

# Idiomatic expressions with body parts in English and French

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Odjel za anglistiku

Preddiplomski sveučilišni studij Anglistike (dvopredmetni)

**Silvia Popić**

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Završni rad

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Zadar, 2020.



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## Table of contents:

1. INTRODUCTION .....	5
2. FUNDAMENTAL TERMINOLOGY.....	6
2.1. Essential features of phraseological units .....	6
3. IDIOMS .....	7
3.1. Definition of idioms .....	7
3.2. Motivation and origin of idioms.....	8
3.2.1. Conceptual metaphor theory.....	8
3.2.2. Symbolic motivation.....	9
4. IDIOMS WITH PARTS OF THE BODY.....	9
5. TRANSLATION OF IDIOMS.....	10
6. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENGLISH AND FRENCH.....	12
7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	13
8. ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED EXPRESSIONS.....	15
8.1. Final pre-analysis remarks.....	15
8.2. Analysis of the expressions.....	15
9. RESEARCH RESULTS.....	39
10. CONCLUSION.....	39
11. REFERENCES.....	41
12. SUMMARY .....	43
13. SAŽETAK .....	43

## List of figures :

Figure 1 - the equivalence type in the translation of body idioms from English into French .....	39
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This work aims to provide an elaborated analysis, with an emphasis on the translation, of English and French idiomatic expressions containing parts of the human body. It can be divided into two main parts, first of which is more of a theoretical nature concerning all the terminology, explanations, and techniques that are necessary for conducting the research, which composes the second part of the work.

The paper begins with the theoretical background on phraseology which includes the definition of the discipline itself as well as the definition and characteristics of its main element of study i.e. phraseological unit. After that, idioms, as the main units of the later research, are discussed in terms of their features and their place within the field of phraseological units. In addition to this, I will touch upon some of the theories which illustrate the possible ways in which the meaning of the idiom can be decoded. Furthermore, focus shifts on the idioms with parts of the body and the role they have in figurative language on a daily bases. Then, in the *Translation* section, I will provide an insight in the techniques which are used and problems that arise during the process of translating idiomatic expressions. Lastly, before the analysis of the expressions, the relationship between English and French language will be discussed by clarifying where lies the similarity between two languages and how will that similarity be depicted in the analysis itself.

After the theoretical part, the paper centers its attention on the analysis of fifty (50) English idiomatic expressions and their corresponding French idioms. The technique which is used in order to conduct the analysis follows the translation technique demonstrated in *English Phraseology* (2007) by Sabine Fiedler. Finally, research results will demonstrate how many idioms were translated as absolute, partial, or zero equivalents.

The overall analysis is based on the hypothesis that the greatest number of selected English expressions will be translated into French by completely equivalent expressions. This hypothesis is based on personal, but also general tendencies of people who study French as the second foreign language after English, to make a parallel between the two languages. Since, in a great number of cases, English can indeed help in understanding and acquiring French, it is understandable to assume that there are many aspects of grammar, syntax, and word choice in which they are identical.

## 2. FUNDAMENTAL TERMINOLOGY

Phraseology as a field of study developed relatively recently, in the middle of the twentieth century, when linguists started to emphasize the importance of figurative language in everyday communication. In simple terms, phraseology refers to a linguistic subdiscipline which is focused on the study of phraseological units. Traditionally, the term phraseological unit (PU) has often been used interchangeably with the term idiom, however, the two are not synonymous. PU is defined as a lexicalized linguistic unit consisting of at least two lexemes that are relatively syntactically stable and idiomatic. On the other hand, idioms belong to the larger inventory of phraseological lexicon which is by the most part composed of idioms themselves. (Fielder 2007: 15-17)

