

THE DEGREE OF EQUIVALENCE BETWEEN IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN ENGLISH AND ALBANIAN



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Abstract

This research explores the extent to which idiomatic expressions in English and Albanian correspond, with a particular emphasis on the translation of culturally specific phrases between these two linguistically and culturally distinct languages. Idioms, known for their figurative meanings and cultural associations, often challenge direct translation and demand more nuanced approaches. By examining a selected set of 29 idiomatic expressions drawn from categories such as business, anatomy, and sports, the study reveals various degrees of equivalence—ranging from complete to partial or none at all. It further investigates the translation strategies used when literal translation fails, including paraphrasing, cultural substitution, and metaphorical reinterpretation. Particular focus is placed on idioms tied to cultural attitudes and societal behaviors, especially those involving bodily references and competitive language common in everyday discourse. Findings suggest that although exact equivalents are occasionally found, most idioms necessitate adaptive techniques to maintain both meaning and cultural relevance in translation. Ultimately, the study underscores the critical role of cultural awareness and contextual understanding in effectively translating idiomatic language, offering valuable insights for both theory and practice in translation studies.

1. Introduction

Language is an integral part of culture, embodying not only communication but also the worldview of its speakers. Idiomatic expressions, in particular, represent a unique aspect of language, encapsulating figurative meanings that transcend literal interpretation. These expressions are deeply rooted in the cultural and historical contexts of the societies they arise from, making their translation a complex and nuanced task (Baker, 1992). In this study, the focus will be on the degree of equivalence between idiomatic expressions in English and Albanian, two languages from distinct linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In the realm of language studies, idiomatic expressions hold a significant position due to their ability to convey meanings beyond the literal interpretation of words. Idioms, as complex linguistic constructs, are often deeply embedded in the culture and history of their language, reflecting unique social realities, shared experiences, and worldviews of native speakers (Fernando, 1996). As such, their interpretation and translation across languages pose significant challenges to linguists and

translators, particularly in contexts where the languages in question have distinct historical, cultural, and structural differences. This study seeks to investigate the degree of equivalence between idiomatic expressions in English and Albanian, examining the ways in which these expressions reflect both linguistic structures and cultural values, and assessing the challenges that arise in their translation.

The question of equivalence in translation, particularly when dealing with idiomatic expressions, is at the core of both translation studies and cross-cultural communication. Idioms, by nature, are often non-compositional, meaning that their meanings cannot be inferred directly from the meanings of their constituent words (Baker, 1992). This characteristic makes the process of translating idiomatic expressions particularly difficult, especially when dealing with language pairs like English and Albanian, which have evolved in different cultural and historical milieus.

English, as a global lingua franca, carries with it a wealth of idiomatic expressions that have developed over centuries of use in diverse cultural contexts, ranging from literary works to everyday speech (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2017). Albanian, on the other hand, is a language with a rich yet distinct cultural and historical background, having been influenced by various languages and cultures over the centuries, including Latin, Greek, Ottoman Turkish, and Italian (Camaj, 1984). Despite the increasing interaction between English and Albanian speakers, particularly in academic, political, and business contexts, there is a significant gap in the literature concerning the specific challenges and strategies for translating idiomatic expressions between these two languages.

1.2. Research Questions

The central focus of this study is on exploring the degree of equivalence between idiomatic expressions in English and Albanian. Specifically, the research aims to address the following questions:

1. To what extent can idiomatic expressions in English be equivalently translated into Albanian, and vice versa?

1.3. Aims and Objectives

The overarching aim of this study is to examine and analyze the degree of equivalence between idiomatic expressions in English and Albanian, taking into account the linguistic, cultural, and contextual factors that affect idiomatic translation. The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- To identify and categorize a representative sample of idiomatic expressions in both English and Albanian.
- To assess the degree of equivalence between idiomatic expressions in the two languages, considering both full equivalence (where idioms can be directly translated) and partial or non-equivalence (where idioms require creative adaptation or cannot be translated at all) (Nida, 1964).
- To investigate the cultural underpinnings of idiomatic expressions in both languages and how these cultural elements impact translation and interpretation (House, 2015).
- To develop and propose strategies for translating idiomatic expressions between English and Albanian, with an emphasis on preserving cultural and contextual meanings while ensuring intelligibility in the target language (Venuti, 2017).

