as “Po shkon zhagaz.” In Albanian, when people want to talk about certain persons who delay doing something or do it very slowly because they do not want to do it, they use the third option, as presented in the questionnaire. These findings are presented in Table 13.

**Table 13.** Results of the idiom – “Drag one's feet”

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| “Të tërheqësh këmbët zvarrë”                                    | Literal translation  | 14.5 |
| “Po shkon me përtësë”   | Paraphrasing         | 43.6 |
| “Po shkon zhagaz”   | Cultural             | 41.8 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

### XIV) *Don't bite off more than you can chew*

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the English idiom “Don't bite off more than you can chew” means you have tried to do something too difficult for you. Concerning translating this English idiom into Albanian, only 9.1% of the students chose the first option (Table 14), which translates the idiom word by word without changing anything. Regarding the second option, 34.5% of the students chose the second option, which in English would have been translated as not to cross your limits. This form of paraphrasing is quite close to the idiomatic meaning but not as good as the cultural one.

The most striking point is that 56.4% of the participants strongly preferred “cultural translation.” This particular one, namely “shtrij këmbët sa ke jorganin,” is one on which quite a good number reached a consensus. By going for this solution, most students show themselves as a group who deeply understand the significance of translating the right cultural element. Regularly called upon expressions that dig deep into the Albanian culture's inner core, this choice not only keeps with the metaphorical meaning of the original idiom but also brings about the feeling of cultural familiarity and emotional relation. The students' practice of drawing a parallel between linguistic meanings and cultural truths is, therefore, a tool that increases the communicative force of the translations.

**Table 14.** Results of the idiom – “Don't bite off more than you can chew”

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| “Mos kafsho më shumë se mund të përtyפש”                        | Literal translation  | 9.1  |
| “Mos kalo limitet e tua”  | Paraphrasing         | 34.5 |
| “Shtrij këmbët sa ke jorganin”                                  | Cultural             | 56.4 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

### XV) *To eat like a horse*

The idiom “To eat like a horse” means to be able to eat much food. Regarding its translation into Albanian, only 12.7% of students chose the literal translation of the idiom (Table 15). Regarding this option of translation, it is worth mentioning that in the Albanian language, we do not use the horse when talking about eating a lot; instead, we use the cow. A high percentage of the students, 58.2%, chose the second option, thinking it has a figurative meaning of having an appetite and eating a lot. The third option of translating this idiom as “të hash sa një lopë” was chosen by 29.1% of the students since, culturally, as mentioned above, we use this idiom when someone eats a lot.

**Table 15.** Results of the idiom – “To eat like a horse”

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| “Të hash si kali”   | Literal translation  | 12.7 |
| “Të kesh shumë oreks”   | Paraphrasing         | 58.2 |
| “Të hash sa një lopë”   | Cultural             | 29.1 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

#### XVI) *Barking up the wrong tree*

Regarding the translation of the idiom “Barking up the wrong tree,” the first option, “Leh te druri i gabuar” (Literal Translation), is chosen by 11.7 of the respondents (Table 16). This is perhaps because this sounds so unnatural in the Albanian language. The second, “Hapa të gabuar” (Paraphrasing), has been chosen by more than half of the respondents, with 50.2 %. This shows that half of the respondents preferred the paraphrasing translation strategy, which, to a certain degree, is close to the original version and is to be delivered in the utmost essence of the expression.

The third option, “Në pozicion të gabuar” (Cultural Translation), was chosen by 38.1% of the respondents, and this is because the translation of this idiom is used quite a lot. However, even though cultural translation is more common among users, the data indicates a strong preference for paraphrasing as the most effective strategy for translating this idiom.

**Table 16.** Results of the idiom – “Barking up the wrong tree”

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| “Leh te druri i gabuar”   | Literal translation  | 11.7 |
| “Hapa të gabuar”  | Paraphrasing         | 50.2 |
| “Në pozicion të gabuar”   | Cultural             | 38.1 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

#### XVII) *Couch potato*

Concerning the translation of the idiom “Couch potato”, only 1.8% of the respondents chose the literal translation, which implies reservations against literal translation (Table 17). This might be due to the inability of such translations to reflect the figurative connotation attached to this phrase relating to being lazy and because it sounds so unnatural in Albanian. We do not use “potato” when we want to talk about laziness.

In this case, most respondents, 90.9%, rephrase the statement (Përtac). In regard to this translation, perhaps the students linked the meaning of this idiom with the couch, which means that people who stay on the couch are lazy. Finally, only 7.3% of the respondents chose the cultural option “rri vendnumëro”, This is probably because this translation sounds more academic, and most students might not be too familiar with this expression.

