

# A STUDY ON THE TRANSLATION DIFFICULTIES OF ENGLISH IDIOMS AS PERCEIVED BY JUNIOR AND SENIOR ENGLISH MAJORS AT UNIVERSITY X

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## ABSTRACT

*The task of translating idioms from English into Vietnamese and vice versa has been considered to be challenging. This research aims at investigating difficulties encountered by junior and senior English majors at University X face in translating English idioms into Vietnamese. To collect the data, 159 students participated in a translation test and a detailed questionnaire. The results show a clear gap between students' language skills and their cultural understanding. In the practical test, students really struggled with idioms that have deep cultural meanings. Most participants felt that the lack of cultural exposure and the illogical grammar of idioms are the biggest barriers. Furthermore, the fear of losing face shows that translation anxiety often forces students to choose a safe word-for-word translation instead of a natural one. It is hoped that the results of this study would contribute to the area of teaching translation. Similarly, more research on teaching translation; especially, practical ones related to methods in helping students overcome these barriers would also be conducted for the development of teaching translation.*

**Keyword:** *English idioms, translation difficulties, cultural exposure, translation anxiety, English majors, pedagogical solutions.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English has mainly used in various conversation globally between people speaking different languages due to the strong integration these days. Based on this fact, translation is the core skill that English majors must conquer in order to keep up with the world. Such translation skill is not only pivotal with learning objective but a decisive factor in the labor market where multi – languages are appreciated (Ilyosovna, 2020). Apart from the four main skills of a language namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, translation is a significant and essential skill contributing to the competency in understanding the language and culture of a country of a person. Once a person is in deep shortage of the target language culture, troubles of switching from the source language to the target language emerge (Nguyễn, 2007).

By progressing to the third and fourth years, students are expected to accumulate sufficient linguistic knowledge before applying into complex translation task. Nevertheless, students encounter problems of translating idioms from English into

Vietnamese because of the cultural difference amongst these two languages. Recent studies from Vietnamese contexts have enhanced this reality. First, Tran and Luong (2023) have shown that English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Technology faced substantial challenges in translating vocabulary from English into Vietnamese. Pham et al. (2023) have explored the causes leading to difficulties in students' translation involving vocabulary, grammar, culture, and background knowledge. They found that the lack of background knowledge and culture have minimized the accuracy of the translation. Dang (2024) has conducted a research in exploring difficulties amongst English majors in translating from English into Vietnamese and vice versa. She identified four main challenges faced by English majors which are literal translation, misunderstanding the figurative meaning of the idioms, lack of parallelism between English and Vietnamese culture, and the differences in grammar.

In the context of university X, English majors start to study translation when entering third year of

the program. Idioms are frequently emerged in the texts for translation practice in both Vietnamese and English. Students are able to deal with popular idioms; however, less common idioms are of challenges for them. With the assistance from the teachers and internet, students would tackle with the idioms easily; nevertheless, students should not rely on any resources to prepare themselves for final exams on translation. Hence, it is necessary and urgent to clearly, specifically, and systematically identify the types of difficulties (recognition, understanding, translation) that students of University X are facing to further strengthen localized teaching and learning materials.

This study aims to investigate the actual idiom translation barriers of 3rd and 4th-year English language students at University X which is guided by the following primary question:

***What are the translation difficulties perceived by junior and senior English majors at University X regarding English idioms?***

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Definition of Translation**

The concept of translation is a controversial topic which is appealing to a large number of scholars worldwide. While several researchers define translation based on form and structures, others depend on the communicative functions. One of the initial scholars who has made an effort to define translation from the scientific angle was Catford (1965). He had approached this issue from linguistic and comparative point of view before concluding that translation was a process of replacing language units. He specifically defines translation as a replacement of a document in a source language (SL) into a paralleled one in the target language (TL) (Catford, 1965). Although this definition provides an obvious background for grammatical analysis, limitations are also emerged when considering this definition in translating culture. This is due to the fact that factor of non-verbal communication and context are often skipped, resulting in the strictness of processing the context that contains emotional shades.

