
CHALLENGES IN TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH-VIETNAMESE IDIOMS WITH ANIMAL ELEMENTS AND SUGGESTED TRANSLATION STRATEGIES**Thu Le Hoai**

Vietnam National University Hanoi - International School, 79 Nguy Nhu Kon Tum, Nhan Chinh, Thanh Xuan, Hanoi, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

The translation of idioms poses significant challenges, particularly when cultural nuances and linguistic intricacies are involved. As an important cultural element of every language, idioms related to animals are not only one of the most interesting linguistic phenomena but also of largest concern among language translators regardless of the language pair translated. This paper explores the obstacles encountered in translating English-Vietnamese idioms containing animal elements, and equivalent translation strategies in addressing these hurdles. By examining the cultural, semantic, and syntactic disparities between the source and target languages, this study identifies the complexities inherent in rendering idiomatic expressions accurately. Additionally, the paper delves into four translation strategies, proposed by Baker (1992): (i) Using an idiom of similar meaning and form; (ii) Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form; (iii) Translating by paraphrase; and (iv) Translating by omission, in overcoming the challenges posed by idiomatic expressions with animal elements. Through a comprehensive analysis of real-world examples in English and Vietnamese idioms, this research provides insights into the complexities of idiomatic translation and offers practical recommendations for translators seeking to improve the accuracy and cultural relevance of translated content.

Keywords: English animal idioms, Vietnamese animal idioms, translation challenges, translation strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Each language, through words, has different structures that create meaning. These structures represent the national cultural thinking, psychology, intelligence and talent of native speakers. Idioms are one of those meaning-making structures. Idioms not only have the effect of making good writing but also contribute to expressing ideas in a profound, delicate and concise way, especially idioms with animal elements.

As an important cultural element of every language, idioms related to animals (from here on called animal idioms) are not only one of the most interesting linguistic phenomena but also one of largest concerns among language translators regardless of the language pair translated. Furthermore, idioms in general and animal idioms in particular are systematized by the basic principles of human language, thinking and perception (Gibbs et al., 1997; Kövecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). For example, to refer to eating a lot, Vietnamese people use images of tigers, buffaloes, dragons (*ăn như hùm đở đở, ăn như trâu, ăn như rồng cuốn* - eat like a tiger, eat like a buffalo, eat like a rolling dragon), British people use the image of a horse (*eat like a horse*). When talking about eating a little, the British use the image of a bird (*eat like a bird*), the Vietnamese use the image of a cat (*ăn như mèo* - eat like a cat). Vietnamese people use the image of a buffalo to refer to the spirit of tireless work (*hùng hục như trâu lăn* - work like a rolling buffalo), while the British borrow the image of a horse (*work like a horse*)...

The purpose of this article is to point out some obstacles when translating animal idioms from English to Vietnamese, thereby propose a number of suitable solutions to the problem of translating English animal idioms (EAI) to equivalent Vietnamese animal idioms (VAI).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition of idioms

All languages have idioms (Langlotz, 2006; Wright, 1999). Idioms are verbal products of a language, naturally entering the daily speech of native speakers and becoming important vocabulary in the vocabulary of each language (Hung, 2007). Idioms reflect observations, feelings, and carry the unique cultural and thinking characteristics of native speakers. Idioms are therefore a treasure containing the unique and rich cultural sediments of a culture. Idioms can be defined as fixed phrases that have a stable structural form, a figurative meaning and are widely used in communication (Baker, 1992, 1998; Hanh, 2004; Giap 1998; Van, 2005; Larson, 1984; Hung, 2007). The meaning of an idiom is not created by simply adding the meaning of the constituent units in each idiom. This shows that translating closely to the meaning or from the opposite in these cases will become meaningless. It can be said that the fixed nature of idioms makes translation difficult; as a result, idioms are considered one of the most complex factors in terms of translatability (Trao, 2017).

2.2. Animal elements in idioms

Regarding idioms with animal components, early linguists mainly focused on classifying the origin of idioms and describing the expressive function of idioms. Pearsall Smith (1925) divided them into groups according to their communicative functions. Other linguists have classified animal idioms based on animal behavior and divided animal idioms into pet idioms, bird idioms, grassland animal idioms, herd animal idioms and aquatic animal idioms (Ammer, 1997).

