

Exploring the Challenges and Strategies in Translating Idiomatic Phrases from Albanian into English

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Abstract

*The aim of this article is to explore the challenges and strategies involved in translating idiomatic phrases from Albanian language into English. These phrases, including idioms, proverbs, and other culturally-bound expressions, often carry meanings that extend beyond their literal definitions, posing difficulties for direct translation. Our study highlights some linguistic and cultural differences between Albanian and English, analyzing how these variations impact the accuracy and fluidity of translation. The examples are provided from the novel *Kronikë në gur* by Ismail Kadare and its translated variant *Chronicle in Stone* by Arshi Pipa. Drawing on examples from both languages, our main purpose is to contrast common Albanian idiomatic phrases with their English equivalents, discussing various translation techniques and strategies. Through this contrastive analysis, we provide insights into maintaining the semantic integrity and cultural meaning of idioms while ensuring comprehension for English language readers. The findings are relevant for translators, linguists, and educators trying to address linguistic gaps between these two languages.*

Key words: translation, idiomatic phrases, strategies, Albanian, English, contrast

INTRODUCTION

Phrases, whether idiomatic or not, are integral parts of every language. People often communicate by combining words into phrases rather than using individual words alone. The meanings of these phrases are often difficult to grasp because they usually do not directly reflect the meanings of the individual words within them. Consequently, understanding and interpreting them can be challenging.

Translating various types of idiomatic phrases from one language to another presents additional difficulties and it requires significant effort. The translator must have a deep understanding of both languages and their cultures. They must also be able to find suitable equivalents for these expressions, especially when dealing with idiomatic phrases. Different languages often use distinct expressions to convey the same ideas. A phrase that seems simple and clear to native speakers of one language may be confusing or even meaningless to speakers of another. This is largely due to the fact that each language is influenced by its own unique cultural elements, which may differ significantly from those of other languages. Furthermore, factors like religion, geography, ideologies, and societal structures can make the interpretation and translation of idiomatic expressions even more complex. As a result, two important

challenges arise: how to understand the idiomatic phrases in one language, and how to accurately translate them into another language to ensure that the same ideas are conveyed.

The *focus* of this research is to explore the primary strategies that translators can use, and the challenges they may face, when translating idiomatic phrases from one language to another.

The *goal* of this paper is to examine the main strategies applied in translating idiomatic phrases from Albanian into English within fictional works. By comparing the translations in both languages, we can identify various similarities and differences among these expressions.

The *examples* of different types of idioms for this analysis are drawn from Ismail Kadare's novel *Kronikë në gur* and its English translation *Chronicle in Stone* by Arshi Pipa.

1. SOME LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many languages spoken across the world today, each unique in various ways. Different nations have distinct ideologies, and every society has its own perception of the world. These ideologies significantly influence language and how meanings are expressed. Idioms are commonly used in everyday communication, both in speech and writing. They are not only colloquial expressions, as many people believe (Seidl, McMordie, 1978). They can also be found in poetry, literature, and even the Bible. They tend to have unique characteristics across different languages. Both English and Albanian are rich in such phrases. Linguistic studies have provided a theoretical foundation for understanding this issue, drawing on terminology theory and focusing on the syntactic and lexical features of idioms and their inner structure.

Certain word groups in both languages, such as *at least/të paktën*, *by means/me anë të*, *to take place/të marrësh pjesë*, etc., appear to be functionally and semantically indivisible. These are often referred to as set phrases, word-equivalents, idioms, or phraseological units (Stefanllari, 2011, p. 140). According to Ginzburg et al. (1979, p. 74), "*Phraseological units are comparatively stable and semantically inseparable. Between the extremes of complete motivation combined with complete stability of the lexical components and grammatical structure on the other hand, there are innumerable border-line cases... The term **set-phrase** implies that the basic criterion of differentiation is stability of the lexical components and grammatical structure of word-groups. The term **idiom** generally implies that the essential feature of the linguistic units under consideration is idiomaticity or lack of motivation. ... The term **word-equivalent** stresses not only the semantic but also the functional inseparability of certain word-groups and their aptness to function as single words.*"

Another definition given is: "*Phraseological units are habitually defined as non-motivated word-groups that cannot be freely made up in speech, but are reproduced as ready-made units.*" (Ibid.).