### 2.1. Essential features of phraseological units

As already stated above, phraseological units are said to be *relatively* stable. This means that their meaning and structure i.e. the word order do not change in different situations. However, sometimes certain lexical or functional elements can be changed which explains the usage of the adverb *relatively*. For instance, it is possible to say: *to beat one's breast* or *chest* or *to talk the hind leg* or *legs of a donkey*. The overall meaning of the expressions remains the

same. Another important characteristic of PU refers to its notion of being lexicalized i.e. permanently memorized, accepted, and used by speakers of a particular community as a constitutive part of a language. Furthermore, the most prominent and probably the most interesting characteristic of PUs is their idiomaticity. This phenomenon presupposes that the meaning of a particular idiom is not reproducible from the overall significance of its constituents. For instance: "*to stick your neck out*" means to : "*risk incurring criticism, anger or danger by acting or speaking boldly.*" (Siefiring 2004: 276), which demonstrates unrelatedness between the literal and non-literal interpretation of the expression. Even though different authors offer many different approaches of how to explain different levels of idiomaticity they all agree that idioms are indeed gradable. This gradation is mostly based on how close the meaning of idiom is to its literal meaning. What is also important to mention is that idiomaticity is not a necessary feature of every PU, but rather its most prominent characteristic which makes an idiom the best representative of the category of phraseological unit. (Fiedler: 19 - 22). That is the reason why idioms will be the focal point of this research.

### 3. IDIOMS

#### 3.1. Definition of idioms

As stated previously, idioms are the most common and most often used subcategory of phraseological units. According to Mona Baker (2001 : 63) these fixed language patterns whose meaning is not deducible from their constituents are described by their five main characteristics.

1. In idiomatic expressions order of constituents is constant and cannot be changed. (e.g. \* *cost someone a leg and an arm*)
2. No word can be omitted from the expression (e.g. \**break leg*)
3. No word can be inserted (e.g. \**lose the face*)



4. No word can be substituted with another word ( *\*have a heart of silver*)
5. Grammatical structure is also unchangeable (*\*tongue is held*)

### 3.2. Motivation and origin of the idioms

When it comes to motivation and comprehension of idioms, some hold that the etymology or the origin of the expression can play a great role in deducing its meaning. According to that thesis, the analysis of the word-for-word meaning of the idiom and its earlier applications are used as a tool for decoding its meaning. There are several theories that explain how the two, meaning and origin of the expressions are related. In the following paragraphs, I will particularize the best known among them – conceptual metaphor theory and symbolic motivation theory.

#### 3.2.1. Conceptual metaphor theory

The first theory relates idioms to the notion of conceptual metaphors. It holds that processing and comprehension of idioms are closely related to the fact that the great number of idioms derive from mutual conceptual metaphors. Lakoff & Johnson (qtd. in Gibbs et.al 1997: 141) describe conceptual metaphor as a method that is applied in order to describe and explain everyday experience by means of abstract concepts. This theory suggests the standard model of figurative language acquisition in which the comprehension of newly introduced concepts is motivated by previously learned concepts. For example, from a conceptual metaphor, ANGER IS HEAT, we can deduce the meaning of particular idiomatic expressions such as “*get steamed up, get hot under the collar and lose your cool.*”<sup>1</sup> (Gibbs et. al 1997: 142). However, this

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<sup>1</sup> All of the mentioned expressions are used in order to express the state of anger and each of them contains a certain indication of heat: *steam, hot, cold*.  
*steamed up* : “angry” (Spears 2000 : 378)

approach does not seem to be completely valid since many experiments conducted by Gibbs et. al (1997) demonstrated that even though conceptual metaphors can help in the comprehension of the idioms, mostly in recognizing situations in which particular idioms are used, they are certainly not the main factor in this process.

### 3.2.2. Symbolic motivation

Dobrovoljski and Piirani (2005: 214) explained the symbolic - motivated approach by stating that the meaning of a particular idiom is motivated by a culturally established symbolic function of one of its constituents. In other words, particular concepts are used to form idioms due to their usage in many different social contexts. In making this theory more comprehensible those two linguists helped themselves by the example of the idiom *to keep the wolf from the door*. They explained that usage of a wolf as a symbol for greediness and financial problems derives from culturally shaped tales and stories about wolves from Western history.

