

УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ „ГОЦЕ ДЕЛЧЕВ“ - ШТИП
ФИЛОЛОШКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ

UDC 81
UDC 82
UDC 008



ISSN: 2545-3998
DOI: 10.46763/palim

ПАЛИМПСЕСТ

МЕЃУНАРОДНО СПИСАНИЕ ЗА ЛИНГВИСТИЧКИ,
КНИЖЕВНИ И КУЛТУРОЛОШКИ ИСТРАЖУВАЊА

PALIMPSEST

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR LINGUISTIC,
LITERARY AND CULTURAL RESEARCH

PALMK, VOL 8, NO 15, STIP, 2023

ГОД. VIII, БР. 15
ШТИП, 2023

VOL. VIII, NO 15
STIP, 2023

ПАЛИМПСЕСТ

Меѓународно списание за лингвистички, книжевни
и културолошки истражувања

PALIMPSEST

International Journal for Linguistic, Literary
and Cultural Research

Год. 8, Бр. 15
Штип, 2023

Vol. 8, No 15
Stip, 2023

PALMK, VOL 8, NO 15, STIP, 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46763/PALIM23815>

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Меѓународно списание за лингвистички, книжевни
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<http://js.ugd.edu.mk/index.php/PAL>

Papers can be submitted and published in the following languages: Macedonian, English, German, French, Russian, Turkish and Italian language.

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PHRASEOLOGY AS A TRANSLATION PROBLEM AMONG EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN KOSOVO

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Abstract: The demand for clear and accurate translation either for business, educational or culturally adoptable purposes is increasing every day. The above demand is affected considerably by the translation of a set of or fixed expressions such as idioms, phrasal verbs and other types of multi-word lexical units or in other words called 'Phraseology'. Therefore, phraseology translation is an important skill or a technique for any English as a Foreign Language (EFL) university students when translating from source language into target one or vice versa, which also means that an EFL student (either as a translator or interpreter) must also understand not only the economical, and political, but also the cultural differences between two cultures or parties in order to create a smooth and transparent communication between them. Since phraseology translation is considered as a difficult skill or technique to be equipped with, in order to develop or improve EFL students' phraseology translation technique, it is the universities or faculties duty to use and adapt various programs or subjects as well as find a way to implement them and assist the teaching of the phraseology translation process. The objective of this study is to find out whether phraseology translation is considered a translation problem among the EFL university students in Kosovo, and how do they cope or deal with the phenomena when they are encountered with.

The results of the study revealed that despite almost all students of both universities consider themselves as good or confident translator/interpreter, but when it came to translating phraseology, they lacked knowledge or techniques and needed improvements especially in regard to idioms and sayings. The study also provides advice and recommendations for universities and new generations of EFL university students who would like to become skilful translators or interpreters and at the same time compete effectively in this demanding globalized market.

Keywords: *Phraseology; translation; EFL students; idioms and collocations.*

1. Introduction

Translation has been in existence since humankind have been using the spoken or written language. "It has always played an important role in the relationship

between people of different origins since the beginning of mankind” (Krasniqi, 2016, p. 1). Translation played an important role and became widely used over the centuries in many aspects of human lives such as religion, trade and exploration (Krasniqi, 2016). Nowadays translation has become widely spread and developed in all sectors of industry and education, therefore any EFL university student while learning English language will come across translation problems, be it from their mother tongue into English or vice versa. As the result, the purpose of this research is to show how phraseology, when it comes to translation, can be seen as a problem and above all affects EFL learners’/students’ progress and development skills.

Back in time, phraseology began being used for the first time in the “Mid-17th century from modern Latin phraseologia, from Greek phraseōn, genitive plural of phrasis ‘a phrase’ + -logia (see -logy)” (Lexico, 2016). Phraseology and its importance are not only a part of English language grammar or learning a language, which in this research’s case is English, but it also deals with “the way in which language is used, especially in the choice of words and expressions” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). In addition, phraseology in every language is different as languages tend to have their own sayings, idioms, collocations and phrases which all take place inside phraseology. Another definition of phraseology in order to grasp its deeper meaning is shown as follows, “In linguistics, phraseology is the study of set or fixed expressions, such as idioms, phrasal verbs, and other types of multi-word lexical units, in which the component parts of the expression take on a meaning more specific than or otherwise not predictable from the sum of their meanings when used independently” (Vusus, 2019, slide. 1).