The Albanian lexicographer Jani Thomai (1999, pp. 183-187) outlines several characteristics of phraseological units: a) they are introduced into speech as pre-formed units, created beforehand, b) their structure is fixed, c) they express a single concept and are non-compositional, and d) the individual words within them have, to some extent, lost their independent meaning. His definition is both clear and comprehensive (Ibid., pp. 210-211): "*Phraseological units are linguistic meaningful units, made up of two or more words, with a set structure, being historically created and used for a long*

time, which is equal to a single word, being reproduced in speech as ready-made and having the role of an indivisible unit.”

Beyond the syntactic and lexical characteristics of set phrases, translation scholars have extensively debated the challenges posed by idiomatic expressions. Newmark (1988) differentiates between communicative and semantic translation, arguing that idioms often require a communicative approach rather than a literal equivalent to preserve their intended meaning. Similarly, Baker (2011) expands on her earlier work by further analyzing how idioms function in various contexts, emphasizing that translators must prioritize meaning over form rather than adhere to word-for-word accuracy.

Hatim and Mason (1997) also highlight the role of pragmatics in idiom translation, noting that some expressions cannot be rendered effectively without cultural adaptation. Their research suggests that idioms exist within a pragmatic framework that determines how acceptable they are in different communicative situations.

From a broader theoretical perspective, Venuti (1995) introduces the concepts of domestication and foreignization, both of which are highly relevant to idiomatic translation. A domesticated translation may replace an Albanian idiom with an equivalent English one, making the text more accessible to the target audience, while a foreignized translation retains cultural elements, exposing the reader to the source language's unique expressions.

Further supporting this idea, Dobrovolskij and Piirainen (2005) examine idioms from a cross-cultural perspective, demonstrating that many figurative expressions are deeply rooted in a language's historical and social context. This aligns with Murtisari's (2016) discussion on explicitation and implicitation in translation as two processes that frequently occur when translating idioms. Translators often need to make implicit cultural meanings explicit for the target audience or, alternatively, tone down expressions that might seem unnatural in the translated text.

Gottlieb (1997), though primarily discussing audiovisual translation, provides insights into the polysemiotic nature of idioms and the difficulties of rendering wordplay and figurative language into another language. His research suggests that idioms often require creative solutions rather than direct translation, a challenge that also applies to literary works such as *Kronikë në gur* and its English translation *Chronicle in Stone*.

This brief theoretical overview highlights that idiomatic phrases in both English and Albanian, share many common features, although their differences are often based on cultural factors. To better understand these similarities and differences, we have analyzed examples of Albanian idioms and their corresponding translations in English.

2. THE PRIMARY CHALLENGES IN TRANSLATING IDIOMATIC PHRASES AND STRATEGIES USED

It is essential to recognize some main challenges a translator might face when translating set expressions, particularly idioms, from one language into another. As noted by Mona Baker (1992, p. 68), the main difficulties in translating idiomatic expressions can be outlined as follows:

a) An idiom or fixed expression may have no equivalent in the target language. Like single words, idioms or fixed expressions may be culture-specific. ... these items are

not necessarily untranslatable. It is not the specific items an expression contains but rather the meaning it conveys and its association with culture-specific contexts which can make it untranslatable or difficult to translate.

b) An idiom or fixed expression may have a similar counterpart in the target language, but its context of use may be different; the two expressions may have different connotations, for instance, or they may not be pragmatically transferable (Ibid., p. 69).

c) An idiom may be used in the source text in both its literal and idiomatic senses at the same time. Unless the target-language idiom corresponds to the source-language idiom both in form and in meaning, the play on idiom cannot be successfully reproduced in the target text (Ibid.). She provides the following example: *He had sufficient influence to be able to **poke his nose into** the private affairs of others where less aristocratic **noses** might have been speedily bloodied* (Ibid., p. 70). The idiom “to poke one’s nose” can be used both literally and figuratively. To translate this idiom, the translator should find an equivalent in the target language. Luckily, in Albanian, there is an identical idiom in both form and meaning “të futësh hundët.”

d) The very convention of using idioms in written discourse, the contexts in which they can be used, and their frequency of use may be different in the source and target languages (Ibid.).

Nida and Taber (1982, p. 106) state: “Obviously in any translation, there will be a type of “loss” of semantic content, but the process should be so designed as to keep this to a minimum.” They also point out that one of the most frequent challenges in content transfer is the translation of idioms. In this paper, we concentrate on translating these expressions from Albanian into English. By examining several examples from the books we have studied, we can discover some of these challenges.