On the contrary to Catford (1965) definition, Eugene Nida (1964) has created a significant breakthrough in focusing on receptor in stead of document. In his research, Nida has argued that

translation does not merely refer to the switching of vocabulary but a complex act of communication. He also defined translation as a process of language reformulation in the TL in a condition that such language must be close to the SL text. However, the meaning and style must remain unchanged. It is obvious that the natural parallelism in Nida view is the key point. This means the translation version should be as natural as the TL style and readers must own the same feeling with the SL text.

New Mark (1988) believes that Nida definition has high application and is relevant to modern translation. Being an educator, New Mark does not limit translation but proposes a less flexible approach. He separates translation and semantics, in which translators are completely loyal to structures and writers' intention, as well as communicative translation. Readers' effectiveness in understanding the text is highly prioritized. He defines translation as a "craft" career in which the translators try to change a message or a verbal sentence in a language into another language.

Overall, when comparing these three viewpoints regarding idiomatic translation, the strong points of approaching function is obvious. Since idioms are special in which the formality often conflicts with real meaning, applying a definition based on the replacement of a text (Catford, 1965) is not sufficient, leading to the meaningless or false document. Meanwhile, although Nida definition is ideal in efficiency, it is hard to measure specifically. Hence, this research chooses Newmark definition as a main theory since the importance of conveying message and the figurative meaning of the idiom are more focused on. This viewpoint allows the research to focus on students' ability in overcoming the format to reformulate the hidden and cultural message of each idiom.

### **2.2. Equivalence in translation**

The concept of equivalence is known as a core issue in modern translation theory and is also a controversial argument between various scholars. Basically, equivalence mentions the relationship between SL and TL. One of the most pivotal theories in this issue belongs to Nida and Taber (1982) since these scholars have changed the core of translation research. This means the attention has been transferred from format to dynamic equivalence, concentrating on readers' reaction in

the TL. Format equivalence refers to the fact that translators try to copy grammar structures and vocabulary from SL as accurate as possible. On the other hand, dynamic equivalence tries to create reactive effects in TL readers which is similar to the effects found in SL. This theory is especially relevant to this study since translating an idiom requires translators to avoid format equivalence or literal meaning to achieve the naturalness of the text. To understand more about the practical challenges, it is important to take Baker (1992) theory into consideration. In her famous book "In Other Words", a framework of analysis has been provided to analyze in detail the equivalence in various levels such as vocabulary, grammar, and structures of a text. For this study, Baker (1992) concept reveals that non-equivalence occurs when the TL has no equivalence in concept or direct vocabulary of the SL. The main reason for this phenomenon is linked to the cultural difference when a concept of habit exists in a culture but does not appear in other culture. As a consequence, idiom is a typical example for this issue and make translation tougher than ever. Sharing similar viewpoints on the difference between structures amongst languages, Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) have distinguished two main methods of translation called direct and indirect translation. Direct translation consists of techniques such as borrowing and literal-meaning translation; meanwhile, indirect translation is related to more complex techniques. Once direct translation fails, which often occurs with idiom translation due to cultural distance, translators have to use indirect translation. One vital technique in indirect translation is equivalence, which is defined as a process of replacing one fixed idiom or structure in the SL by a different format in the TL but the meaning and style are still preserved.

### **2.3. Idioms and translation challenges**

#### **2.3.1. Definition and characteristics of idioms**

Idiom is one of the attractive but challenging area in vocabulary and translation research. In a language system, idiom is generally classified as a fixed formula, emerging frequently in both oral and written styles. According to Richards and Schmidt (2010), the main identity features of an idiom is the general cannot be concluded by simply combining both literal meaning and individual words. Technically, this feature is called

non – compositionality and plays a role as a clear boundary between idioms and regular phrases.