This research is significant for several reasons. First, it addresses a crucial gap in translation studies concerning the equivalence of

This research is motivated by the growing need for accurate translation and interpretation between English and Albanian in a variety of fields, including literature, media, education, and international relations. Moreover, the study aims to contribute to the broader field of translation studies by providing insights into the role of cultural and contextual factors in determining the degree of equivalence between idiomatic expressions in different languages. The implications of this study extend beyond mere translation, as idiomatic equivalence can influence the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication, which is increasingly important in our interconnected world.

2. What are the primary challenges in achieving idiomatic equivalence between these two languages, and what strategies can be employed to overcome these challenges?

3. How do cultural and contextual factors influence the translation of idiomatic expressions between English and Albanian?

4. What insights can the study of idiomatic equivalence offer for improving cross-cultural communication between English and Albanian speakers?

idiomatic expressions between English and Albanian, two languages that, despite their growing interaction, have been understudied in this regard. Second, it contributes to a deeper understanding of the cultural dimensions of language, particularly in the way that idiomatic expressions encode cultural values, beliefs, and practices (Newmark, 1988). Third, by focusing on the challenges of idiomatic translation, this study provides practical insights for translators working in fields such as literature, diplomacy, and business, where accurate and culturally sensitive translations are essential for effective communication.

The theoretical contributions of this research are equally significant. By examining idiomatic equivalence through the lens of translation theory, the study engages with key concepts such as dynamic equivalence (Nida, 1964), domestication and foreignization (Venuti, 2017), and the cultural turn in translation studies (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990). Furthermore, the findings of this research have the potential to inform broader discussions in linguistics regarding the relationship between language, thought, and culture, particularly in the context of how idiomatic expressions shape and reflect cognitive processes in different linguistic communities (Whorf, 1956).

components. They serve as compact forms of communication, conveying figurative meanings that are generally clear to native speakers but may remain obscure to non-native users or when

2. Literature Review

Idiomatic expressions are unique linguistic units whose meanings cannot be deduced by analyzing the meanings of their individual

transferred between languages (Fernando, 1996). What makes idioms particularly complex is their non-literal nature; their interpretations are often shaped by metaphor, cultural references, and situational context, which makes translating them across languages especially challenging.

Idioms are found in virtually all languages and are closely tied to the cultural, historical, and societal experiences of the

2.1. Idiomatic Equivalence in Translation

Studies

Equivalence is a foundational concept in translation studies, particularly when addressing culturally loaded elements such as idioms. It concerns the extent to which the meaning, structure, and overall effect of a source text can be faithfully conveyed in the target language (Nida, 1964). Scholars have long debated the appropriate approach to equivalence. Some advocate for formal equivalence, which emphasizes preserving the original linguistic form, while others support dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes conveying the intended message and effect to the target audience (Newmark, 1988).

Translating idiomatic expressions brings added complexity to the issue of equivalence. Idioms are often culture-bound and lack direct counterparts in other languages, making straightforward translation nearly impossible (Venuti, 2017). To navigate this, translators typically rely on two key approaches: domestication and foreignization. Domestication adjusts the idiom to align with the cultural context of the target audience, while foreignization maintains the idiom's original flavor, preserving its cultural uniqueness for the reader (Venuti, 2017).

Although the topic of idiomatic equivalence has been explored in relation to numerous language pairs, there is a noticeable absence of research focusing specifically on English and Albanian. Given the increasing linguistic and cultural exchanges between these two languages, this study seeks to address that gap by examining the methods used to achieve equivalence in idiomatic translation, with special attention to cultural and contextual influences.

A number of idiomatic expressions have gained significant popularity in the Albanian language, despite not being officially documented in Albanian idiom dictionaries. These phrases are, in fact, direct translations—calques—of English idioms. According to Gjocaj (2008), their widespread use stems from their perceived modernity and linguistic appeal, making them appear "trendy" within contemporary discourse. Remarkably, these calques retain the same semantic meaning as in their source language, thus representing instances of full idiomatic equivalence.

communities that use them (Baker, 1992). Because they are so culturally embedded, idioms depend on shared understandings, traditions, and values within a specific linguistic group. For instance, the English idiom "spill the beans," which refers to revealing confidential information, may not translate directly into another language if the underlying metaphor lacks cultural significance or resonance (Gibbs, 1994).