Translation on the other hand comes in right after phraseology when it comes to EFL students as it has been considered to be “one of the most difficult tasks” together with the fact that “It is not enough to transfer complete meaning of the idioms in the translation; a translator should try to convey national spirit of the fixed phrase” (Tarakov et al. 2015, p. 2). In addition, it was also being found that difficulties such as:

General difficulties in doing translation are that no two languages are exactly the same in term of phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic features. They are divergent in arrangement of sentences or syntax. That’s why students find it difficult in translating of English into the target language. Then, another difficulty is to translate idiomatic expressions from English into the target language (Al-Darawish, 1983 as cited in Arono & Nadrah, 2019, p. 89).

Which goes to show why translation is a common problem when it comes to phraseology, as Baker (Baker, 1992 as cited in Arono & Nadrah, 2019) claims that “there are two factors which make idiomatic expression translation in English difficult” and they are “the translators’ lack of equivalence of the target language” which means “they do not know the acceptable translation of some words into target language since different languages express different linguistic features” and the other factor “The latter, culture specific idioms are also not easy for the students to translate into the target language” which means “they may refer to specific items to that particular culture of the language”(p. 89).

Another reason why this research is of importance especially to EFL university students is the fact that translating is not only about changing a piece of writing from one language to the other but also about grasping its full meaning which is where phraseology is interlinked as Subbotina (2012, p. 1487-1488) shows that the “translator should interpret the meaning of the whole expression or a group of words and the primary task for the translator is to choose a meaningful equivalent for the adequate translation of a definite phraseological unit during the translation process.” together with those who study English see that “Nowadays translation of phraseological units is an important subject for contemporary translation studies.” It is the translator’s job when translating a text ensure that the whole meaning is attended as Subbotina (2012, p.1488) claims “The translator should define the ways of translation and express the connotative and evaluation functions of the whole expression.”

Despite translation being used by students, it is also important in many other aspects/factors of life as (Saidbakhramovna, et al. 2020, p. 395) found out “With the expansion of diplomatic relations, cultural and educational ties, and trade with foreign countries, there is an increasing need to study the linguistic and cultural features of teaching English phraseological units.”

When it comes to translating phraseologies there are some aspects that EFL university students should bear in mind as Komissarov (1985, as cited in Arono & Nadrah, 2019, p. 89) states “five aspects should be considered in idiomatic expressions such as”:

- figurative meaning,
- literal meaning,
- emotive character,
- stylistic register, and
- national coloring.

In consideration to the fact that translation in align with phraseology has been approached, another purpose of this research is to find out just how these two means of language have affected the fourth-year English department students of the University of Prizren “Ukshin Hoti” and the third-year of the “AAB” College with the help of these three research questions below:

- 1) What kinds of problems did the students face when it came to translating phraseology throughout their studies?
- 2) How well they did do when translating Phraseology and what they found the hardest whilst translating?
- 3) How did the students come up with solutions when they found themselves stuck on phraseologies whilst translating?

These questions will be answered through the use of the quantitative research method where 20 students of the English department at the University of Prizren “Ukshin Hoti” and 15 of the “AAB” College were asked to answer 11 questions given through an online survey (Google Form) due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Other than the research questions, the survey itself will be based on finding out how the EFL students managed to translate idioms, sayings and textual meanings together with the problems they faced and what solutions they came

up with when stuck on a phrase or sentence that they were translating either from English into Albanian or vice versa.

2. Literature Review

In this chapter, the review of literature presents goals to be discussed in terms of translation problems in the field of phraseology translation that EFL university students around the world are faced with. Most of EFL university students are faced with difficulties in translation because of various language issues such as grammatical, linguistic, and lexical ones as well as cultural differences between source language and the target one. However, the problem of translating phraseologies has been ongoing for quite some time now, which is why beforehand it is important to mention. Some of the problems faced when translating- phraseologies from students that have been tested from various countries are explained in the following.

One of the earliest studies that have been conducted by Sukmana (Sukmana, 2000, as cited in Arono & Nadrah, 2019, p. 89) reported that “most students of sixth semester of English study program at University of Bengkulu get poor achievement and none of them get good achievement in translating idiomatic expression”, whereas later on a study conducted in Thailand where students had to translate from English to Thai, (Suksaereseup & Thep-Ackrapong, 2009, as cited in Arono & Nadrah, 2019) claimed that the translators have problems in reading process of the source text (language) and wrong lexical interpretation (p. 89).