Regarding the second language learners, the shortage of semantics creates a significant barrier in awareness. As Larsen-Freeman (2003) has pointed out, the inability to distinguish literal and figurative meaning of a phrase is the common cause leading to the serious error in using a language. When the less experienced students see a phrase such as kick the bucket, they tend to understand the individual meaning of each word to build the entire meaning of the whole phrase. This process leads to the misunderstanding of the whole message since the figurative meaning about the death does not relate to the specific action. Moreover, this idiom is defined due to not only meaning but also the compulsory structures. Baker (1992) stresses that one basic feature of idiom is the fixability. Unlike the frequent and flexible phrases, idioms work as the frozen language molds, allowing less or no changes of format. For instance, translator or learners cannot change the sequence, delete a word, or replace one word by a synonym without destroying the idiom identity of the whole phrase. Baker (1992) also illustrates this point by revealing that translators cannot change from active to passive voice, or edit adjective in a fixed structure. In consequence, students who are not able to be aware of such strict language feature often try to apply all the grammatical rules, leading to the unnatural signs or grammatical errors in the TL.

#### **2.3.2. Classifying difficulties when translating idioms**

Based on the complex features of idioms such as fixed structure and uniqueness, the translation of such idioms is a dramatic challenge for inexperienced translator. In a influential book called "In Other Words", scholar Mona Baker (1992) has systematically classified major difficulties in translation encountered by translators. This classification plays a role as a core and theoretical framework to determine and analyze translation errors in this study. The most obstacle that Baker mentions is referring to the difficulty in identify idiom. Several idioms cause misunderstanding as they look like the expressions in literal meanings which are accepted in the SL; hence, translators often skip the figurative meanings. Obviously, students are not able to recognize these expressions as idioms; so translating word by word is often conducted

before producing a meaningless result in the target language. The second obstacle derives from the cases with no parallel phrases in the TL. Baker (1992) explains that this issue stems from the unique factors or concepts in the culture of SL but there is no parallel phrases in the TL. For instance, it is impossible to find an equivalent idiom in Vietnamese when translators are required to translate an idiom related to a traditional sport in English. The third challenge shows the misleading similarity which is described as a “fake friend”. In this case, an idiom in the SL can have an extreme similarity with one in the TL; however, the meanings are completely different. This is dangerous since translators cannot identify the trick and choose the false words or phrases without checking carefully. Finally, Baker (1992) stresses a difficulty related to the context difference, the use and frequency. Even though translators find a TL idiom with similar meaning, the irrelevance of the situation as well as register may happen. The use of informal expression or slang in an academic text is considered as a serious error. Thus, understanding these four challenges would provide a thorough theoretical framework to evaluate students’ translation effectiveness in this study.

## ***2.4. Strategies for Translating Idioms***

### ***2.4.1. Mona Baker's Strategic Framework (1992)***

Due to the dramatic challenges related to the non – equivalence as well as the cultural difference, the task of translating idiom literally often leads to failure in communication. Consequently, the essential thing for translators and advanced students is to use the indirect and specific strategies to translate idioms effectively. Amongst the leading scholars in the field of translation, Mona Baker (1992) has provided a more comprehensive classification of translation strategies in the book “In Other Words”. This plays as a core theoretical framework to analyze the choice for translation strategies in this study. The first strategy proposed by Baker (1992) is to use a meaningful idiom which has similar format. This method involves the task of searching for an idiom in TL to convey the most relevant meaning with parallel words. However, Baker (1992) notes that this is an ideal situation which rarely happens since two languages come from different cultures; hence, the similarity in using metaphor and grammatical structures are rarely found. The