**Table 17.** Results of the idiom – “Couch potato”

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| “Mos kafsho më shumë se mund të përtyresh”                      | Literal translation  | 9.1  |
| “Mos kalo limitet e tua”  | Paraphrasing         | 34.5 |
| “Shtrij këmbët sa ke jorganin”                                  | Cultural             | 56.4 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

#### XVIII) *Don't count your chickens before they've hatched*

The data from students' experiences translating the English idiom “Don't count your chickens before they've hatched” into Albanian were quite surprising. Only 3.7 % of the respondents chose the first option (Table 18). This small percentage signals that the students comprehend those direct translations are not always the best/proper way to interpret idiomatic expressions, especially when a literal interpretation may not effectively convey the intended figurative meaning in the Albanian context.

Most responses, 72.7%, included the phrase “Mos u gëzo para kohe”. This choice suggests that students were more willing to explain the idiom's meaning in different words than try to rephrase it. Perhaps this is also because this form of expression is quite commonly used by the natives.

Also, 23.6% of the students picked the cultural translation "Mos bën hop hala pa kërcy". This form of idiom is mainly used by the older generation, which could explain why the students were not so familiar with this expression.

**Table 18.** Results of the idiom – "Don't count your chickens before they've hatched"

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| "Mos i numëro pulët ende pa çelur"                              | Literal translation  | 3.7  |
| "Mos u gëzo para kohe"  | Paraphrasing         | 72.7 |
| "Mos bën hop hala pa kërcy"                                     | Cultural             | 23.6 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

#### XIX) *Cross that bridge when it comes to you*

The English idiom "Cross that bridge when it comes to you" is used when you don't need to ponder a situation until it really happens. Based on data, only 5.5% of respondents made the first choice (Table 19), "Kaloje urën kur të vish tek ajo," using literal translation. This translation strategy is not coherent and meaningful. In addition, it obscures the idiom's meaning in the target language, potentially confusing readers.

In the meantime, 80% of responses are for the version "Mos u shqetëso para kohe" (paraphrasing), the second option listed. For this idiom, the paraphrasing translation strategy is very effective as it gives meaning without the literal translation. This is the best method judging by this percentage. Most of the time, this means that responders care more about getting the spirit of an idiomatic expression than its literal correctness — they are getting at cultural meanings. 14.5% of respondents have selected the cultural translation strategy.

**Table 19.** Results of the idiom – "Cross that bridge when it comes to you"

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| "Kaloje urën kur të vish tek ajo"                               | Literal translation  | 5.5  |
| "Mos u shqetëso para kohe"                                      | Paraphrasing         | 80   |
| "Mos e lodh kokën"  | Cultural             | 14.5 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

#### XX) *Once in a blue moon*

Based on the Cambridge Dictionary, the meaning of the English idiom "Once in a blue moon" is something that happens rarely or not often. Based on the questionnaire, the students responded as follows when it comes to translating this idiom into the Albanian language. "Njëherë në hënën e kaltër" (Literal Translation)—The literal translation strategy received only 0.8% response, indicating that respondents do not favor a direct translation of "Once in a blue moon" into its literal equivalent. This suggests that the literal meaning may not resonate culturally or contextually within the target language.

The other two translations, paraphrasing "shumë rrallë" and the cultural translation "rrallë e përmallë", reached the same percentage, 49.1%. Perhaps culturally, we use both options very often, and both of them somehow indicate the same meaning. It only depends on who is using them.

**Table 20.** Results of the idiom – "Once in a blue moon"

| Translated versions of the idiom presented in the questionnaire | Translation strategy | %    |
|---|----------------------|------|
| "Njëherë në hënën e kaltër"                                     | Literal translation  | 0.8  |
| "Shumë rrallë"  | Paraphrasing         | 49.1 |
| "Rrallë e përmallë"   | Cultural             | 49.1 |

**Note.** Authors' development using the research data

## Discussion

Regarding the research objective, research question, and the research hypothesis of this paper, the findings indicate that paraphrasing is the most used translation strategy among EFL students. They confirm their strong inclination toward paraphrasing by attaining data on the students' strategies in translating English idioms into Albanian. The students only get the right message if they paraphrase, as the skill of word meaning is so highly developed in explaining the students' points. According to Kashgary (2011), a combination of translation strategies is also used to provide solutions when direct translation is not possible. For example, in translating the idiom "It is raining cats and dogs," 71.4% of students chose to put this in other words rather than just translating it literally (only 5.4%, cultural translation approached a mere 23.2%). Another expression of

the same pattern is routinely observed, for instance, "Couch potato," where 96.8% of students preferred the method of paraphrasing, which makes it among the most covered idioms in the choice of semantics utilization.