2.1. Recent studies conducted on the topic of phraseology translation

Ibrahim (2017) conducted a recent study in Sudan with EFL university students of Dongola University and its goal was to find out difficulties in translation among EFL university students, introducing students’ difficulties, and how to overcome the problems of phraseology translation. The data taken from Dongola University consisted of 30 students with whom a questionnaire was used to answer the questions, more specifically 11 questions were used for a quantitative study. The study analyzed the difficulties in translation among EFL university students and concluded that Sudanese university students in College of Education in the second semester “find students’ difficulties in translating because of grammatical categories, linguistic level, lexical items, and some differences between source language with the target language” (as cited in Arono & Nadrah, 2019, p. 90).

Another research was conducted by **Al Zu’bi (2018)** with MA students who take translation program in Yarmouk and Middle East University who also faced difficulties in translating due to the unfamiliarity with political sayings and resorting to literal translation (Al Zu’bi, 2018 as cited in Arono & Nadrah, 2019, p. 90), which shows that not only the EFL Bachelor degree students but also the EFL Master degree students faced difficulties when translating phraseology.

The last but not least, **Arono & Nadrah (2019)** conducted a recent study with Indonesian EFL students based on assessing students and what problems they faced whilst translate phraseologies. Their study confirms that the issues

and problems that Indonesian EFL students faced while translating were the following:

- materials of translation are not suitable with the need of language learners,
- the activity of translation is boring,
- the learners also lack of background knowledge about linguistic,
- errors in translating some idioms and some words which are not familiar with their native language because the culture influences,
- difficulties in translating language's expressions, and
- translate idiomatic expressions from English into the target language.

Moreover, when asked their students out of idioms, ellipsis and textual meaning, what they found the hardest, the results showed “the most frequent error made by students is translating idioms that occur 420 times which equals to 87.05% of the total errors” Arono & Nadrah (2019, p. 91). The reason why the above studies have been chosen is the fact that they fit perfectly with the main purpose of this study, together with the questions that were asked when the studies were conducted and that they are recent studies and were published recently. In the discussion, this study will then go on to see if this was the same case with fourth-year EFL students at the University of Prizren “Ukshin Hoti” and the third-year EFL students of “AAB College” bearing in mind though, that they will be questioned upon their translation experience from English into Albanian and vice versa. Arono & Nadrah study conducted in 2019 also based itself on seeing the errors that the students found themselves in on these three specific problems: translating idioms, translating ellipsis and textual meaning. Therefore, this study will be measuring and investigate almost the same issues. Apart from translating ellipsis for rather the importance of this study is to see how sayings or phrases are a problem to the students than ellipsis.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research aims

This study aims to investigate whether phraseology is considered a translation problem among EFL university students in Kosovo, but also, what techniques or strategies do students use in order to overcome phraseology obstacles during their translation work or studies. In addition, it analyzes and identifies which parts of phraseology are the hardest or the most difficult ones to deal with during their translation courses and what they should do in order to improve or master their phraseology translation proficiency.

3.2. Research methods

This study investigated whether phraseology caused translation problems among EFL university students, as well as what techniques or strategies should students use in order to benefit them during translation courses. It is conducted through the use of the quantitative research method (quantitative data).

Therefore, the type of a method being used during this study makes this paper a quantitative one which according to QuestionPro (2020) shows “Quantitative

research collects information from existing and potential-customers using sampling methods and sending out online surveys, online polls, questionnaires, etc., the results of which can be depicted in the form of numerical.” It must also be mentioned that this study apart from the use of quantitative data, also used various materials such as articles, books, research papers and dictionaries in order to bring out the depth in answering the three research problems and comparing and contrasting the findings to what others have found in the past when it came to phraseology as a translation problem among EFL university students.

3.3. Participants

The chosen participants or the population (in methodology terms) for this study were 35 third and fourth-year EFL university students (respectively 20 fourth-year English department students from the “Ukshin Hoti” University and 15 third-year English department students of “AAB” College) to make up the sample. The participants were all volunteers who wanted to contribute towards this study of great significance as well as to improve their translation skills regarding phraseology. The age range of participants was from 22-25 years-old, they were a mixture of males and females. All the participants agreed electronically through their emails and expressed their desire to participate in this research.