Both approaches offer a similar explanation of the idiom motivation drawing a parallel between idiomatic and literal usage of the constituents, the first of which is concerned more with the actual semantics of the expression and the latter with the real-life experience usage.

## 4. IDIOMS WITH PARTS OF THE BODY

As emphasized in the previous section, cultural aspects can present an important part in the comprehension of idioms, however many different languages use similarly constructed idiomatic expressions. This is particularly manifested in the expressions containing parts of the

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*get hot under the collar* : "very angry " (Spears 2000 : 199)

*lose your cool* : "to lose one's temper; to lose one's nerve " (Spears 2000 : 254)

human body. Numerous functions that the human body is able to perform make it one of the most frequently used sources for figurative language. What is more, body idioms often do not present a challenge when it comes to comprehension since the majority of such expressions are based on the real-life functions of their constituents. For example, *eyes* are often connected with the sight as in *easy on the eye* or *cast one's eye over something*<sup>2</sup>, *ears* with a hearing ability as in *be all ears* or *play by ear*.<sup>3</sup> Analogously, *brain* and *head* are often found in the expressions related to intelligence and thinking, *tongue* and *mouth* refer to words and speaking, and the heart represents the emotions.

Even though such an approach can in many situations help in deducing the meaning it is surely not exhaustive enough having in one of the main features of phraseological units explained earlier i.e. idiomaticity. (Ionescu 2015)

## 5. TRANSLATION OF IDIOMS

Since the primary motive of this work is to comparatively analyze idioms in two languages, it is important to demonstrate how the process of translation from one language to another is executed as well as point out the problems which arise during that process.

The main purpose of translation, in general, is to transfer a particular message from source to target language with the greatest equivalency possible. Due to the specific nature concerning their formation and semantic aspect, idiomatic expressions can present a demanding task to those translating them.

Fiedler (2007: 120) demonstrates how the process of translation of idioms and PUs, in general, is conducted in four key steps. Firstly, one should start by identifying the source

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<sup>2</sup> *easy on the eye*: "pleasant to look at " ; *cast one's eye over sth* : "look quickly over sth" (Seidl, McMordie 1998 : 217)

<sup>3</sup> *Be all ears*: "listen attentively and with keen interest to news or information"; *play by ear*: "play an instrument without music, from memory" (Seidl, McMordie 1998 : 216)

language unit which is aimed to be translated. Secondly, the meaning of the identified unit is to be explained, keeping in mind the context in which it is used. Thirdly, the explanation provided in the previous step is to be transferred to the target language. And fourthly, the corresponding target - language unit should be provided.

Another important component that is to be examined and considered is the concept of equivalence as a degree of correspondence between expressions in different languages. Fiedler (2007: 118) distinguishes between three types of equivalence: full or absolute, partial, and zero equivalence.

1. For two idioms to be full equivalents, it is necessary that they are identical on a lexical level as well as in meaning and form. For example, "*have a heart of gold*" and "*avoir le coeur d'or*" are complete equivalents because they have the same structure (verb + noun + preposition + noun), same lexical components - have (fr. *avoir*) a heart (fr. *le coeur*) of gold (*d'or*) and the same meaning (*being kind*).
2. Furthermore, idioms are said to be partially equivalent if they have the same meaning, but they are either composed of different lexical units or have dissimilar structures. For instance, expressions "*to fall on deaf ears*" and "*faire la sourde oreille*" are partial equivalents because in English, body part is in singular, whereas, in French it is in plural form. Another example of partial idioms is "*to split hairs*" and "*couper les cheveux en quatre*" since there is an additional element *en quatre* in French.
3. Zero equivalence refers to the fact that particular idiom does not have the corresponding idiomatic equivalent in a target language. That is the case when a parallel between the two expressions cannot be drawn due to dissimilar structures and different constituents. As is "*show one's hand*" and "*jouer cartes sur la table*" meaning "*to reveal one's intentions*." (Spears 2006: 604)