Assuming the same situation, 51.8% of the students essentially decided to eschew their original style while paraphrasing the idiom "Back on your feet," as opposed to only 21.4% and 26.8% of them who selected a literal and a cultural translation, respectively. In the idiom "Spill the beans," 71.9% of the students chose to paraphrase, which, in turn, confirms the point that it is more beneficial to keep the idiomatic flavor of the expression while not resorting to word-for-word mappings.

These percentages imply that students perceive paraphrasing as the best approach to procure the idiomatic expression of the target language while maintaining clarity and intelligibility of their translation. In addition, it is essential that students analyze firstly the idioms and then try to translate them, as stated in the research paper regarding the idiom comprehension in English as a foreign language: *Analysability in focus* by Fotovatnia and Goudarzi (2014) where the paper concludes that the analyzability of idioms significantly affects both the speed and accuracy of their comprehension in an unfamiliar language. According to Hubers et al. (2020b), L2 learners rely heavily on the transparency of idioms to understand their meanings—the more transparent an idiom, the better the L2 idiom knowledge. In addition, L2 learners attempting to recall mental images of the literal meanings of idioms perceive a real roadblock to correctly understanding idioms. Also, vocabulary knowledge and cross-language lexical interference positively affect L2 idiom knowledge. L2 learners with working knowledge of idioms in their L1 can directly translate them to L2 (p. 11).

It finds that unanalyzable idioms take more time in processing and understanding due to there not being transparent relations between their literal and figurative meanings.

There are many challenges to teaching non-native speakers' idioms. First of all, idioms are figurative. In other words, the meaning of an idiom cannot be deduced from its component words, making them very difficult for learners. Another specificity of idioms is their low-frequency level in native speakers' conversational language. In conversation, native speakers build on expressions through vocabulary combinations rather than using set idiomatic expressions (Ghaderi & Afshinfar, 2014). In contrast, analyzable idioms have more precise meanings and are easier and quicker to comprehend. This is in line with the philosophy of the hermeneutic of translation, which privileges the interpretation of meaning in a textual context and does not stick to literal translations. The evidence of a typical inclination towards paraphrasing as a standard feature of translating every single idiom point to the development of a multidimensional proficiency in translation, integrating both linguistic accuracy and cultural relevance.

These findings signal how crucial it is to include in the process of translation the idiom analyzability along with cultural consideration. Ultimately, this calls for effective translation, for which nuances in both linguistic and cultural contexts must be known to the students through an intentional focus on paraphrasing and an idiomatic expression in depth.

## FINAL REMARKS

The study explains the different ways in which language learners of EFL, emphasizing the prevalence of paraphrasing, where the latter is the most preferred, use them to translate idiomatic expressions from English to Albanian. Paraphrasing is the most favorite here, and it is through this that the importance of preservation of meaning and communicative value of the text, rather than literal translation, is stressed. The lack of coherence in the message achieved by direct translations leads to a higher rate of misunderstanding. The results show that the students learning idiomatic expressions know their cultural and contextual features, thus choosing the ones more harmonious with the target language's cultural norms. This creates more instruments of expression through more vigorous interactive practice. Besides, the idea of mutual understanding on two levels among languages and cultures can be made a reality. Consequently, the research paper advocates that the two translations complement each other regarding meaning and cultural authenticity; thereby, they are conducive to the quality and effectiveness of idiomatic translation.

### Limitations and future research

However, as all research should have limitations, this one does. First, the number of participants was small, and they were all drawn from one institution; thus, these findings may not apply to all EFL learners. Future studies could expand the samples to make the findings more general.

Additionally, the study principally concentrated on cross-translation from English to Albanian; hence, the situation of idiom translation from Albanian to English was not included. Broader studies also include the translation of idioms from Albanian to English and the impact of cultural backgrounds for an all-encompassing comprehension of translation strategies. The study also based its research on self-reports that are open to personal prejudice and subjectivity. Objective measures such as task-based assessments and self-reporting could be used to confirm additional issues and strengthen general

interpretation. Therefore, the study merely touched upon deductions regarding various strategies students use. However, future research could delve into the cognitive and psycholinguistic processes in which the mental process of idiomatic translation unfolds.

Consequently, further research should add meaning to the theories of translation strategies brought about in this study and provide further directions in translating potentially helpful practices for language learning and translation studies.

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|   | A1                               | A2  |
| A. theoretical and conceptual foundations and problematization: | 50%                              | 50% |
| B. data research and statistical analysis:                      | 50%                              | 50% |
| C. elaboration of figures and tables:                           | 50%                              | 50% |
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