Most languages have idioms about animals, especially in agricultural societies where the relationship between humans and animals is closer. Animals in idioms are often used as personifications to describe human behavior and characteristics (Colin, 2006). Conversely, humans also interpret the characteristics of animals in relation to human behavior and personify their behavior in relation to human emotions. Moon (1998) argues that animals are considered lower life forms than humans and are therefore widely used to describe negative human characteristics, for example: *an old goat* (an old, unlikeable man); *a night owl* (someone who feels more lively at night and usually goes to bed very late); *a black sheep* (a person who is different from the rest of their family or another group, and who is considered bad or embarrassing); *a dead duck* (any person or thing that has failed or is certain to fail and is therefore not worth discussing), *an ugly duckling* (an ill-favored child in an otherwise attractive family)... However, animals are sometimes used to describe desirable human characteristics such as: *a top dog* (the most important and powerful person in a group); *an early bird* (a person who gets up very early)...

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Challenges in translation of EAI to VAI

Idiomatic translation is a difficulty for translators. In this article, we analyze three obstacles when translating animal idioms from English to Vietnamese: the inability to recognize idioms, cultural differences and inequivalence between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL).

3.1.1. Inability to recognize idioms

According to Awwad (1990), the three main difficulties in translating idioms are: (1) misunderstanding the author's intention in the source text, (2) not recognizing the cultural differences between the two languages, and (3) having difficulties in finding equivalent words that still retain the special meaning of the idiom. Baker (1992) believes that “the main problems that idioms and fixed expressions pose in translation concern two main areas: the ability to recognize and interpret an idiom correctly and the difficulties in expressing the different aspects of meaning that an idiom or fixed phrase conveys in the target language” (p. 65). For Mollanazar (2004, p.52), “the first step in translating idioms is to recognize them. The pitfall for translators is translating idioms literally. Translating individual idioms is often meaningless or sometimes even amusing”. Similarly, Nolan (2005, p. 67) believes that “the most common pitfall to avoid is failing to recognize figurative or idiomatic language and translating it literally”.

Here are some examples of the challenges in recognizing EAI:

Example 1: Try thinking about the idiom “*it's raining cats and dogs*” (meaning pouring rain) in English. This is an idiom that if the translator just translates word by word, readers will never understand the true meaning of the sentence (*raining cats and dogs*). That's why translators need to recognize idioms and understand their meanings correctly before starting to translate. This creates difficulties for translators because dictionaries often limit definitions to single words or only express a few idioms. The idiom “*It's raining cats and dogs*” means very heavy rain. Linguists need to know the exact meaning of the idiom, then look for an alternative version in the TL that expresses the same meaning in the source language. Fortunately, most languages have related idioms that refer to this concept of heavy rain. Therefore, in this case, the translator can absolutely use the same structure to retain the tone and voice of the original text in his translation. In Vietnamese, there is an idiom “*mưa như trút nước*” (pouring rain) to mean the same thing.

Example 2: The idiom “*to catch flies*” can be difficult to recognize due to its commonly used literal meaning. This is another example of a student's error in translation of idiom: “*The students all sat staring in utter incomprehension, catching flies as the professor explained quantum mechanics.*” (Tất cả học sinh ngồi nhìn với vẻ khó hiểu, bắt ruồi khi giáo sư giải thích về cơ học lượng tử.) In this Vietnamese translation, the translator did not recognize the idiom “*to catch flies*”, that's why he translated it into Vietnamese as its literal meaning (fly = a small insect with two wings).