These expressions have permeated both everyday and professional vocabulary, becoming familiar across diverse segments of society. Examples include:

- "A picture is worth 1000 words" → "Një fotografi vlen sa 1000 fjalë"
- "At a crossroad" → "Në udhëkryq"
- "Butterflies in the stomach" → "Fluturat në stomak"
- "Father figure" → "Figurë atërore"
- "It takes two to tango" → "Duhet dy (veta) për tango"
- "Light at the end of the tunnel" → "Dritë në fund të tunelit"
- "In seventh heaven" → "Në qiellin e shtatë"
- "Over my dead body" → "Mbi trupin tim të vdekur"
- "Throw the towel" → "Hedh peshqirin"
- "White lie" → "Gënjeshtër e bardhë"

Many of these calqued idioms are especially prevalent in the fields of business and politics, demonstrating how global linguistic trends influence specialized language in Albanian. Notable examples include:

- "A domino effect" → "Efekti domino"
- "Behind closed doors" → "Prapa deryve të mbyllura"
- "Big fish" → "Peshk i madh"
- "Black Friday" → "E premija e zezë"
- "Below the belt" → "(Goditje) nën brez"
- "Have an ace up your sleeve" → "Kam asin nën mëngë"
- "Hot potato" → "Patate e nxehtë"
- "Money laundering" → "Shpërlarje parash"
- "On the table" → "Në (mbi) tavolinë"
- "Under the table" → "Nën tavolinë"
- "Zero tolerance" → "Zero tolerancë"

These idioms illustrate how the increasing exposure to English—through global media, international institutions, and online platforms—has contributed to the adoption of literal translations that are now becoming normalized within modern Albanian usage. Humans are not merely biological beings—they are also carriers of cultural and social identities, which are reflected in the languages they speak. Language serves as a vessel for cultural and social experience, and because these experiences differ across cultures, they shape individuals' perceptions of the world (Geeraerts, 2006). This, in turn, influences how idiomatic

expressions are understood and interpreted in everyday communication.

When Albanian speakers encounter an English idiom, they often attempt to infer its meaning by identifying familiar elements—lexical items that either appear in similar idioms in Albanian or carry recognizable meanings. English speakers use a similar strategy when faced with unfamiliar idioms in other languages. Both groups rely on shared or familiar vocabulary to bridge understanding. However, this method becomes significantly more challenging when idioms lack any lexical overlap between languages. There exists a particular category of idioms in English that, while semantically equivalent to expressions in Albanian, are constructed using entirely different lexical components, making direct recognition more difficult despite conceptual similarity.

2.2. Theories of Idiomatic Translation

A number of influential theories have contributed to the development of idiomatic translation, each offering distinct solutions for handling figurative language. One such approach is Larson's (1998) meaning-based translation model, which argues that the primary goal of translation should be to communicate the intended meaning of an idiom rather than preserving its original structure. Larson emphasizes that the idiom's functional role should be retained, even if this requires replacing it with a culturally suitable equivalent in the target language.

Baker (1992) similarly adopts a functionalist stance, stressing that translators should focus on meaning rather than form when dealing with idioms. She outlines several practical strategies for translating idiomatic expressions: locating an equivalent idiom in the target language, rephrasing the idiom's meaning, or omitting it entirely when no satisfactory equivalent exists. These methods highlight the inherent difficulty of translating idioms and the adaptability required of translators facing non-literal language.

Nida's (1964) concept of dynamic equivalence also plays a crucial role in idiom translation. He advocates for an approach centered on producing the same effect on the target audience that the original expression has on its native readers. When translating idioms between languages as culturally distinct as English and Albanian, this perspective is especially important, since figurative meaning often hinges on cultural context.

In contrast, Catford (1965) discusses the notion of formal equivalence, which seeks to retain the original idiom's structural form in translation. Yet, he acknowledges that this method is often inadequate for idiomatic language, which is deeply embedded in cultural understanding and may not be easily grasped by speakers of another language.

2.3. Cultural Considerations in Idiomatic Translation

Culture significantly influences how idiomatic expressions are interpreted and translated. As Newmark (1988) points out, idioms are often deeply embedded within the cultural framework of the source language, carrying meanings shaped by societal beliefs, traditions, and values. This cultural grounding makes idiomatic translation particularly complex, as it requires translators to navigate both linguistic and cultural differences with care.

Take, for example, the English idiom "barking up the wrong tree," which refers to following an incorrect line of reasoning or action. This phrase might not resonate in Albanian, where the metaphor involving barking and trees may lack cultural relevance. In such instances, the translator must replace the idiom with a culturally meaningful expression in Albanian that captures the original intent, even if the literal structure is abandoned (Newmark, 1988).