2.1 Translation strategies used

Mona Baker suggests the following strategies for translating idioms or set phrases: 1) using an idiom of similar meaning and form, 2) using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form, 3) translation by paraphrase, and 4) translation by omission (Baker, 1992, pp. 72-78). We examine each strategy, providing examples from the books we have analyzed in both their Albanian and English versions.

2.1.1 Using an idiom of similar meaning and form

This strategy entails using an idiom in the target language that closely conveys the same meaning as the source-language idiom and also uses similar lexical items. However, this type of perfect match is rarely achieved (Ibid., p. 72).

Kjo donte të thoshte se gjithë ujërat e botës, pavarësisht nga ç'gropa binin, flisnin të njëjtën gjuhë. (p. 107)

This meant that all the water in the world, whichever part of the sky it fell from, spoke the same language. (p. 27)

The Albanian phrase *flisnin të njëjtën gjuhë* (literally, “spoke the same language”) is retained in English, which works well here since in both languages is used this metaphor to convey a universal connection. The metaphor of waters “speaking the same language” is culturally universal and does not require much adaptation. This choice is effective as it keeps the metaphor’s simplicity.

-Aeroplani po vjen këtej. –Po vjen si çjapi te kasapi. (p. 210)

“The plane’s coming back!” “Like a lamb to the slaughter.” (p. 64)

The phrase *si çjapi te kasapi* (literally, “like a goat to the butcher”) is a culturally specific idiom in Albanian that implies inevitable doom, similar to the English phrase *like a lamb to the slaughter*. The translator chose an English equivalent idiom rather

than a literal translation. *Like a lamb to the slaughter* is familiar to English-speaking readers and captures the intended sense of helplessness. The shift from *goat* to *lamb* maintains the image of an innocent animal facing death, preserving the metaphor's emotional impact.

Ai burrë atje ka sy të keq, kapeni atë, thoshte Vasiliqia. (p. 220)

"That man there has the evil eye," she would say to them, "seize him." (p. 67)

The concept of *sy të keq* (literally "bad eye") is deeply embedded in Albanian and many other cultures as the "evil eye," a curse or symbol of misfortune. This translation *the evil eye* is accurate, as the concept exists across cultures and does not need adaptation.

Here are also included word-for-word translations:

Më në fund, nuk e mbajti dot veten. (p. 116)

Finally, she couldn't contain herself anymore and burst out,... (p. 31)

The Albanian phrase *nuk e mbajti dot veten* literally means "could not hold herself," which implies a loss of self-control due to strong emotion. The English translation *couldn't contain herself* retains that nuance, implying that she couldn't prevent herself from showing her feelings.

Nëna shkuli faqet. (p. 77)

Mother pinched her cheeks, which was a way of saying how upset she was. (p. 16)

In Albanian, *shkuli faqet* (literally "pinched her cheeks") is an expression of deep distress, often related to grief. While the English phrase *pinched her cheeks* could be interpreted differently, the translator adds *which was a way of saying how upset she was* to clarify this cultural nuance, which is crucial for English readers who may not understand the significance of this act. The English translation opts for sacrificing the idiomatic meaning of this Albanian idiom. This strategy involves rendering only the literal meaning of an idiom in a context that allows for a concrete reading of an otherwise playful use of language (Baker, 2018, p. 85).

Atje lart ishte heshtje varri. (p. 62)

There was a tomb-like silence at the top. (p. 11)

The phrase *heshtje varri* (literally "grave silence" or "silence of a tomb") is translated effectively to *tomb-like silence*, which carries the same meaning in English. This metaphor is common in both languages, so minimal adaptation is necessary. Another way of translating it would be using phrases like *dead silence* or *silent as the grave*. The translation remains close to the original, preserving both the meaning and tone associated with absolute silence.

U shpërndamë si zogjtë e korbit. (p. 333)

Scattered like a raven's chicks. (p. 111)

The phrase *si zogjtë e korbit* (literally "like the chicks of the raven") in Albanian culture conveys a sense of disorder. The English version *scattered like a raven's chicks* may not be a familiar concept to English readers. As a result, this translation is not appropriate. Expressions which start with *like* (simile-like structures) also tend to suggest that they should not be interpreted literally (Baker, 2018, p. 71).

-Unë s'kam zemër ta shoh. (p. 113)

"I don't have the heart to watch." (p. 29)

The phrase *s'kam zemër* translates literally to "I don't have the heart," a feeling that exists in both languages to express an inability to witness something difficult. This direct translation works effectively in English, preserving the emotional nuance of the Albanian phrase without requiring further adaptation.

These examples, and numerous others, show the translator's efforts to maintain cultural integrity and make sure that the translated phrases are clear and, in some way, related to English language readers.