Mona Baker (2001: 72 - 78) suggests similar strategies for translating idioms. She states that idioms can be translated by providing a target - language idiom having both approximate meaning and structure. Even though this is considered to be the most desirable method to apply, in most cases it is not possible due to the fact that many idioms are culturally influenced. In such cases, a translator can opt for other methods, such as those of omission or paraphrase which enable much greater freedom of translation. Baker (2001: 68 – 71) also focuses on the problems translators are faced with throughout the whole process. Apart from the previously mentioned fact that some idioms are culturally influenced, the different contexts of usage, as well as different levels of formality, can make the process of providing a target - language unit even more challenging. Also, for those expressions that can be interpreted and used both metaphorically and literally, it is difficult to find a target - language unit corresponding to both meanings. Even though " losses" of translation are an inevitable part of the process, the translator should try to minimize them as much as possible.

## 6. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENGLISH AND FRENCH

The reason why English and French are chosen as the languages included in this comparative analysis lies in the objective to demonstrate similarities between the two of them on different linguistic levels i.e. lexical, morphological, syntactic, and semantic. Since idioms are widely used in everyday language, by both English and French speakers, I perceived them as a good means for the representation of those similarities. Also, for non- French speakers, it presents an easier way of noticing the relationship between English and French, rather than observing some other complex grammatical structures.

In order to keep the focus on the linguistic aspect of languages, this paragraph aims to establish the link between the two languages as briefly as possible without going too far back

in history. England and France are known to have a long and turbulent history of relations, which left a mark on many domains of life of the two countries, including language. It all started in the eleventh century with the Norman conquest of England. In the centuries that followed French was the dominant language in England. However, it is in the period of the Renaissance, when French had the most influence on English especially in the domains of vocabulary and syntax. It is estimated that about two-thirds of English words derive from French mostly in the domains of the army, politics, law, commerce, and art. Today, such words are considered to be stylistically formal, and that is why their usage is desirable and appreciated, especially in writing. On the other hand, like all other languages, French encounters a large number of Anglicisms in everyday speech, mostly in the sphere of technology. Also, the similarity is visible in many aspects of syntax such as in the word order of sentences and questions or in the application of the same syntactic patterns in many linguistic operations such as the formation of indirect speech or conditional sentences. (Roth 2010: 255 – 259)

## 7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I decided to focus my paper on the analysis of idioms, since, as stated and explained previously in the paper, (in section 2.2.) an idiom is often regarded as the best representative of the category of phraseological unit.

This research was conducted through several stages. The first among them was the one of finding idiomatic expressions in the English language, in which one of the lexical elements is a part of a human body. Bearing in mind that numerous bilingual dictionaries list only those expressions which have the exact or close translation into another language, all of the English expressions for this research were found in monolingual dictionaries. Explanations of particular idioms along with the corresponding examples providing the context of their usage were directly taken from the following dictionaries: "*Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*", "*Cambridge*

*International Dictionary of Idioms*", *"McGraw-Hill's Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs"*, *"NTC's American Idioms Dictionary"* and *"English Idioms"*. As it can be observed from the mentioned dictionaries, both British English and American English idioms were taken into account. Afterwards, the focus was on finding the corresponding idioms in the target language - French. Suggested translations and explanations in French were found and extracted from three online dictionaries: *English - French Collins Dictionary*, the dictionary within the French web page *Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales* and dictionary specified for idiomatic expressions *L'internaute*.

The analysis of the chosen expressions is conducted in the already mentioned procedure proposed and explained by Fiedler (2007: 120). Thus, according to this, the analysis consists of the following steps:

1. Identification of selected English idiomatic expression
2. Analysis of the meaning of selected English idiomatic expression
3. Translation of the English phraseological meaning into French
4. Substitution of the English idiom with the corresponding French idiom
5. Identification of the equivalence degree

As it can be observed, the type of equivalence, which is determined on the basis of structure, meaning, word choice, word class and presence or absence of body part, will also be provided as well as some further comments concerning the expressions which are not complete equivalents and differ in a particular way. In order to demonstrate those differences even better, in some of those comments, I provided my own literal translations of English idioms into French. When there is a case of absolute equivalence, no comment will be provided since the two expressions are identical on every considered level.