3.1.2. Culture differences

Khoa (2022) states that due to cultural differences, EAI may use images that are different from those used in VAI to convey similar metaphorical ideas or concepts. This causes certain obstacles for English learners, especially translators, in fully grasping idioms. According to Oualif, M. (2017), cultural origins are crucial to the translation process. Because of the disparities in their cultural origins, words have distinct meanings and emotional connotations. Oualif, M. (2017) also argues that the translation process is difficult because of the cultural and linguistic distinctions between the TL and SL. In addition to language and stylistic traits, cultural and social distinctions between native speakers and non-native speakers also play a role in translation problems. The difficulty of the transition from SL to TL increases with the gap between SL and TL. Baker, M. (1992, p.68) adds that the main problem with idioms or expressions of a culture is that “they are not necessarily untranslatable; however, they may refer to some specific detail or event that is common to that particular culture, making it difficult to translate the idiom.” According to Lahlali, E. and Abu Hatab, W. (2014), translating involves more than just word translation; it involves dealing with language and culture. One of

the many social activities that the speaker does to reflect their culture is language. The translator must be aware of the cultural background of the individuals he is translating for. The translator serves as a liaison between the TL and SL. To effectively communicate the SL message, all he has to do in this regard is to comprehend the reader's or the target audience's cultural background. He must simultaneously acquire skills that will enable him to deal with idioms that are ingrained in culture. Idioms increase a person's linguistic awareness; therefore, knowing idioms indicates a learner's ability to grasp linguistic elements.

Cultural differences between countries can lead to incomplete or misleading translations of animal-related idioms from English to Vietnamese. Here are some specific examples:

Example 3: "*Let the cat out of the bag*": In English, this idiom often means revealing a secret. However, in Vietnamese culture, letting the cat out of the bag may not cause the feeling of revealing a secret. Therefore, direct translation can lose the charm of the idiom.

Example 4: "*A bull in a china shop*": In English, this idiom refers to a person who is careless and clumsy in a sensitive or fragile situation. However, in Vietnamese culture, images of bulls in ceramic shops may not cause feelings of clumsiness or indifference.

These examples show that translating animal idioms from English to Vietnamese requires flexibility and a deep understanding of both cultures to convey the meaning accurately and effectively.

3.1.3. Untranslatability/ Non-equivalence

Every language has words that cannot be translated into some other languages. Sometimes, an EAI has a deep or multi-faceted meaning, but has no equivalent expression in Vietnamese. This can take away the nuance or meaning of the sentence. The absence of equivalency at the idiomatic level is one of the issues that translators face while translating idioms, according to Straksiene (2009). Idioms are present in all languages, but it can be challenging to identify terms in TL that are identical to SL idioms in both form and meaning. Idioms can have cultural allusions, which presents challenges for translators. Additionally, according to Baker (1992), an idiom or fixed phrase could not have an equivalent in TL since linguistic choices on how to express different meanings are arbitrary and very seldom coincide with one another (p.68). This indicates that while we may convey a notion in one language with a single word, we can do the same in another language by using an idiom or a set phrase. Similar to single words, fixed phrases and idioms can have cultural connotations. Non-equivalence is a reality in every language and it has caused some cases of untranslatability (Kashgary, 2011). Therefore, when dealing with the problem of non-equivalence, the focus should be on the level of language use in both languages. It is best to provide an equivalent idiom in TL; nevertheless, in many cases no equivalent idiom can be found, then the only remaining translation is to explain, describe or paraphrase the animal idiom. Translating TL in this case will give equivalent words without descriptive idioms. This approach pushes translators to use word-for-word translations, explanations, footnotes or TL paraphrases, or just figurative/idiomatic translations; therefore, a certain loss of translation is inevitable.

Below are some examples of English idioms for animals that have no direct equivalent in Vietnamese and require explanation when translated:

Example 5: The English idiom "*white elephant*" means useless and costly. The meaning of this idiom as we see has nothing to do with the meaning of the word "*white*" or "*elephant*". In ancient times, white elephants were considered sacred in Thailand and other Asian nations. Taking care of a white elephant required special food and access for those who wished to worship the animal, thus keeping one was an expensive endeavor. A Thai king would give a

subordinate a white elephant if he was not happy with them. Most of the time, the gift would damage the recipient.

Example 6: The idiom “*a mare’s nest*” means a concept or finding that appears intriguing and thrilling but turns out to be untrue or worthless. This idiom means that there is no such thing as a mare’s nest since mares, like horses or donkeys, do not build nests.