second strategy is to use an idiom with similar meaning but different formats. This is considered as a flexible and effective method, in which the translator replace the English idiom by a Vietnamese expression with same functional meaning but a metaphor from the local culture is used to represent the meaning. For example, the idiom “When in Rome, do as the Romans do” is often translated as “Nhập gia tùy tục”. This example illustrates Baker’s second strategy because both expressions advise people to adapt to the new environment. However, the English version uses the image of a specific city while the Vietnamese version uses a tradition of a family. The third most common strategy refers to the task of translating by reformulating the text. Baker (1992) believes that this is the safest choice for students when there is no equivalent idioms in the TL. In this strategy, translators have to explain the meaning of the fixed expression by using simple vocabulary instead of the figurative language. Although this strategy guarantees that the content or clause meaning is conveyed in an exact way, there is a major limitation since the translation becomes raw and loses the taste of style or emotional effect of the SL. The final strategy stated by Baker (1992) is translating by omitting unnecessary words. This strategy allows translators completely eliminate the idiom out of the TL if such an idiom does not play a significant role in the message or the explanation is long. Understanding these four strategies is essential to evaluate students to overcome the obstacles in translation.

### ***2.4.2. Newmark's (1988) metaphor/idiom processing strategy***

To supplement for Baker’s framework, it is essential to take Peter Newmark (1998) viewpoints of metaphor translation into consideration. Newmark argues that metaphor establishes the core factors of most idioms and proposes the similar strategy of progressing the images. The first and noticeable method is to reformulate the same image in the TL. This technique includes keeping the original metaphor image in the process of translation. For instance, keeping the same Vietnamese expression “sống như chó với mèo” when translating into English. Nevertheless, Newmark (1998) warns that this strategy is only effective if the image is popular or easy to understand in the culture of TL. The second approach is related to the replacement of

the image in the SL by a standard image in the TL. This concept has the strong similarity with the second strategy proposed by Baker. In this case, the translator tries to find a metaphor or a popular idiom in the TL to convey the same meaning in the SL. The third strategy is the thing that Newmark (1998) called meaning reduction. This strategy is basically similar to the strategy of translating by explaining that Baker has mentioned. The translator, therefore, decides to completely eliminate the metaphorical factor and keep the core meaning of the expression to ensure the obviousness. These classifications of theory are especially significant with the practical part of this study. Specific translation strategies chose by students would be vital for data analysis part.

### **2.5. Theoretical framework**

Affective Filter Hypothesis theory proposed by Krashen (1982) is chosen for this study. First, idiom translation is a task with high complex due to non-literal meaning and belong much on culture. This makes students to be lack of confidence and make mistakes. According to Affective Filter Hypothesis, when learners have high anxiety, the Affective Filter will prevent the task of receiving and processing input effectively. In this context, students might meet more challenges not because of lacking knowledge, but also the higher affective filter when comparing to senior students. Second, this theory helps explain the difference in perceived difficulties amongst students. Not all difficulties originate from language competence; but part of these comes from psychological factor. For instance, two students with the same language competence can still evaluate the difficulty of an idiom; however, these evaluations are different. Those who have higher motivation and less anxiety will complete the task easier. Hence, Affective Filter Hypothesis will provide an extra angle to analyze questionnaire data relating to learners' awareness. Besides, this theory is suitable with the study since junior and senior students' data is compared. The progress of senior reflects both language accumulation and show the reduction of affective filter over time.

Although language competence and cultural knowledge are pre-requisite condition for translation, the psychological state and attitude of translators play an important role, which are often skipped during the process of translation. The process of decoding the SL text and encoding the

TL is not merely the transformation vocabulary mechanically; that is a complex activity of awareness which is strongly affected by translators' emotion.