## 8. ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED EXPRESSIONS

### 8.1. Final pre- analysis remarks

As already mentioned above, this central section of the paper encompasses the analysis of fifty idiomatic expressions that are to be translated from English into French relying on the five-step procedure explained in the previous section.

The selected expressions are arranged alphabetically, according to the name of the body part they have as a constituent. For the majority of body parts, I listed two (2) expressions and for some, I listed (3) simply because some body parts such as *ears*, *head*, *heart*, and *hand* are used in a much greater number of expressions than others. By providing more idioms for mentioned body parts, I wanted to demonstrate their wider range of usage and application.

### 8.2. Analysis of the expressions

#### ARM

##### (1) cost an arm and a leg

1. "*It must have **cost Fred an arm and a leg** to send all three children in private schools.*" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 213)
2. "cost someone a great deal of money" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 213)
3. "coûter beaucoup d'argent" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **coûter les yeux de la tête** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. partial equivalence



The two expressions are considered to be partial equivalents due to the different choice of body parts as constituents. *An arm and a leg*, denoting a huge amount of money, in French counterpart are replaced with *eyes of the head* (fr. *les yeux de la tête*).

## (2) with open arms

1. "*Thank you so much for the brochures. Bob will welcome them **with open arms**.*" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 213)
2. "willingly, with enthusiasm" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 213)
3. "avec joie, avec cordialité" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **à bras ouverts** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. partial equivalence

The difference between these two expressions lies in the usage of a different preposition. Namely, preposition *with* is translated by French preposition *à*. Even though preposition *à* has numerous meanings that depend on the context of usage, it is surely not a complete equivalent to English *with*. The exact translation of *with* would be *avec*, which suggests that the two expressions are partial equivalents.

## BACK

## (3) stab somebody in the back

1. "*I wish you would not gossip about me. There is no need **to stab me in the back**.*" (Spears 2006: 638)
2. "to betray someone" (Spears 2006: 638)
3. "trahir quelqu'un" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **poignarder quelqu'un dans le dos** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

**(4) Turn your back to/on someone**

1. "*These people are appealing to our government to help them. **We can't just turn our backs on them.***" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002:17)
2. "to refuse to help someone" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 17)
3. "Cesser de s'occuper par mépris." (cnrtl.fr)
4. **tourner le dos à quelqu'un** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

**(5) watch your back**

1. "*It's a rough neighbourhood so **watch your back** when you are walking around the street.*" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 17)
2. "to pay attention to people in your environment in order not to be deceived or hurt" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002 : 17)
3. "prendre ses précautions" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **protéger ses arrières** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. partial equivalence

The equivalence between these two expressions is partial due to the meaning of the constituent *arrières* in the French expression. Even though it is closely related to the meaning of French adverb *arrière* meaning *behind*, used as a noun it denotes military forces at the back of the troupe, but also the back part of something in general. (cnrtl.fr)

## BRAIN

### (6) rack your brain(s)

1. "*I've been **rack**ing my **brain**(s) but I still can't remember who wrote that play.*" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 48)
2. "to think hard in order to find a way for solving a problem or to recall something" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 48)
3. "réfléchir intensément" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **se creuser la cervelle** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

### (7) pick someone's brain

1. "*I'd love to **pick** your **brains** about computers - you seem to be the expert around here.*" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 48)
2. "question someone who is better informed about a subject than yourself in order to obtain information" (Siefring 2004: 217)
3. "Solliciter l'aide de quelqu'un." (linternaute.fr)
4. **faire appel aux lumières de qn** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. zero equivalence

Idiomatic expression *to pick someone's brain* was translated into French without any body part as a constituent. The brain as the representation of seeking help or advice is translated in French by the word *lumières* meaning *lights*. The literal translation of French expression would be *to call on the lights of somebody*. Thus, there is no equivalence between the two respective expressions.