These examples show that sometimes to understand and express an English phrase referring to animals, we need to explain its core meaning in context to translate it into Vietnamese most effectively.

3.2. Suggested translation strategies

There have been quite a few researches on how to translate idioms. These studies all have a common conclusion that literal translation is considered the worst way to translate idioms.

Larson (1984) believes that the most dangerous thing when translating idioms is translating them literally, because then the translated text will most likely be corny and meaningless. The most effective way proposed is to translate the idiom in TL with a similar idiom in SL. According to Larson (1984), translation method is divided into two categories: literal translation and idiomatic translation. Literal translation faithfully follows the form of the source language. On the other hand, idiomatic translation tries to convey the meaning intended by the origin writer in the form of TL. Newmark (1981, 1991) also emphasizes that idioms should never be translated word for word. However, he also points out that a literal translation of the TL’s idioms can be used if the translation serves to understand and remember the idioms. Newmark (1988) adds that there are two best methods in translation: communicative translation and semantic translation. While communicative translation produces the same effect on the TL readers, semantic translation reproduces the precise contextual meaning of the author. These two methods contribute to conveying exactly both meaning and context of the SL. This will satisfy the need of readers about an accurate version of translation. Nida & Taber (1969, p.106) eliminate the use of literal translation for idioms and propose three methods: (i) Idiomatic translation using non-idiom phrases; (ii) Translate idioms using idioms and (iii) Translate non-idiomatic phrases using idioms. Nida and Taber (1969) argue that idioms in SL are mostly translated using words/phrases that are not idioms in TL, although it would be ideal if the translator could find a similar idiom in TL.

After considering the difficulties in translating idioms in some languages, Baker (1992, p.71-78) proposed the following four main ways to handle idiom translation: (i) Using an idiom of similar meaning and form; (ii) Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form; (iii) Translation by paraphrase; and (iv) Translation by omission. These are also the four proposals for translating animal idioms from English to Vietnamese that we want to present in this article.

3.2.1. Using an idiom of similar meaning and form

In order to transmit the same lexical equivalents, this technique uses TL idioms that roughly express the same meaning as SL idioms. According to Kommissarov (1985, p. 210), the translator will employ this technique to translate a phrase into TL that has the same meaning as the SL, such as having the same image, degree of emotion, or pronunciation. According to Baker (1992), this approach may appear perfect, but it also depends on the rhetorical purpose and style of the SL and TL. Ideally, you should use an idiom in the TL that is substantially equivalent to its meaning in the SL and has similar lexical features; nevertheless, it is uncommon to find such perfect matches. Let's consider the following examples:

Table 1: Translation by using an idiom of similar meaning and form

Example	EAI	Meaning	Cultural origin	VAI
7	<i>As sly as a fox</i>	Particularly intelligent, cunning, or shrewd, especially in devious or deceitful ways.	The fox, considered a very cunning and deceitful animal, can be used to describe someone who is cunning, deceitful, sly and naughty.	<i>Gian như cáo</i> (as cunning/sly as a fox)
8	<i>Pig out</i>	Eat a lot or too much	Pigs are famous for their gluttony, laziness, and hygiene problems.	<i>Ăn như lợn</i> (eat like a pig)
9	<i>Monkey business</i>	Mischievous or illegal happenings	The image of a monkey connotes foolishness or ridicule.	<i>Trò khỉ</i> (monkey business)
10	<i>As free as a bird</i>	Completely free to do as you want	The bird represents a subject with a free and liberal life, not tied to one place.	<i>Như cánh chim trời</i> (like a bird in the sky)
11	<i>Parrot-fashion</i>	Learn or repeat the exact words, usually without understanding them	Parrot is used to refer people who repeat other people's words and ideas without knowledge.	<i>Học vẹt, như con vẹt</i> (learn like a parrot)
12	Crocodile tears	False tears	Only when attacking and devouring their food, do crocodiles release their tears, either as a trap to draw in their meal or as an expression of their intense passion.	<i>Nước mắt cá sấu</i> (Crocodile tears)

To sum up, finding a total equivalence of EAI and VAI is a difficult task, because they should meet strict requirements. First, the idea that the idiom and its counterpart should be utilized in both languages in the same way is expressed at the stylistic or functional level. Second, the semantic level indicates that the idiom's meaning is the same in both languages when compared. Lastly, formal level shows that the idiom's constituent parts are similar in both languages when compared.