Xhaferi (2013) similarly observes that Albanian idioms are often closely linked to the nation's cultural traditions and historical narratives. Expressions rooted in customary practices or specific historical references may prove difficult to render accurately in English without sacrificing their cultural depth. These examples underscore the importance of cultural literacy in translation, highlighting the necessity for translators to be familiar with the socio-cultural context of both the source and target languages.

Pavlović (2007) further elaborates on the idea of cultural equivalence, suggesting that idioms reflect the worldview of their originating culture. Translating idiomatic expressions between English and Albanian, therefore, involves more than linguistic substitution—it requires insight into the values and perspectives embedded within the expressions. This kind of translation demands both linguistic expertise and cultural sensitivity, along with the creative ability to reframe idioms in a way that maintains their impact and meaning across languages.

2.5. Challenges in Translating Idiomatic

Expressions between English and Albanian

Translating idiomatic expressions between English and Albanian poses distinct challenges, largely due to the linguistic, cultural, and historical contrasts between the two languages. Although they both stem from the Indo-European language family, their separate paths of development have resulted in marked differences in vocabulary, grammar, and cultural symbolism (Camaj, 1984).

A major difficulty lies in the absence of direct equivalents for many idioms. As Baker (1992) emphasizes, idioms are highly language-dependent and frequently resist literal translation. This is especially apparent in English and Albanian, where idioms

often draw on imagery and cultural allusions that may not have parallels in the other language. For instance, the English phrase “hit the nail on the head,” used to express precise correctness, lacks a direct counterpart in Albanian. While a similar sentiment can be conveyed, it typically requires the use of a different metaphor. In these instances, translators must decide whether to rephrase the expression or substitute it with a culturally relevant idiom in the target language (Baker, 1992).

According to Ionescu (2017), the most frequently observed syntactic structure among idioms across languages is the verb + noun phrase (V+NP) pattern. This structure is also evident in a substantial portion of the idioms analyzed in this study, including 64 out of 168 idioms with full equivalence, 60 out of 164 idioms showing partial equivalence, and 25 out of 72 idioms that lack an equivalent in the other language. These patterns are clearly illustrated through the provided examples.

However, despite this commonality, many frequently used idioms in both English and Albanian exhibit notable syntactic differences. These differences are especially pronounced in idioms categorized under partial equivalence and often stem from additional constituents or structural divergences. Conducting a syntactic comparison of English and Albanian idioms presents challenges, given the inherent structural disparities between the two languages and the broad categorization of expressions considered idiomatic in each. As a result, some idioms are best analyzed at the phrase level, while others require analysis at the clause level.

The structural variations are particularly visible in partially equivalent idioms, and to illustrate this, 16 representative examples were selected:

- Be all ears → (Jam) gjithë (tërë) sy e veshë: The English structure follows a V+NP pattern, whereas the Albanian version involves coordinated nouns ("eyes and ears"), adding an extra constituent.
- Blood is thicker than water → Gjaku ujë nuk bahet (Gjevari, 1972): Both idioms are independent clauses. However, English uses a subject–predicate–subject complement (S–PSC) structure, while the Albanian version follows a subject–predicate–object (S–P–O) format.
- Hand over the reins → I lë në dorë (diku): In English, the noun "reins" explicitly appears, while the Albanian counterpart omits it, implying the object within context.

3. Methodology

This research utilizes a qualitative design to investigate how idiomatic expressions in English and Albanian align in terms of meaning and usage. Because idioms rarely allow for literal, one-

- In the blink of an eye → Sa hap e mbyll sytë: The single verb "blink" in English is rendered in Albanian using two verbs, "hap" (open) and "mbyll" (close), along with the noun "sytë" (eyes), to preserve the idiomatic meaning.
- On pins and needles → Rri (si) mbi gjilpëra: The English phrase comprises coordinated nouns "pins and needles," whereas the Albanian expression includes the verb "rri" (stay), which is not present in the English version.
- Once in a blue moon → Një herë në hënë: The adjective "blue" modifies "moon" in English but is omitted in the Albanian equivalent.
- Open old wounds → I hap plagën (diku): The English idiom includes the adjective "old," which is not present in the Albanian phrase, and the noun appears in singular form.
- Stab someone in the back → I ngul thikën pas shpine: The Albanian version introduces the noun "thikën" (knife), whereas the English verb "stab" implies both the action and the instrument. The syntactic pattern of the English phrase follows V+X+PP, as outlined by Bruening (2019).