According to Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, the emotional negative states such as anxiety, lack of confidence or depression can create a "mind barrier" preventing students from processing the SL efficiency and creating the natural TL. In the specific context of idiom translation, this emotional filter become obviously special. Idioms are characterized by the vague of semantics and the cultural unique which often causes the overloading for novice translators. When facing a strange idiom, students often have the positive attitude due to curiosity, confidence, and the ability to endure the vague. Accordingly, students have more opportunities to interact with the text by using the concise strategies such as predicting the vocabulary from the context, reformulating or searching for the equivalent vocabulary in terms of culture. In contrast, translation anxiety is recognized as a factor reducing the language performance. Students undergoing the level of anxiety or high depression often feel unconfident about the cultural gap. Hence, they often give up the processing the awareness and more to word-by-word translation as a defensive strategy without caring about the effectiveness in the TL (Shojaei, 2012).

Furthermore, students' attitude towards the translation task significantly affects the willingness to use the external resources and edit the draft version. Hence, understanding these psychological reactions is necessary to develop the pedagogical solutions on the whole. Studies on various emotions amongst students provide an entire view about the reason why several translation errors still exist, making translation become the core idea for the current studies.

Apart from the language and culture barriers, translators' psychological states also play a vital role in the process of translation. According to Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, the negatively emotional factors such as anxiety, lack of confidence, and low motivation can generate psychological barriers preventing students from processing the SL effectively. In idiom translations, this is often known as translation anxiety.

When encountering the tough idioms, students have high level of anxiety, leading to the experience of awareness overloading. Gradually, students give up the deep process and move to literal translation as a defensive mechanism. In contrast, the positive attitude and “the ability to endure vague” allow students to be patient in finding the similar words in terms of function. Thus, understanding the emotion is essential to explain why several translation errors still exist despite students’ low language competence.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed quantitative research design to evaluate the complex progress of idiom translation, requiring an assessment of both translators’ language competence and the cultural ability to self – evaluation of students. This method involves the task of collecting and analyzing the quantitative data through a systematic questionnaire and application to evaluate translation. The quantitative research was chosen for this study because this ensures the representativeness. By surveying a large sample of 159 students, the study can identify various and general trends and evaluate exactly in a long time. This allows researchers to give general conclusion about the situation. Second, the utilization of Likert Scale with structure provides objective data, which can measure the abstract concepts such as cultural barriers and translation anxiety.

Purposive sampling technique was employed in this study. According to Creswell (2014), when applying this technique, researchers are able to choose participants based on the ability of providing the most valuable information. In the context of idiom translation, random sampling technique is not feasible since freshmen and sophomore students are insufficient of intense knowledge. Consequently, purposive sampling technique helps maximize the resource by focusing on junior and senior students. To ensure quality, participants must meet several and strict criteria. First, all participants must be junior or senior English majors with full – time programs at English department. Second, all participants must be joining or completing the translation subjects at the time of the research. Finally, all participants are voluntary to participate in the study.

In terms of sample, a population of 159 students participated in the study, in which they had to answer all the question items in the questionnaire

with several items related to testing their translation of idioms. With regards to demographic information, participants of this study belong to age group from 20 to 22. Around 80 to 90 percent of participants were female, reflecting the fact of any language major university. Two groups of participants including junior and senior students were identified to ensure representativeness and depth to analyze the development of translation ability during the process of education and training.

To guarantee the reliability, this study used a questionnaire by distributing through Google forms. The questionnaire was written in both English and Vietnamese to make sure all participants understand the items before they could provide necessary information. Before delivering the questionnaire officially, the researcher asked experts’ advice and experimented in a small group of students.

The process of collecting data was planned carefully. First, the researcher prepared and delivered the questionnaire. The researcher explained and guided the teachers in charge of teaching translation before they implemented in their classes. Consent forms were also sent to students with agreement before answering all questions. The data was then collected and analyzed through SPSS to interpret the statistical meaning.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. Demographic Profiles of Participants

As shown in Figure 4.1, the study involved a total of 159 junior and senior English majors from university X. Specifically, the sample consisted of 91 third-year students (Juniors), accounting for 57 %, and 68 fourth-year students (Seniors), making up 43% of the total participants. The inclusion of both academic levels ensures a comprehensive and comparative view of the difficulties encountered by students as they progress toward the end of their professional degree program. This large and diverse sample size enhances the reliability of the findings regarding idiom translation challenges.