2.1.2 Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form

Baker (1992) also suggests that it is often possible to locate an idiom or fixed expression in the target language that conveys a similar meaning to the original one, even though it may use different words.

Ne kalamajtë, hipur në një bokërimë të zhveshur, thërrisnim sa kishim në kokë. (p. 340)

We kids climbed a barren knoll and shouted at the top of our lungs. (p. 114)

The Albanian phrase *thërrisnim sa kishim në kokë* translates literally to “we shouted as much as we had in our heads,” which is a way of saying they shouted loudly. The English phrase, *shouted at the top of our lungs* is a common idiom that captures the enthusiasm of the children's shouting. We can say that this is a highly effective translation since it conveys the same sense in a way that sounds natural to English language readers. This adaptation does not change the meaning, as both expressions emphasize loudness even though different words are used.

Unë e di që burgu s'punon. Xhanxhin. Dyert të hapura. Të merr të qarët. (p. 196)

“All I know is the prison isn't working. The doors are wide open. Not a soul around. It's enough to break your heart.” (p. 58)

The phrase *të merr të qarët* translates directly to “it makes you want to cry.” It reflects an emotional reaction to something that makes people sad. The English translation *to break your heart* is a similarly emotive expression, often used to convey profound sadness or disappointment. It doesn't literally imply crying, but it causes a strong, heart-breaking feeling. This choice is appropriate, as it preserves the intensity of the sadness while using an idiom familiar to English language speakers. By avoiding a direct translation, the translator keeps a natural tone in English.

Duke dëgjuar me kureshtje, unë e vrisja mendjen të kuptoja se si ishte në të vërtetë kjo Shqipëria. (p. 155)

I listened curiously, racking my brain trying to understand exactly what was this Albania they were so worried about. (p. 44)

The phrase *e vrisja mendjen* literally means “I was killing my mind.” Idiomatically, in Albanian, it expresses the idea of thinking very hard or struggling to understand. *Racking my brain* is an English idiom with a very similar meaning, used to convey the same idea. This is an excellent translation choice, as it maintains both the idiomatic tone and the metaphor of mental effort.

Tani s'keni gojë të thoni se është Xhexhoja që e ndjell zinë. (p. 335)

You'll never be able to call me a Cassandra again! (p. 112)

The phrase *e ndjell zinë* means “to bring or invoke misfortune.” Idioms and fixed expressions which contain culture-specific items are not necessarily untranslatable (Baker, 2018, p. 74). The translator used the expression *to call me Cassandra*, an English literary and cultural reference to the Greek mythological figure who was cursed to make true prophecies that no one believed. The translator was creative because the English phrase effectively captures the idea of someone being blamed for predicting misfortune or disaster.

2.1.3 Translation by paraphrase

The most frequent approach to translating idioms is to use non-idiomatic language in the target text, especially when an equivalent expression does not exist in the target

language or when idiomatic phrasing does not suit the style of the target language (Baker, 1992).

Do të martohet Argjir Argjiri, e more vesh? Luaj vendit. Do të martohet vërtet. (p. 141)

Have you heard? Argjir Argjiri is getting married. You're kidding. No, it's true. (p. 40)

The phrase *luaj vendit* literally means “move from your place,” which conveys shock or disbelief in Albanian. The reaction implies that the news is so surprising it could make someone jump. The translator chose *You're kidding*, an English expression that conveys disbelief or surprise in a similar way, so the translation is effective since it conveys the same sense of astonishment in a way that feels natural to English readers and does not require further clarification.

... gulçimi i tij ngrihej gjer në kupë të qiellit. (p. 179)

... and the sound of its panting rose to the sky. (p. 53)

E ndezur nga fjalët e saj, ajo e ngriti prapë zërin në kupë të qiellit. (p. 336)

Egged on her own eloquence, she raised her voice to its highest pitch. (p. 112)

The phrase *në kupë të qiellit* means “up to the dome of the sky.” It emphasizes that one's voice can reach an extraordinary height or level of intensity, suggesting passion.

The translator chose to use two different ways to translate it, correspondingly as *rose to the sky*, and *to its highest pitch*. Although both translations lose the image of the “dome” of the sky, the English examples, retain the essential meaning of sound reaching a great height, adapting effectively to English readers' expectations.