## EARS

**(8) be all ears**

1. "*Howard was **all ears** when I told him I had some complimentary theatre tickets for Saturday evening*". (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 215)
2. "be listening eagerly and attentively" (Sieftring 2004: 90)
3. "être très attentif ou écouter très attentivement" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **être tout oreilles** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

**(9) fall on deaf ears**

1. "*All of Sally's good advice **fell on deaf ears**. Walter had made up his own mind*". (Spears 2006: 201)
2. "(for talk or ideas) to be ignored by the persons they were intended for" (Spears 2006: 201)
3. "faire semblant de ne pas entendre ce qui est dit, d'ignorer des propos; refuser d'accéder à une demande" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **faire la sourde oreille à qch** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. Partial equivalence

The difference between the two expressions lies in the different verb choice. English verb *fall* is in the French language translated as *faire* which means *do* or *make*. Since it is the only difference, the two expressions are partially equivalent.

**(10) to be wet behind ears**

1. "*In your first job, older colleagues automatically think you **are still wet behind ears** and seldom take you seriously*". (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 216)

2. "To be inexperienced, usually because of one's youth, immaturity of lack of knowledge." (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 216)
3. "être inexpérimenté" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **être encore un(e) novice** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. zero equivalence

There is no equivalency between the two expressions since there is no specific idiomatic expression for someone inexperienced in French. The literal translation of French expression *être encore un(e) novice* into English would be *to be a beginner (in something)*.

#### (11) go in one ear and out the other

1. "*I can't concentrate. Things people say to me just **go in one ear and out the other.***" (Spears 2006: 259)
2. "to be heard and then soon ignored or forgotten" (Spears 2006: 259)
3. "Refuser d'entendre, de savoir, de comprendre" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **Entrer par une oreille et sortir par l'autre** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. partial equivalence

The difference between these two expressions lies in the usage of different verbs. In English expression, there is only one verb, *go*, accompanied by the prepositions *in* and *out*. On the other hand, in French there are two different verbs used to mark *going in* i.e. *entrer* (eng. *enter*) and *going out* i.e. *sortir* (eng. *exit*).

## EYE

#### (12) cast one's eye over something

1. "*Would you **cast an eye over** these three designs and tell me what do you think?*" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 217)
2. "look quickly over something" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 217)
3. "rapidement, sur le champ" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **jeter l'oeil sur quelque chose** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

**(13) cry one's eyes out**

1. "*She **cried her eyes out** after his dead.*" (Spears 2006 : 135)
2. "to cry very hard" (Spears 2006 : 135)
3. "Sangloter, pleurer abondamment et longtemps" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **Pleurer toutes les larmes de son corps** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. Partial equivalence

English expression to *cry one's eyes out* is translated into French as *pleurer toutes les larmes de son corps* or in English: *to cry out all the tears of one's body*. Thus, replacing eyes by *tears of the body* makes these idioms partially equivalent.

**(14) keep an eye on someone or something**

1. "*Could you **keep an eye on the baby** for me for a while?*" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 120)
2. "to watch or look after someone or something" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 120)
3. "Surveiller quelqu'un/quelque chose du regard" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **garder l'œil sur quelqu'un ou quelque chose** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. Absolute equivalence

## FACE

(15) **lose face**

1. "*He refused to admit he made a mistake because he didn't want to **lose face**.*" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 124)
2. "to do something which makes other people stop respecting you"  
(Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 124)
3. "Perdre son honneur, sa dignité" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **perdre la face** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

(16) **put on a brave face**

1. "*How is Linda coping after her divorce? – Well, she feels terribly lonely and depressed, but she manages to **put a brave face on it** most of the time.*" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 219)
2. "act as if something unpleasant or upsetting is not as bad as it really is."  
(Sieftring 2004: 100)
3. "Témoigner ou non de la fermeté" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **Faire bonne contenance** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. Partial quivalence

In the two respective idioms, there is a usage of different constituents. In French expression, *face* is translated as *conetance*, which refers to a facial expression rather than face itself. Furthermore, adjective *brave* is translated by French adjective *bon(ne)* meaning *good*.