In this context, it is important to consider the concept of syntactic frozenness, introduced by Fraser (1970) and later referred to as fixedness by Langlotz (2006). This concept describes the structural rigidity often attributed to idiomatic expressions. While widely accepted as a defining feature of idioms, many researchers acknowledge exceptions to this rule. This is especially true in Albanian, where certain idioms display syntactic flexibility that challenges the assumption of fixedness typically associated with idiomaticity.

Cultural specificity further complicates idiomatic translation. Venuti (2017) points out that idioms are frequently rooted in particular cultural customs, historical experiences, or belief systems, which may not translate easily into another cultural framework. When rendering such expressions from English into Albanian—or vice versa—translators must balance fidelity to the original meaning with the need to ensure that the idiom remains meaningful and appropriate for the target audience. This delicate task underscores the importance of cultural awareness and adaptive translation strategies in maintaining the impact of idiomatic language across languages.

to-one translation, a comparative approach is essential to examine the linguistic, cultural, and situational factors that influence their interpretation. The study applies both descriptive and interpretive

methods to assess the strategies employed in translating idioms and to classify them according to their level of equivalence—whether complete, partial, or lacking entirely.

3.2. Data Collection

3.2.1. Corpus Selection

The dataset for this research comprises idiomatic expressions drawn from two primary sources. For English, the idioms were selected from established reference works, including the Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms (2010) and the Cambridge Idioms Dictionary (2017). A total of 29 idioms were chosen, prioritizing those commonly used in both formal and informal contexts. In the case of Albanian, expressions were sourced from Fjalori Frazologjik i Gjuhës Shqipe (1980) along with more contemporary idiomatic dictionaries. To ensure a representative sample, idioms frequently appearing in literature, mass media, and everyday conversation were also included.

The selection aimed to cover a broad spectrum of themes such as emotional states, actions, temporal references, and human behaviors. This diverse range facilitated a comprehensive comparison between the two languages, shedding light on how figurative meaning is conveyed across different cultural and linguistic frameworks.

3.2.2. Criteria for Selection

The selection of idioms for this study was guided by three key criteria:

Preference was given to idiomatic expressions that commonly appear in everyday communication, literary texts, and media discourse. Idioms with strong cultural associations or embedded references were included to explore the role of cultural context in translation. The focus was on idioms that demonstrate a high level of non-literality, those whose meanings cannot be readily interpreted from the individual meanings of their components.

3.4.1. Comparative Analysis

The study employs a comparative analytical method to evaluate idiomatic equivalence between English and Albanian. Each English idiom is matched with its Albanian counterpart, and the degree of equivalence is assessed using Baker's (1992) classification framework:

Full Equivalence: Idioms that match both in meaning and structural form, allowing for direct translation with no loss of nuance or cultural resonance.

Partial Equivalence: Idioms that convey the same underlying idea but differ in wording, imagery, or metaphor due to cultural divergence.

Non-Equivalence: Idioms that lack a corresponding expression in the target language, either in meaning or form. For these, translation solutions such as paraphrasing or cultural substitution are considered.

Given the culturally embedded nature of idiomatic language, the study further investigates how cultural background influences equivalence. For idioms exhibiting partial or non-equivalence, an in-depth analysis of cultural references, historical influences, and societal norms is carried out, informed by the frameworks of cultural equivalence proposed by House (2015) and Nida (1964). This allows for a more nuanced understanding of how cultural distinctions between English and Albanian shape translation outcomes.

3.5. Translation Strategies

Where full equivalence is not possible, the study examines alternative translation strategies to convey meaning effectively. Drawing on Baker's (1992) model, the strategies include:

Employing an idiom with both similar meaning and form in the target language.

Using an idiom that shares meaning but differs in structure or imagery.

Rendering the meaning through paraphrasing when no equivalent idiom exists.

Omitting the idiom entirely if it cannot be appropriately translated.

The findings from this comparative analysis are presented quantitatively by categorizing each idiom into one of the three equivalence types. The percentage distribution across categories is then calculated to offer a statistical overview of how successfully idiomatic expressions can be translated between English and Albanian. This data provides valuable insight into the nature and frequency of equivalence in idiomatic translation across these two languages.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

For the purpose of analysis, a dataset was compiled featuring 29 idiomatic expressions in English along with their meanings and corresponding Albanian equivalents. This dataset served as the foundation for a comparative examination of idiomatic translation between the two languages. To manage the analysis effectively, the idioms were divided into five subsets, each containing 10 expressions. This segmentation enabled a more organized and detailed review of the data, allowing the researcher to examine individual idioms and their translated forms in depth.