3.2.2. Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form

This strategy is predicated on the potential to locate a phrase or idiom in the TL that bears a meaning like to that of the SL, but with distinct lexical elements. Baker (1992) explains that this can be done by finding an idiom or fixed phrase in the TL that has the same meaning as the idiom to be translated but that phrase or idiom has other lexical elements (p. 74). This strategy can be widely used to bridge the cultural gap because each nation has its own way and use its own animals to express their thinking and habits.

Let's consider a few examples as follows:

Table 2: Translation by using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form

Example	EAI	VAI	Explanation
13	<i>The pot calling the kettle black</i>	<i>Lươn ngắn lại chê chạch dài Thòn bơn méo miệng, chê trai lệch mồm</i> (Short eel criticizes long loach; Flounder with a distorted mouth criticizes mussel with misaligned mouth)	EAI means the criticisms a person is aiming at someone else could equally well apply to themselves, the equivalent of VAI can also be a dog criticizing a hairy cat or a sloppy mouth criticizing a crooked mouth. These idioms all imply a person who does not know others or himself, only knows how to criticize others but does not know that he has the same disability as others.
14	<i>Love me, love my dog</i>	<i>Yêu ai yêu cả đường đi</i> (Love mee, love my way)	The same metaphor is represented in SL by this idiomatic translation, albeit with different lexical elements. An analogous phrase in TL can successfully communicate the cultural message of SL and express a symbolic or symbolic meaning. This is the situation where an idiom in the native tongue has an exact meaning, definition, style, picture, subtlety, etc. that is comparable to the idiom in the source language. The symmetrical images of “me - my dog” are preserved in the target idioms “me - my way”.
15	<i>As poor as a church mouse</i>	<i>Nghèo rớt mông toi</i> (So poor that the shirt had fallen off all the leaves, leaving only the spinach hanging on the shoulder)	The reason for this long-used comparison is unclear, but most believe that, since churches are not famous for storing food, a rat inside a church would not be successful. The metaphor alludes to extreme poverty compared to a mouse in a church with no food (English) and the top of one's palm leaf raincoat falling off (Vietnamese). Both idioms develop on the same image of describing extreme poverty.
16	<i>Work like a dog</i>	<i>Làm việc như trâu</i> (work like a buffalo)	In western culture, the image of the dog is often associated with positive characteristics. The expression originates from sheepdogs and sled dogs, who toil day and night and work from the break of dawn till dusk. In Eastern culture, particularly in Vietnam, the buffalo is a representation of meekness, diligence, hard work, and honesty. That's why when translating the EAI “work like a dog” in VAI, translators

			should use the same form but different animal to make it understandable for Vietnamese people.
17	<i>Lock the barn door after the horse is gone</i>	<i>Mất bò mới lo làm chuồng</i> (Build a stable after losing the cow)	Both idioms convey the same meaning: taking precautions or taking action after a loss or damage has already occurred, which is often too late to be useful. Both idioms reflect a common human tendency to react to problems only after they have manifested, rather than anticipating and preventing them. Despite the different cultural contexts and different animals mentioned (horse in English, cow in Vietnamese), different actions mentioned (“lock the barn door” in English and “build the stable” in Vietnamese, the underlying message remains the same.

In a nutshell, the field of symbolism and reference that these idioms provide is quite similar in both languages even though they use different expressions. However, there are challenges in finding equivalent idiomatic translations. The Vietnamese translation will be perfect if the idioms in English and Vietnamese contain the same or similar objects or entities. The Vietnamese versions of these examples show corresponding idiomatic meanings but the comparative images are not the same, leading to the loss of a certain amount of English cultural information or characteristics. In addition, different images and associations can stimulate different emotions from Vietnamese recipients leading to different conceptual metaphors.