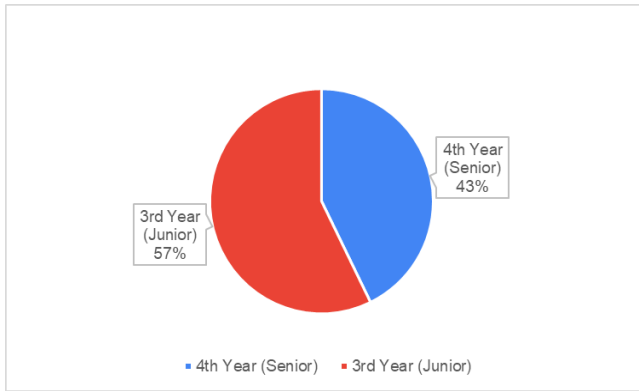


Figure 4.1. Distribution of participants by academic year (N=159)

## 4.2. Analysis of Perceived Translation Difficulties

### 4.2.1. Evidence from Actual Translation Performance

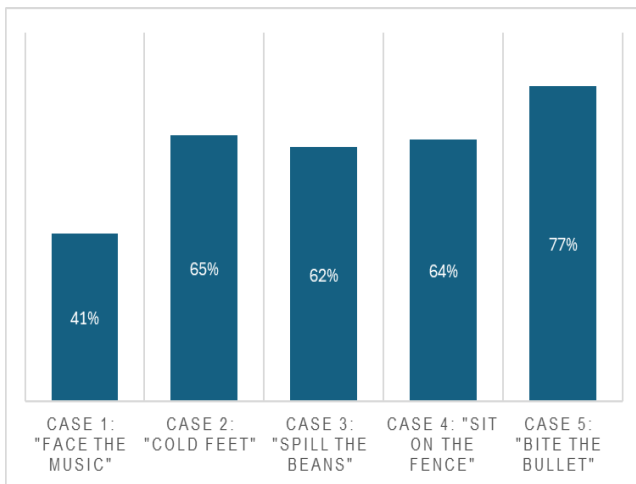


Figure 4.2.1 Accuracy rates of tests on idioms translation.

The bar chart shows the accuracy rates of 5 tests on idiom translation amongst junior and senior English majors at university X.

First and foremost, the participants' translation difficulties are first evidenced through their performance in the practical test (Figure 4.2). The accuracy rates across the five tested idioms varied significantly, ranging from a low of 41% to a maximum of 77%.

Specifically, the idiom 'Face the music' proved to be the most challenging item, with only 41% of the students selecting the correct figurative meaning. This low success rate suggests that a majority of students struggled to decode the expression's

meaning despite the provided context, often falling into the trap of literal interpretation. In contrast, 'Bite the bullet' yielded the highest accuracy rate at 77%, likely due to its higher frequency in common learning materials. However, the moderate scores for other items like 'Spill the beans' (62%) and 'Sit on the fence' (64%) further confirm that a substantial gap remains in the students' ability to translate culturally-laden expressions accurately. These findings provide empirical proof that idiom translation remains a major hurdle for English majors at University X.