Presenting the idioms in smaller sections helped maintain clarity and focus throughout the analysis. This structured approach also made it easier to identify recurring patterns and translation challenges. By breaking down the dataset in this way, the study

was able to systematically highlight the degrees of equivalence—full, partial, or non-equivalent—while drawing attention to the

cultural and linguistic nuances involved in rendering idiomatic expressions from English to Albanian and vice versa.

Table 1. English Idioms and their Albanian equivalent

<i>ENGLISH IDIOMS</i>	<i>MEANING</i>	<i>ALBANIAN EQUIVALENT</i>
A piece of cake	Something very easy	E lehtë si tortë
Barking up the wrong	Making a wrong assumption	I ra në të gabuarën
Burn the midnight oil	Working late into the night	Djegi vajin e mesnatës
Hit the nail on the head	To be exactly right	E gjeti gozhdën në kokë

The following table provides a list of selected English idiomatic expressions along with their meanings and corresponding Albanian equivalents:

Table 2. English Idioms and their Albanian equivalent

<i>ENGLISH IDIOM</i>	<i>MEANING</i>	<i>ALBANIAN EQUIVALENT</i>
Sit on the fence	Unable to decide	Ulem në gardh
Speak of the devil	Someone who appears when mentioned	Flet për djallin
Steal someone's thunder	Take credit for someone else's work	Vjedh bubullimat e dikujt
The elephant in the room	An obvious problem	Elefanti në dhomë

The idioms listed in the table are metaphorical in nature and are frequently used in both formal and informal contexts. These expressions are figurative, meaning their intended significance cannot be derived from the literal interpretation of the individual words. Instead, they rely on metaphorical language to express deeper, often abstract ideas.

"Sit on the fence" refers to a state of indecision or neutrality. The imagery of someone physically sitting on a fence symbolizes their unwillingness to commit to one side of an argument or situation. This idiom is typically used to describe individuals who avoid making a firm decision or taking a clear stance.

"Speak of the devil" is a colloquial expression often used when someone unexpectedly appears just as they are being talked about. Its origins are linked to the old superstition that mentioning the devil could cause him to appear. Today, however, the phrase

is used humorously in everyday conversations without any serious connotation.

"Steal someone's thunder" is an idiomatic expression that describes the act of claiming recognition for another person's ideas or accomplishments. The metaphor suggests diverting attention or praise away from the original source, much like taking the dramatic impact—or "thunder"—from someone else's moment.

"The elephant in the room" refers to an evident issue or problem that is deliberately ignored or left unaddressed. The phrase draws on the metaphor of an elephant - a large and unmistakable presence—being in the same space as everyone, yet no one acknowledges it. It highlights the social tendency to avoid uncomfortable or controversial topics, even when they are clearly apparent.

Table 3. English Idioms and their Albanian equivalent

<i>ENGLISH IDIOMS</i>	<i>MEANING</i>	<i>ALBANIAN EQUIVALENTE</i>
Break the ice	To make people feel more comfortable	Thyej akullin
Spill the beans	Reveal secret information	Zbuloi sekretin
Throw in the towel	To give up	Dorëzohem
Once in a blue moon	Rarely	Njëherë në muajt e kalendarit
Under the weather	Feeling ill	Nën mot

The idiom "Break the ice" is commonly used to describe efforts made to ease social tension and create a more comfortable

atmosphere during initial interactions. Its Albanian counterpart, "Thyej akullin," carries an identical meaning, reflecting a shared cultural metaphor for overcoming social awkwardness.

The expression "Spill the beans" refers to the accidental or unintended revelation of confidential information. In Albanian, this idea is captured by the phrase "Zbuloi sekretin," which likewise signifies the act of disclosing a secret. Both idioms emphasize the unplanned nature of revealing sensitive content.

"Throw in the towel" has its origins in the sport of boxing, where tossing a towel into the ring signifies surrender. The Albanian equivalent, "Dorëzohem," conveys the same notion of admitting

defeat. Each phrase is rooted in a cultural understanding of giving up in the face of adversity, illustrating how similar metaphorical concepts are expressed across different linguistic contexts.

The idiom "Once in a blue moon" refers to an event that occurs very rarely. In Albanian, "Njëherë në muajt e kalendarit" conveys the same meaning, although the imagery differs slightly. Both expressions emphasize the infrequency of an event.