(17) **take something at face value**

1. "*These results **should not be taken at face value** - careful analysis is required to assess their full implications.*" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 124)
2. "to accept something because of the way it first looks or seems, without thinking about what else it could mean" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 124)
3. "Croire trop facilement" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **prendre qqch pour argent comptant** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. zero equivalence

English idiomatic expression *to take sth at face value* is translated in French as *prendre qqch pour argent comptant*. Even though both expressions contain the verb take (fr. *prendre*) they differ in other constituents. Namely, the literal translation of French idiom would be *to take something for given cash*. It can be observed that both idioms contain the notion of value i.e. money however due to lexical and syntactic differences they are considered zero equivalents.

## FINGER

### (18) **cross your fingers / keep your fingers crossed**

1. "***We're crossing our fingers** and hoping that the weather stays fine.*" (Sieftring 2004: 136)
2. "to hope that things will happen in the way you want them to" (Sieftring 2004: 136)
3. "Eloigner le mauvais sort et favoriser la chance en croisant les doigts" (linternaute.fr)
4. **croiser les doigts** (collinsdictionary.com)



5. absolute equivalence

**(19) put one's finger on something**

1. "*There's something about Wilson that makes me suspect that he's bot telling the truth, but I can't quite **put my finger on what it is.***" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 220)
2. "define, identify or discover something" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 220)
3. "Deviner quelque chose ou trouver quelque chose" (linternaute.fr)
4. **mettre le doigt sur quelque chose** (cnrtl.fr)
5. absolute equivalence

## FOOT/FEET

**(20) Fall/ land on one's feet**

1. "*It's going to be a hard day. I only hope I **land on my feet.***" (Spears 2000: 239)
2. "to recover satisfactorily from a trying situation or a setback" (Spears 2000: 239)
3. "*Se tirer heureusement d'une occasion fâcheuse, se trouver dans la même situation qu'auparavant.*" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **retomber sur ses pieds**
5. absolute equivalence

**(21) have one's/both feet at the ground**

1. "*I like Tom. He is not a dreamer. He **has got both feet on the ground.***" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 222)

2. "Be sensible realistic and practical person" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 222)
3. "manifester un grand sens des réalités" (linternaute.fr)
4. **avoir les pieds sur la terre** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

**(22) put one's foot into something**

1. "*I put my foot in it by telling John's secret; he found out.*" (Spears 2006 : 530)
2. "to say something that you regret; to say something stupid, insulting, or hurtful" (Spears 2006: 530)
3. "Aborder sans ménagements une question délicate que les autres cherchent à éviter." (cnrtl.fr)
4. **mettre les pieds dans le plat** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. Partial equivalence

The two idioms are partially equivalent due to additional constituent in the translated French idiom and that is *dans le plat* (eng. *in the plate*). Also, in English, the body part is in the singular (*one's foot*) whereas in French it is in plural (*les pieds*).

## HAIR

**(23) a hair's breadth**

1. "*Enemy forces are within a hair's breadth of the city. - We were **a hair's breadth** away from getting caught.*" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 170)

2. "a very small distance or amount" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 170)
3. "À très peu de chose près" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **à un cheveu de quelque chose** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. partial equivalence

In both languages, the word *hair* stands for a very small distance or amount. However, there are slight differences in the overall structure. Idiomatic expression in French would literally be translated into English as *at the single hair of someone*. In conclusion, the equivalence between the two idioms is partial.

#### (24) **let one's hair down**

1. "It's nice to **let your hair down** once in a while and go a bit wild." (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 170)
2. "to relax and enjoy yourself without worrying what other people will think" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 170)
3. "Négliger ses affaires" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **se laisser aller** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. zero equivalence

There is no idiomatic expression with a body part which corresponds to English expression *let one's hair down*. *Se laisser aller* is a verbal expression composed of reflexive verb *se laisser* (eng. *to let*) and infinitive *aller* (eng. *to go*). It would be literally translated in English as *let yourself go*.