However, full confidentiality and ethical aspects of personal data were considered and guaranteed. The participants were assured that the information provided would be used solely for study purposes and will not be shared by any means to any third party or to the public. At the same time, the participants were given information about the institution the researchers were affiliated with.

3.4. Research instruments and procedure

The instrument used in this research was a questionnaire which was distributed and completed by all 35 participants through the use of an online survey (Google form) that included eleven questions, containing yes/no, open/closed, long/short answer and rate (from ‘very good’ to ‘terrible’) questions. The online survey was conducted due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions at the time and not allowing the survey to be administered face to face. The eleven questions presented in the survey, apart from finding out the answers to the research questions, are also of great use to lower year EFL students of the both universities surveyed as they can find out what translation problems the third and fourth-year students face and just how to overcome them. Moreover, the third and fourth-year students were chosen due to the fact that they were almost near their graduation and both universities have provided several translation courses over the years which is why the survey was detail oriented specifically towards them and not towards any lower year students. The students’ questionnaire has 11 questions in total, but there are only 7 questions analyzed in this publication.

4. Results

Based on the results provided by EFL students of both universities this study concludes or summarizes the following:

- almost two third (57.1%) of EFL students consider their translating skills (including translating a text that contains phraseology) to be good;
- however, just below two third (60%) of EFL students think that phraseology makes translation harder. The study reveals that majority of students agree that phraseology makes translation harder and difficult when finding the Albanian or the target language equivalent;
- in addition, most of the EFL students (85.7%) consider that ‘idioms’ followed by ‘collocations’ are the hardest units of phraseology to translate. Once again, the study reveals that idioms followed collocations are the most difficult units to translate from English-Albanian and vice versa;
- in addition to difficulties of translation among EFL students, above three quarters (77.1%) of students consider ‘understanding the meaning of the phraseology in English’ as the hardest problem faced during translation, followed by ‘understanding the textual meaning of the phraseology’;
- whereas, with regard to other problems that EFL students face during translating phraseology, the study reveals that almost three quarters (71.4%) of students consider ‘trying to find the correct words in Albanian in order to translate into English (this is due to the Albanian language not having enough or equivalent words compared to English language)’ followed by ‘trying to translate the phraseology from English-Albanian or vice versa’;
- however, when EFL students get stuck whilst translating in class during the course, just about two third (65.7%) of students ‘used a dictionary and tried to find the word or saying’ in order to overcome the difficulty, followed by ‘tried to read the whole sentence in order to understand the phraseology’ and ‘used the internet to understand the meaning of the phraseology’;
- finally, how did students learn phraseology and what was the most successful method that helped them towards learning it, almost three quarters (71.4%) of students consider ‘by watching movies, series or documentaries’ as the most successful method that helped them to learn and translate phraseology, followed by ‘university courses’, ‘by reading books’, and ‘by having discussion with our professors who had knowledge on English-Albanian phraseology or vice versa’.

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate whether phraseology is considered a translation problem among EFL university students in Kosovo, but also, what techniques or strategies did students use in order to overcome phraseology obstacles during their translation work or studies.

When asked how the students would rate their translation skills results came out mostly positive with 57.1 of them equivalent to 100% answered “Good”. Which shows that, when it comes to translation the majority of them find themselves confident. However, when asked how they found themselves in translating phraseology, the results were more or so different, where out of 35 students 21 of them equivalent to 60% answered with “Good”, 6 out of 35 of them equivalent to 17.1% answered “Not so great”. This shows that the majority found

themselves managing to translate the text with some difficulties and the minority not doing well or finding themselves having no trouble at all. Which is why in this part of the study, before finding out whether the three research questions were answered or not through the survey conducted, it is important to compare and contrast the findings together with the literature review.

The study conducted by Arono & Nadrah (2019) when asking their students what they found the hardest when translating phraseology, results showed “the most frequent error made by students is translating idioms that occur 420 times which equals to 87.05% of the total errors.” This is seen in the results of this paper too, as the question was multiple choice where 30 students picked idioms, 13 chose sayings, 17 picked collocations, 12 chose textual meanings and only 1 student picked “None of the above”. Which goes to show that the hardest to translate according to the students were idioms followed by collocations then sayings, whereas textual meaning was considered to be the least hard to translate.