The phrase "Under the weather" is commonly used to describe feeling ill or unwell. The Albanian equivalent "Nën mot" mirrors this figurative use, with both expressions metaphorically referring to the impact of adverse conditions on health

Table 4. English Idioms and their Albanian equivalent for Business Idioms

<i>BUSINESS IDIOMS</i>	<i>MEANING (ENGLISH)</i>	<i>ALBANIAN EQUIVALENTE</i>	<i>MEANING (ALBANIAN)</i>
Back to the drawing board	To start something over again after a failed attempt.	Kthehu te plani fillestar	Për të filluar nga e para pas një dështimi.
Cut corners	To do something in the easiest or cheapest way.	Prerë rrugën	Bëj diçka në mënyrën më të lehtë, shpesh duke sakrifikuar cilësinë.
In the driver's seat	To be in control of a situation.	Në sediljen e shoferit	Të jesh në kontroll të situatës.
Think outside the box	To think creatively and come up with innovative ideas.	Mendo jashtë kutisë	Të mendosh në mënyrë krijuese dhe të gesh ide inovative.
The bottom line	The most important aspect, often related to profit or loss.	The most important aspect, often related to profit or loss.	Aspekti më i rëndësishëm, shpesh i lidhur me fitimet ose humbjet.

The selected business-related idioms were analyzed and translated into Albanian to examine how both languages articulate key concepts within professional and commercial settings. This comparison allowed for the identification of both linguistic and cultural parallels, offering a clearer understanding of how figurative language operates in business discourse across

English and Albanian. Additionally, the analysis sheds light on the difficulties that arise when translating idioms with specialized meanings, highlighting the nuanced interpretation required to maintain clarity and contextual appropriateness in business communication.

Table 5. English Idioms and their Albanian equivalent for Body part Idioms

<i>ENGLISH IDIOM</i>	<i>MEANING (ENGLISH)</i>	<i>ALBANIAN EQUIVALENT</i>	<i>MEANING (ALBANIAN)</i>
Break a leg	Good luck	Thyej këmbën	Fat të mirë
Keep an eye on	Watch carefully	Mbaje një sy	Vëzhgo me kujdes
Cost an arm and a leg	Very expensive	Kushton një krah dhe një këmbë	Shumë e shtrenjtë
Lend a hand	Help someone	Jep një dorë	Ndihmo dikë
Cold feet	Nervous or hesitant	Këmbët e ftohta	Nervoz ose hezitues

The analysis of body part idioms aimed to reveal both the commonalities and distinctions in figurative expression between English and Albanian. Such idioms are often embedded within specific cultural frameworks and comparing them provides a lens through which to observe how each language employs body-

related metaphors to convey abstract ideas. This examination offers valuable insights into the linguistic similarities and subtle differences in how universal themes—such as fortune, expense, vigilance, and anxiety—are articulated. Ultimately, this comparison illustrates how diverse cultures draw on the same

physical references to express shared aspects of human experience through idiomatic language.

Table 6. English Idioms and their Albanian equivalent for Sport Idioms

<i>ENGLISH IDIOM</i>	<i>MEANING (ENGLISH)</i>	<i>ALBANIAN EQUIVALENT</i>	<i>MEANING (ALBANIAN)</i>
Hit the ground running	Start something successfully from the beginning	Fillo me hov	Fillo me sukses që në fillim
Throw in the towel	To give up or admit defeat	Hedh peshqirin	Dorëzohem
Get the ball rolling	Start an activity or project	Nisim topin	Filloj një aktivitet ose projekt
On the ball	Alert and competent	Në top formë	Të jesh vigjilent dhe kompetent
Level playing field	Fair competition	Fushë e barabartë	Garë e ndershme

Sports-related idioms were deliberately selected for analysis in this study due to their widespread use in both English and Albanian to express ideas linked to competition, effort, and success. Such metaphors extend beyond athletic contexts, appearing frequently in fields such as business, leadership, teamwork, and everyday conversation. Their dynamic and action-oriented nature makes them particularly effective for conveying complex or abstract ideas.

5. Discussion

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the extent to which idiomatic expressions in English and Albanian align, with a focus on the cultural, linguistic, and contextual factors that influence translation. The study addressed four central questions: the degree of idiomatic equivalence between the languages, the main obstacles to achieving this equivalence, the role of cultural and contextual influences, and the broader implications for intercultural communication.