### 4.2.2. Perceived Underlying Barriers

#### Lack of Cultural Exposure

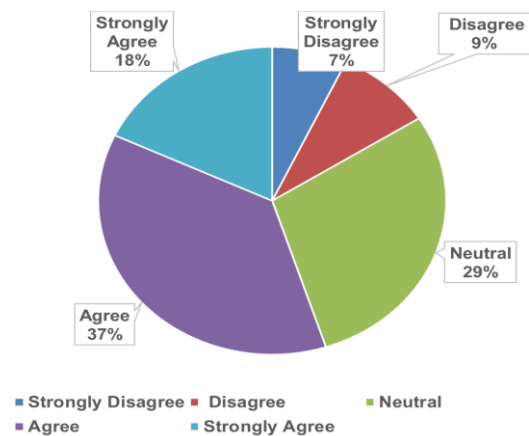
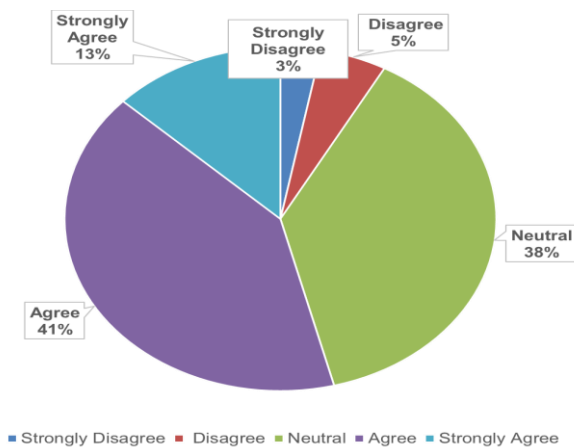


Figure 4.2.2. Lack of Cultural Exposure

The pie chart illustrates the distribution of respondents in five categories consisting of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and disagree. Generally, most respondents tend to agree with the lack of cultural exposure in idiom translation. Among these categories, the largest proportion (37%) of participants believe that errors in idiom translation occur due to the less exposure to the culture of TL. The second largest percent of respondents (29%) shows "neutral" idea which means such participants are not clear in believing on the lack of cultural understanding in idiom translation. Those who are strongly agree with the statement account for 18%, boosting the rate of those agreeing with the statement to 55%. On the other hand, negative responses either disagree or strongly disagree account for 16% in total. This finding confirms Baker's theory regarding the strict structural constraints and fixity of idiomatic expressions, which prevents students from translating them word-by-word.

### Illogical Grammar Rules

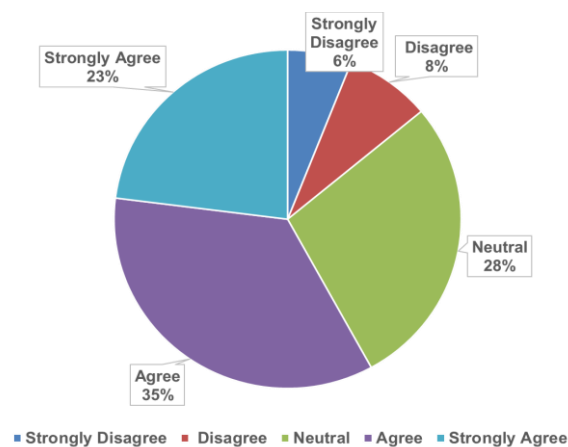


**Figure 4.2.3. Illogical Grammar Rules**

The pie chart gives information about the participant opinion on illogical grammar rules. It is clear from the chart that there is a tendency toward agreement category.

The biggest proportion of respondents in agree category is 41%, showing that students have problem with illogical grammar rules when it comes to idiom translation. When combining with respondents of “Agree” category, the total rate of respondents that support this viewpoint increases to 54% respectively. Participants with “Neutral” category account for 38%, suggesting that these feel uncertain whether or not such statement is true. On the contrary, those with opposed opinion on this statement are limited, with only 5% for “Strongly disagree” and “3% for “Disagree”.

### Fear of Being Wrong



**Figure 4.2.3. Fear of Being Wrong**

The above pie chart depicts respondents’ points of view based on 5 main categories involving strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Overall, the trend of agreeing on this statement is obvious, meaning that respondents have difficulty with fear of being wrong when translating an idiom. First, respondents with agree and strongly agree account for the largest proportion in the chart with 58% respectively. Then, a significant percentage of “neutral” respondents is 28%, revealing that students are not sure if they are fear of being wrong. The smallest proportion of respondents’ accounts for only 14%, suggesting that only some students feel fear of making mistakes in idiom translation.