3.2.3. Translation by paraphrase

When stylistic tastes differ or there is no equivalent in the target language, Baker (1992) claims that translation by paraphrase is the most frequently used. Nida and Taber (1969) strongly support this translation and believe that most idioms with color elements are translated this way. This translation Newmark (1988, p. 91) calls using descriptive equivalent. The meaning of the idiom will be distorted if it is translated word for word. Translation along with an explanation or note would be preferable in these situations. It goes without saying that in order for a translation to be relevant and successful, the translator may need to decide whether to leave out a certain element or substitute it with one that is somewhat similar in terms of semantics and cognitive representation. It is quite difficult to translate animal idioms, both literally and symbolically, unless there is an equivalent in Vietnamese that matches both form and substance. It is evident that many EAI have similar non-idiomatic descriptions when translated into VAI. Because of this, style markers may vanish and neutral translations of animal idioms fail to accurately capture cultural elements (Szerszunowicz, 2009). According to Fiedler’s (2007) recommendations, we advise approaching EAI with great caution if they lack a Vietnamese counterpart or if their equivalent is based on a different metaphor. This is because it necessitates careful assessment of how well the new picture fits the English context. To guarantee the best possible translation quality from English to Vietnamese, the VAI’s message should be conveyed in a non-idiomatic manner. Translation practice shows that translation by paraphrase will lead to more vocabulary used in the translated text than in the original text, because this method of translation includes explaining the meaning of idioms. The explanation according to this strategy is often more detailed than the explanation according

to the strategy using the descriptive similarity phrase /descriptive equivalent proposed by Newmark (1988, p. 91).

Let's consider the examples below:

Table 3: Translation by paraphrase

Example	EAI	VAI	Explanation
18	<i>Have butterflies in one's stomach</i>	<i>Lo lắng, bồn chồn về chuyện sắp xảy đến</i> (to experience extreme anxiety, frequently related to an impending task)	The idiom “have butterflies in one's stomach” refers to feeling nervous or anxious, typically before a significant event or in a situation that causes apprehension. The original meaning and imagery behind this idiom evoke the sensation of fluttering or queasiness in the stomach, similar to the light, fluttering movement of butterflies. This physical sensation is commonly experienced during moments of nervous anticipation, excitement, or anxiety. The expression captures the mix of unease and heightened alertness that people often feel in such circumstances.
19	<i>As eager as a beaver</i>	<i>Nhiệt tình, háo hức, sẵn sàng làm việc chăm chỉ</i> (Be willing to work very hard)	When someone says “Jenny is as eager as a beaver”, he means that Jenny is a really eager beaver who always comes to the office early and voluntarily. The image of the animal “beaver” may be unfamiliar to many Vietnamese people because the habitat of this animal is the temperate region of the Northern Hemisphere. “Eager beaver” is used to refer to an industrious and enthusiastic person. In Vietnamese there is no idiom equivalent to the animal element that describes a person with special enthusiasm.
20	<i>Like a dog with two tails</i>	<i>Rất vui sướng, hạnh phúc tột độ</i> (Very happy, extremely happy)	The idiom “like a dog with two tails” may not have come from somewhere, although it is thought to have started in the UK. The word probably originated from seeing a dog furiously wag its tail, a gesture of joy and enthusiasm.
21	<i>Sow dragon's teeth</i>	<i>Làm điều gì đó nhằm ngăn chặn rắc rối mà vô tình dẫn đến rắc rối</i> (Do something to prevent trouble that unintentionally leads to trouble)	The idiom derives from the Greek tale of old, in which Jason planted a dragon's teeth onto a field, and those teeth grew into an army of soldiers.