M'u ngroh zemra kur pashë kaq njerëz. (p. 45)

I was glad to see so many people. (p. 5)

The phrase *m'u ngroh zemra* literally means “my heart warmed,” a common Albanian expression that conveys a feeling of warmth, comfort, or joy upon seeing something pleasing, especially in a social setting. The translator chose the phrase *I was glad*, which conveys happiness but without the metaphor of warmth associated with the heart. This translation simplifies the idiom to a more direct statement in English, which is effective in conveying the basic feeling of pleasure. However, it loses some of the richness and emotional warmth expressed in the original Albanian expression. A direct translation - *It warmed my heart to see so many people* - would be more appropriate.

Ata biseduan kokë më kokë. (p. 321)

They conferred privately for a moment. (p. 106)

Ju flisni me gjithë mend apo jeni në kllapi? (p. 343)

Are you serious or crazy, or what? (p. 115)

Diçka fillova të merrija vesh. (p. 111)

Little by little I began to understand what I was reading. (p. 28)

Javeri përsëri u shkri gazit. (p. 110)

Javer laughed again. (p. 28)

As we can notice from the above examples, expressions like *kokë më kokë* (head to head) and *u shkri gazit* (burst into laughter) are translated into single words, like *privately* and *laughed*, giving more priority to clarity than literal meaning. In *little by little I began to understand*, the translator added a gradual element to match the slow realization implied in Albanian by the expression *të merrija vesh*, making the translated phrase more meaningful. For phrases like *me gjithë mend dhe jeni në kllapi*, the translator used a colloquial equivalent: *Are you serious or crazy?*, making it feel more natural and conversational to English language readers. These translations generally convey the intended meanings, though some lose a degree of figurative sense.

2.1.4 Translation by omission

Like with single words, an idiom may occasionally be left out in the target text. This could happen if there's no close equivalent in the target language, if the meaning is difficult to convey through paraphrasing, or for stylistic reasons (Baker, 1992).

Ç'pate që ngrite krye, pse na prish gjakun? (p. 55)

Why do you rebel? (?) (p. 8)

The idiomatic expression *prish gjakun* was omitted because it is highly specific to Albanian culture and there is no direct English equivalent. Translating it literally *spoil our blood* would confuse English language readers and it would also require further explanations, which could disrupt the flow of the narrative.

Kisha vënë re se, kur jepte këshilla, zëri i bëhej më me hundë. (p. 77)

(?) Whenever she gave advice, her voice got even nasal. (p. 16)

Even the expression *vënë re* (notice) was left out but we have to mention that its omission did not affect the meaning of the following sentence.

Cilën do më shumë ti, familjen apo Shqipërinë? – Shqipërinë, or t'u mbylltë dera, i thashë. S'do mend që Shqipërinë. (p. 155)

'Which do you love more, your family or Albania?' Albania, (?) of course, I told him. (p. 44)

The expression *t'u mbylltë dera* is very challenging to translate because there is no equivalent in English. It is a curse with a negative meaning but it is also used as a kind of joke (Thomai, 2010, p. 69), as in the sentence above. Translating it could have introduced a harsh tone to English language readers, which would not align with the translator's interpretation of the context or the character's emotional state.

The translator struggled to maintain the original meaning of the text with its adaptation appropriate for the English readers. All the above expressions, and many others, might have sounded awkward or lost their impact if translated literally. By avoiding them, the translator gave more priority to clarity than the cultural aspect.

3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this section, we have provided a detailed analysis of the strategies used. The translator's work reflects a kind of balance between retaining cultural integrity and making sure that the text is adaptable to English-speaking readers.

The first strategy (*using an idiom of similar meaning and form*) preserves both meaning and linguistic structure, and is effective when the target language has an equivalent expression. For example, the idiom *like a lamb to the slaughter* replacing *si cjapi te kasapi* demonstrates cultural adaptation while maintaining the metaphor's tone. The substitution of *goat* with *lamb* emphasizes innocence and sounds better to English language readers since this idiom is common. In the case of *flisnin të njëjtën gjuhë*, the direct translation to *spoke the same language* works well because of the universality of the metaphor in both cultures. Yet, idioms with exact matches are rare, so this strategy works selectively. For instance, *heshtje varri* becomes *tomb-like silence*, which retains the grave metaphor and tone but lacks the cultural weight of *varr* (grave), symbolically tied to Albanian traditions. There exists the "strong unconscious urge in most translators to search hard for an idiom in the receptor-language, however inappropriate it may be" (Fernando and Flavel, 1981, p. 82).