Findings revealed that full equivalence is relatively uncommon and generally occurs only when both languages share a similar metaphor or cultural foundation. Most idioms fell into the categories of partial or non-equivalence, reflecting the structural and cultural divergences between English and Albanian. In cases of partial equivalence, the underlying meaning was preserved, but linguistic and cultural adjustments were necessary to ensure clarity and resonance in the target language.

For instance, the idiom “throw in the towel” and its Albanian counterpart “hedh peshqirin” both signify surrender, demonstrating alignment in metaphorical framing. However, idioms involving body parts or rooted in specific traditions often lacked direct equivalents, requiring either rephrasing or cultural adaptation. This underscores how deeply cultural context shapes the construction and interpretation of idiomatic language.

Several challenges emerged in the translation process. Many idioms reflect unique cultural events, beliefs, or social practices, making them difficult to translate without altering their

significance. While some English idioms like “the ball is in your court” have close Albanian equivalents, others such as “once in a blue moon” lack culturally meaningful parallels. In such cases, translators must rely on paraphrasing or culturally adapted alternatives to convey the intended message effectively.

The translation strategies observed align closely with theoretical frameworks in translation studies. Nida’s (1964) concept of dynamic equivalence—which emphasizes conveying meaning over maintaining structure—proved especially relevant. Similarly, Venuti’s (2017) approaches of domestication and foreignization were reflected in practice, depending on whether the translator prioritized cultural familiarity or retained the original metaphor.

Cultural and situational factors were found to be crucial in determining the success of idiomatic translation. Idioms rooted in global experiences, such as those from sports, were more likely to have direct equivalents. Conversely, idioms derived from local customs, cuisine, or folklore often required creative adaptation. The context of use also influenced translatability; business idioms, for example, tended to be more universally understood and easier to translate than colloquial or informal expressions.

One of the key insights of the study is the indispensable role of cultural competence and contextual sensitivity in effective idiomatic translation. Misinterpreting or awkwardly translating idioms can lead to confusion or miscommunication—especially in high-stakes environments like business meetings or diplomatic engagements. Thus, translators must not only possess linguistic expertise but also a nuanced understanding of both source and target cultures to ensure that idioms retain their intended meaning and effect.

By analyzing these idioms, the study sought to determine how sporting metaphors are transferred between English and Albanian—specifically, whether equivalent expressions exist in both languages or whether cultural reinterpretation is required. Sports idioms often embody values such as perseverance, fair

play, and strategic thinking. These values, while largely universal, may be articulated differently depending on cultural and linguistic context.

6. Conclusion

This research set out to explore how idiomatic expressions in English and Albanian compare, with particular attention to the cultural and linguistic challenges posed by figurative language. Due to their non-literal and culturally embedded nature, idioms often resist direct translation. Through the comparative analysis of categories such as body part idioms, sports idioms, and business idioms, the study found that while full equivalence is occasionally achievable, many idioms require flexible and creative strategies to preserve both meaning and cultural relevance.

The motivation for this study lies in the increasing need for effective communication between English and Albanian speakers, particularly in globalized fields such as international business, diplomacy, education, and media. Idioms frequently carry cultural nuances that can either enrich or distort a message when translated. This research addresses a gap in current scholarship by examining how idioms are handled in translation between these two specific languages.

The focus was on identifying levels of equivalence—full, partial, and non-equivalence—and on evaluating the methods translators use to bridge cultural and linguistic divides. The choice to analyze body, sports, and business idioms was deliberate, as these categories are both metaphor-rich and widely used across cultures. The findings show that while some expressions translate easily, others are deeply rooted in cultural norms or historical contexts, requiring thoughtful adaptation to be understood in another language.

This study offers several contributions. Academically, it enriches the field of translation studies by providing a framework for analyzing idiomatic equivalence and emphasizing the importance of cultural awareness. Practically, it offers valuable insights for translators, educators, and professionals who rely on idiomatic expressions in their work. By highlighting the risks of literal translation and proposing alternative strategies, this research supports more effective and culturally appropriate communication between English and Albanian speakers.

In summary, translating idiomatic expressions is not solely a linguistic exercise but a cultural one. Idioms reflect the social values, beliefs, and historical experiences of their speakers. Although idiomatic translation poses challenges, this study demonstrates that with the right strategies—grounded in cultural

understanding and contextual awareness—these challenges can be successfully addressed. Future research might expand on this foundation by exploring other idiom categories or examining how idiomatic translation impacts various forms of media, such as literature, film, and advertising, thereby broadening the scope of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic research.

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