In summary, the translation difficulties faced by 3rd and 4th-year English majors are multi-dimensional. They are not merely linguistic errors but are deeply rooted in a lack of socio-cultural knowledge and psychological anxiety. The consistency between the low test scores and the high mean scores of perceived barriers confirms that the primary challenge lies in the gap between the students’ linguistic competence and the complex cultural nature of English idioms. This answer directly addresses the first research question and emphasizes the need for a more culture-oriented approach in translation pedagogy.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the comprehensive quantitative analysis conducted, the study has effectively addressed the primary research question regarding the translation difficulties faced by English majors. The empirical evidence gathered from the practical translation test, where the accuracy rate for culturally opaque idioms like "Face the music" plummeted to only 41%, serves as a strong confirmation that idiomatic expressions remain a formidable linguistic hurdle for senior students. Furthermore, the findings indicate that these challenges are not merely isolated errors but are deeply rooted in a significant lack of socio-cultural exposure and the inherent structural complexity of idioms, both of which were rated significantly high at 3.6 on the Likert scale. This lack of cultural grounding often prevents students from escaping the trap of literal translation, which is further exacerbated by a profound psychological filter. Specifically, the data reveals that the fear of "losing face," scoring 3.5, creates a state of

translation anxiety that effectively hinders students from exploring creative and culturally resonant equivalents, thereby limiting their overall translation competence.

To mitigate these identified difficulties, a holistic and modernized approach involving both institutional reform and student proactivity is highly recommended. At the university level, it is suggested that the English Department diversify its curriculum by establishing distinct and specialized modules for British and American cultures as separate courses. This structural change would allow students to gain a more nuanced and country-specific understanding of the historical and social backgrounds that shape idiomatic language. Simultaneously, educators should prioritize the creation of a supportive classroom environment that encourages "trial and error," thereby helping students dismantle the psychological barrier of losing face when handling complex figurative language. Instead of traditional rote learning, instructors should integrate interactive workshops focused on finding functional equivalents rather than simple word-for-word translations. For example, students could be guided to explore the semantic overlap between "It's raining cats and dogs" and the Vietnamese expression "Mưa thối đất thối cát" to better grasp the essence of cultural equivalence. Moreover, the development of a specialized digital bilingual idiom glossary by the English Department would provide a sustainable and reliable reference tool for students throughout their academic journey. On an individual level, students must move beyond the confines of textbooks and proactively immerse themselves in authentic English media, such as movies, podcasts, and literature, to observe idioms in natural contexts. Finally, students are encouraged to leverage artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT or Gemini as "cultural coaches" to research the etymology and backstories of idioms rather than simply seeking instant translations, as understanding the historical narrative behind a phrase ensures deeper and more permanent retention.

Despite the careful preparation and robust quantitative survey design, this study acknowledges certain limitations. Firstly, the research scope is restricted to 159 third and fourth-year English majors at a single institution, University X. Therefore, the findings might not be

entirely generalizable to students at other universities across Vietnam with different training programs. Secondly, while the study effectively measured students' actual performance through a translation test, the data regarding cultural and psychological barriers heavily relied on self-reported questionnaires. This self-assessment method may contain a degree of subjectivity, as students might overstate or understate their actual feelings of translation anxiety.

To build upon the findings of this current project, several directions for future research are highly recommended. Future studies could expand the sample size by including students from multiple universities in different regions to provide a more comprehensive overview of idiom translation difficulties nationwide. Additionally, researchers might explore other complex areas of figurative language, such as phrasal verbs or proverbs, to see if the psychological barriers remain consistent. Finally, future investigations could employ qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, think-aloud protocols, or eye-tracking during the actual translation process, to gain deeper cognitive insights into exactly how translation anxiety disrupts students' strategy choices in real-time.

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