The other strategy (*using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form*) involves finding an idiom that captures the essence of the original but employs a different structure (in most cases, a different lexical item). For example, *thërrisnim sa*

kishim në kokë is effectively translated as *shouted at the top of our lungs*. While the literal phrase is replaced, the meaning and intensity are preserved, aligning with English idiomatic norms. Likewise, *të merr të qarët* becomes *it's enough to break your heart*, a poetic and natural English equivalent that communicates the same emotional sense. However, cultural nuances may be lost when idioms are replaced by equivalents with different images.

On the other hand, *paraphrasing* often “sacrifices” the idiomatic richness of the source text but ensures clarity and avoids cultural misunderstandings. For example, the phrase *luaj vendit* is translated as *you're kidding*, which makes the text relatable to English readers. Similarly, *në kupë të qiellit* loses its reference to the dome of the sky but is adapted effectively with *rose to the sky* or *to its highest pitch*, capturing the intensity of the voice. Even *m'u ngroh zemra* becomes *I was glad*, simplifying the metaphor but preserving the feeling. But, it should be mentioned that paraphrasing can, in some way, fade cultural richness, as in *kokë më kokë* becoming *privately*. The figurative meaning of closeness and intimacy in the Albanian idiom is lost.

What is more, *omissions* are made when an idiom lacks an equivalent in the target language or when its inclusion might disrupt the flow of the narrative. For example, the choice of the translator to omit *t'u mbylltë dera* avoids unnecessary confusion or harshness that might result from translating this culturally specific curse, which is used as a joke in this context. Similarly, *prish gjakun* is omitted without disrupting the essential meaning of the dialogue.

Yet, omission risks fading cultural context, which could change the depth of the characters' interactions. For instance, leaving out *vënë re* reduces the observant nature of the character.

Other authors' strategies for handling idioms in translation, such as Nida, et al. align closely with Mona Baker's strategies. They mention that (1982, p. 106) “*Idioms are some of the most obvious candidates for semantic adjustment, for the very fact that they are idioms means it is unlikely that the same type of distinctive form will have the same meaning in another language. The adjustments are quite understandably of three types: (a) from idioms to non-idioms, (b) from idioms to idioms, and (c) from non-idioms to idioms.*” But they also emphasize that (Ibid.) “*Whereas one inevitably loses many idioms in the process of translation, one also stands to gain a number of idioms. Such idiomatic renderings do much to make the translation come alive, for it is by means of such distinctive expressions that the message can speak meaningfully to people in terms of their own lives and behavior.*”

4. CONCLUSIONS

The translation strategies used in the analyzed books, both Albanian and English language, display a thoughtful balance between maintaining cultural integrity and proper interpretation of different types of set phrases. By drawing on Mona Baker's framework (1992, 2018), we found that the translator explores the complexities of idiomatic expressions and their cultural references, often prioritizing clarity and relation with English language readers.

The use of idioms with similar meanings and forms effectively fulfills some linguistic and cultural gaps, as seen in expressions like *flisnin të njëjtën gjuhë* and *si cjapi te kasapi*. However, exact matches are rare, and the translator frequently uses idioms of similar meaning but dissimilar form, such as replacing *e vrisja mendjen* with

racking my brain. These adaptations succeed in conveying the essence of the source text but occasionally lose the richness of its original meaning.

Paraphrasing prevails as the most frequent strategy, which ensures the natural flow of the text for the target readers. This is by far the most common way of translating idioms when a match cannot be found in the target language or when it seems inappropriate to use idiomatic language in the target text because of differences in stylistic preferences of the source and target languages (Baker, 2018, p.81). Even though this approach often “sacrifices” idiomatic depth – such as in the case of *m’u ngroh zemra* – it maintains the narrative’s emotional and contextual coherence. Similarly, selective omissions, like *t’u mbylltë dera*, prevent potential confusion but at the cost of lacking culturally significant elements.

Our analysis highlights a very significant challenge in the translation of set phrases: the need to balance cultural preservation with their interpretation. While the translator often prefers clarity, certain omissions and simplifications could be reduced by providing explanatory notes or preserving metaphorical sense more frequently. This would allow readers to engage more deeply with the cultural aspects of the original text.

All in all, we have to emphasize that the translation is successful in making the Albanian narrative understandable to English-speaking readers by retaining much of its original emotional tone. However, some compromise is evident, reflecting (as mentioned above) the inevitable challenges of translating culturally rich idioms and expressions. Future translations could benefit from more creative solutions that further integrate more cultural-specific aspects with linguistic ones, enhancing the foreign reader’s understanding of the Albanian culture.

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