Another finding which correlates with the literature review is the fact that when students were asked “What are some other problems that were faced when it came to translating phraseology (idioms, sayings, textual meanings, collocations etc.)?” 16 out of 35 chose “Trying to translate the Phraseology from English-Albanian or Albanian-English”, 25 out of 35 chose “Trying to find the correct words in Albanian in order to translate into English (Due to Albanian not having enough words compared to English)”, 8 out of 35 picked “Not understanding the text due to not having enough knowledge about it”. 7 out of 35 chose “Finding the text boring”, 6 out of 35 picked “Finding the text not beneficial or worth my time” and the last but not least only 1 student out of the 35 chose “None of the above”. These findings align with Arone & Nadrah (2019) that showed the students faced problems with:

- materials of translation are not suitable with the need of language learners;
- the activity of translation is boring;
- the learners also lack of background knowledge about linguistic;
- errors in translating some idioms and some words which are not familiar with their native language because the culture influences;
- difficulties in translating language’s expressions;
- translate idiomatic expressions from English into the target language.

This paper must also consider the relation of the findings in the results together with the three research questions that were raised at the beginning of this study. When students were asked “What are some other problems that were faced when it came to translating Phraseology (idioms, sayings, textual meanings, collocations etc.)?” 16 out of 35 chose “Trying to translate the Phraseology from English-Albanian or Albanian-English”, 25 out of 35 chose “Trying to find the correct words in Albanian in order to translate into English (Due to Albanian not having enough words compared to English)”, 8 out of 35 picked “Not understanding the text due to not having enough knowledge about it”. 7 out of 35 chose “Finding the text boring”, 6 out of 35 picked “Finding the text not beneficial or worth my time” and last but not least only 1 student out of the 35 chose “None of the above”.

In addition, when they were asked “What is the hardest thing or (most) hardest thing to translate when it comes to Phraseology? (Either from English-Albanian or vice versa)”, this question was multiple choice where 30 students picked idioms, 13 chose sayings, 17 picked collocations, 12 chose textual meanings and only 1 student picked “None of the above”. Which goes to show that the hardest thing (part of phraseology) to be translated (according to the students) were idioms followed by collocations then sayings and textual meaning being the least hard to translate.

Finally, when students were asked “When you got stuck whilst translating in class during the course what did you do?”, they were once again given the chance to pick multiple answers, where 11 out of 35 chose “Asked my Professor to help me or to explain to me”, 23 out of 35 “Used a dictionary and tried to find the word or saying”, 14 picked “Used the internet to understand the meaning of the Phraseology”, 11 out of 35 chose “Asked my colleague sitting next to me if they knew”, 20 picked “Tried to read the whole sentence in order to understand the Phraseology” and lastly 3 out of 35 students chose “None of the above” together with the question “What advice would you give (if any) to the lower year students who are still taking translation courses and that face problems translating Phraseology?” which can be found in the results figure 11 where a display of all the students answers are shown in answer to the questions. A few of them were “Practice translation as much as you can”, “ They must try to read more books, novels and watch movies in order to get used to Phraseology more”, “Try to communicate with native speakers”, “To watch movies with captions”, “Always make sure to read the text at least 3 times before starting to translate, and use a dictionary when you are stuck!”, “Read, watch movies (British ones especially) and search them up for their meanings and never feel afraid to ask their teachers for help.

5.1. Limitations of the study

Limitations were found during the implementation of this study. One of them was the low number of participants that took part in the study and the second one was, only two universities being involved because the survey was detail oriented specifically for the fourth-year and respectively third-year English Language and Literature students. They were chosen due to the fact that all of them had considerable experience with regard to translation courses and the research questions suited them as they were based on the problems and solutions faced whilst taking the courses.

Another limitation towards this study was the global pandemic (COVID-19) which did not allow the survey to be handed out and answered in person, but it was conducted through the use of google forms which leads to the thought that some of the students might have not understood some of the questions and had no way of asking the researchers for clarification or they might have not answered truthfully due to the fact that the survey was conducted online.

6. Conclusion

This study was designed to find out what problems the fourth and the third- year English department students of the University of Prizren “Ukshin Hoti” respectively the students of “AAB” College faced throughout their years at university, courses they attended together with solutions they found to their problems when it came to translate idioms, collocations, sayings etc. when it came to phraseology in translation. The results presented in this study show that almost all of the 35 EFL students considered themselves good or confident at translation but when it came to phraseology they stumbled upon problems, especially when it came to translate idioms. Though, despite the problems they faced throughout their courses and translation as shown in the results of this study, it is safe to say that they found solutions that helped them leaving only a small percentage of students unsatisfied with translating phraseology. One of the main reasons why this study was conducted, was in hopes that this study provides a platform for future generations to carry out this research and especially pay attention to the limitations that were stated in the discussion.