22	<i>Dark horse</i>	<i>Một ứng viên bí ẩn trong một cuộc ganh đua nào đó mới lộ diện, ít người biết về người này, nhưng được kỳ vọng sẽ chiến thắng. (A mysterious candidate in a certain competition has just emerged, little is known about this person, but is expected to win.)</i>	Unsurprisingly, horse racing is the source of the idiom. A dark horse was a horse that the bookmakers were unsure of how to wager on since they didn't know much about it. The term began to refer to persons who were obscure before unexpectedly became well-known in the 1830s.
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It is clear that translating EAI literally has the benefit of maintaining visuals and cultural quirks, which promotes linguistic and cultural interchange. However, literal translation frequently leads to misinterpretations or leaves out important details, which decreases the efficacy of the translation. The most significant drawback of explanatory and annotated translation techniques is that, while effective in communicating the message of EAI, they need a significant investment of time, space, and resources.

3.2.4. Translation by omission

In certain situations, idioms may be omitted from the target text. The reason for this may be that they cannot be easily paraphrased, they do not have a close match in the target language, or because of stylistic considerations. Therefore, the strategies recommended for use should be omission and interpretation. The EAI need to be refined to better translate the meaning into VAI. It should be noted here that the Vietnamese meaning will not be an exact equivalent to the English meaning. According to Baker (1992), omission is used when an idiom lacks a close match, when paraphrasing its meaning would be difficult, or when artistic considerations take precedence. It is evident that the use of omission can be justified if it saves space by avoiding a long explanation and the presence of the idioms does not alter the text's overall meaning. It is important to remember that there is almost always a “loss” in meaning when an idiom is removed. One is required to add a few extra words to certain sentences or paragraphs when omissions have occurred in order to “compensate” for the consequent loss (Shojaei, 2012). Here are some English idioms involving animals translated into Vietnamese using the omission strategy:

Table 4: Translation by omission and compensation

Example	EAI	VAI	Explanation
23	As happy as a clam	Rất vui (Very happy, omit “a clam”)	This indicates a highly happy person. It is not immediately obvious why a clam would be seen to be joyful.
24	As drunk as a skunk	Rất say (Very drunk, omit “a skunk”)	This indicates that someone is really drunk. It can be perplexing to compare it to a skunk, which is recognized more for its pungent scent than for being intoxicated.
25	As gentle as a lamb	Rất dịu dàng (Very gentle, omit “a lamb”)	This characterizes a really kind and well-mannered individual. It may not be universally understood that lambs are symbols of tenderness in culture.

The omission strategy in translation involves leaving out a part of the idiom that may not have a direct equivalent in the target language, while retaining the overall meaning. By omitting culturally specific or figurative elements that may not translate well, these translations retain the core meanings of the original idioms.

4. CONCLUSION

Although EAI make up only a limited part of English, they convey many meanings, creating interesting examples of cultural influences and their expression in the language (Belkhir, 2014). By comparing and contrasting English-Vietnamese translation of animal idioms, it can be seen from this study that EAI and VAI reflect very well the unique characteristics of the two cultures and languages. Despite some equivalent idioms, most EAI do not have equivalent idioms in Vietnamese. The challenges in translating the collected EAI have been analyzed and classified into the following four groups according to the level of equivalence in the Vietnamese translation: (i) Using an idiom equivalent in meaning and form in the Vietnamese language; (ii) Using idioms that have the same meaning but different form; (iii) Translating idioms using non-idiomatic phrases; (iv) Translating by omitting idioms. However, languages reflect different realities with different perspectives. Because EAI is a linguistic unit with rich cultural, social, and geographical characteristics, finding equivalent idioms in translation is never easy and sometimes even impossible. Even when there are equivalent words in both languages, they still cause many problems for translators.

It can be concluded that translating EAI requires the translator to “have cultural insight, good understanding and appropriate analysis of the source idiom and metaphor in the idiom” before translating the equivalent in TL (Ngoc & Hong, 2018, p.1133). In addition, the translator should accurately grasp the meaning hidden in the EAI and flexibly use appropriate translation strategies to convey his message into Vietnamese. During the translation process, cultural characteristics and specificities must be carefully taken into account to discover original cultural metaphors constructed from VAI. This is important to help better understand EAI and promote cross-cultural exchange between British and Vietnamese cultures. In short, translating idioms containing animal elements from English to Vietnamese requires the translator to have

deep cultural knowledge and flexible expression ability to preserve the original meaning of idioms.

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