Furthermore, this study hopes to bring attention upon this issue so that the years to come can learn from the misunderstandings and problems that three and fourth-year students faced and can have a step forward into solving them together with the advice mentioned by the students. Further research about the problems of translating phraseology can be conducted where the researcher can provide more data or maybe conduct research in a larger group of EFL students so more results and opinions can be given or gathered. Moreover, research conducted in this area, hopefully, can convince or trigger either private or public universities to create a program for the sole purpose of teaching the EFL students phraseology and its importance as mentioned in the introduction of this paper, so that anyone who learns a language will come across phraseology as it not only deals with translation but many other aspects of language and culture.

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to express generous gratitude to all fourth-year students of “Ukshin Hoti” University and the third-year students of “AAB” College who voluntarily participated and without whom this study of great importance and significance would have been impossible.

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Appendix: Students' Questionnaire

1. Based on the translation courses you have taken at university up until now, how would you rate your translation skills (from English-Albanian and vice versa)?
 - o Excellent
 - o Good
 - o Not so great
 - o Bad
 - o Terrible

2. When it came to translating a text that contained Phraseology (which means idioms, sayings, textual meanings). How would you rate yourself (from English-Albanian and vice versa)?
 - o Excellent (I managed to translate the whole text with no problem at all!)
 - o Good (I managed almost all the text with only some misunderstandings!)
 - o Not so great (I understood part of it but found it hard to translate!)
 - o Bad (I only understood some words or sayings but could not translate!)
 - o Terrible (I did not understand anything nor could I translate the text!)

3. Does Phraseology make translation harder?
 - o Yes
 - o No
 - o Maybe

4. What is the hardest thing or hardest things to translate when it comes to Phraseology (from English-Albanian and vice versa)?
You can pick one or more answers to this question
 - o Idioms
 - o Sayings
 - o Collocations
 - o Textual meaning
 - o None of the above

5. What was the hardest or some of the hardest problems faced when it came to understanding in translating Phraseology (idioms, sayings, textual meanings, collocations etc...)?
You can pick one or more answers to this question
 - o Understanding the meaning of the Phraseology in English
 - o Understanding the textual meaning
 - o Understanding the meaning of the text itself
 - o None of the above

6. What are some other problems that you were faced when it came to translating Phraseology (idioms, sayings, textual meanings, collocations etc...)?
 1. *You can pick one or more answers to this question*
 - o Trying to translate the Phraseology from English-Albanian or Albanian-English
 - o Trying to find the correct words in Albanian in order to translate into English (due to Albanian language not having enough words compared to English)
 - o Not understanding the text due to not having enough knowledge about it
 - o Finding the text boring

- o Finding the text not beneficial or worth my time
 - o None of the above
7. If not mentioned in the question above, do you have any other reason/s why you faced problems when it came to translating Phraseology (idioms, sayings, textual meanings, collocations etc...)?
-
-
8. When you got stuck whilst translating in class during the course what did you do?
You can pick one or more answers to this question
- o Asked my professor to help me or to explain to me
 - o Used a dictionary and tried to find the word or saying
 - o Used the internet to understand the meaning of the Phraseology
 - o Asked my colleague sitting next to me if they knew
 - o Tried to read the whole sentence in order to understand the Phraseology
 - o None of the above
9. If not mentioned above, what else did you do when you got stuck whilst translating in class during your translation course?
-
-
10. How did you learn Phraseology and what was the most successful method that helped you towards learning it?
You can pick one or more answers to this question
- o Through university courses
 - o By having discussion with your professor who had knowledge on/about English Albanian Phraseology and vice versa
 - o By speaking to native speakers (British/American)
 - o By watching movies, series or documentaries
 - o By reading books
 - o By searching them on the internet out of curiosity
 - o Other
11. What advice (if any) would you give to the lower year students who are still taking translation courses and face problems translating Phraseology?
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ГОД. VIII
БР. 15

ПАЛІМПСЕСТ

РАЛІМПСЕСТ

VOL. VIII
NO 15