#### (25) **split hairs**

1. "*Let's not argue about whether we sold eleven million two hundred thousand or eleven million three hundred thousand. **That's splitting hairs!** The fact it, we haven't sold enough.*" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 222)
2. "talk or argue about irrelevant or unimportant differences or details" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 222)
3. "Subtiliser à l'excès" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **couper les cheveux en quatre** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. partial equivalence

The reason why two expressions are partial rather than complete equivalents is the additional element of *en quatre* (eng. *in four*) in corresponding French idiom.

## HAND

### (26) **catch someone red-handed**

1. "*Tom was stealing the car when the police drove by and **caught him red-handed.***" (Spears 2000: 65)
2. "to catch a person in the act of doing something wrong" (Spears 2000: 65)
3. "Prendre quelqu'un sur le fait; prendre quelqu'un en flagrant délit de vol ou en train de commettre un acte délictueux, répréhensible" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **prendre qqn la main dans le sac** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. Partial equivalence

In both languages idioms contain the body part *hand*, however, partially equivalent French expression has an additional element and that is *sac* (eng. *bag*). In English, we say to *catch somebody red-handed* whereas in French we *catch someone with hand in the bag*.

**(27) give someone a hand**

1. "*Will somebody please **give me a hand** with this?*" (Spears 2000 : 154)
2. "to help someone with someone or something" (Spears 2000 : 154)
3. "Aider quelqu'un" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **Donner la main à quelqu'un** (cnrtl.fr)
5. absolute equivalence

**(28) show one's hand**

1. "*If you want to get a raise, don't **show the boss your hand** too soon.*"  
(Spears 2006: 604)
2. "reveal one's intentions to someone" (Spears 2006: 604)
3. "agir franchement, loyalement, sans rien dissimuler." (cnrtl.fr)
4. **jouer cartes sur table** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. zero equivalence

Since, in French, there is no body part idiom with similar structure and lexical items which corresponds to *show one's hand*, there is zero equivalence between the two expressions. *Jouer cartes sur table* would literally mean to *play cards on the table*.

**HEAD****(29) bury your head in the sand**

1. "*Parents said bullying was being ignored, and accused the headmaster of **burying his head in the sand**.*" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 181)

2. "to refuse to think about an unpleasant situation, hoping that it will improve so that you will not have to deal with it" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 181)
3. "Nier l'évidence, chercher à se dissimuler l'imminence d'un danger ou la triste réalité en feignant l'incompréhension. " (cnrtl.fr)
4. **pratiquer la politique de l'autruche** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. zero equivalence

The literal translation of French idiom would be *to practice the politics of the ostrich*. Even though both expressions are connected with the bird ostrich, which buries its hand in the sand, they are examples of zero equivalence because French expression does not contain body parts and it is composed of completely different lexical items.

**(30) have one's head in the clouds**

1. "*Even though Luke is a poet and an idealist, he certainly does not have his **head in the clouds**.*" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 225)
2. "Be a dreamer, be out of touch with reality, idealistic, not practical." (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 225)
3. "Être rêveur, distrait, perdre le sens des réalités, vivre dans un autre monde. " (cnrtl.fr)
4. **avoir la tête dans les nuages** (cambridgedictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

**(31) keep a cool head**

1. "*Just **keep a cool head** in the examination tomorrow and you should be all right.*" (Spears 2000: 229)

2. "To stay calm in a difficult situation which is likely to cause a person to start panicking. " (Spears 2000: 229)
3. "rester calme et lucide" (cnrtl.com)
4. **garder sa tête froide** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

## HEART

### (32) **break one's heart**

1. "*He **broke my heart.** But I'll never forgive him.*" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 184)
2. "to make someone who loves you very sad, especially by saying them you do not love them any more. " (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 184)
3. "accabler de douleur, affliger profondément" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **briser le cœur de quelqu'un** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

### (33) **to have heart of gold**

1. "*She'll do anything for anyone - she's got **a heart of gold.***" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 185)
2. "to be extremely kind and helpful" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 185)
3. "être généreux" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **avoir un cœur d'or** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

**(34) lose heart**

1. "Now, *don't lose heart. Keep trying!*" (Spears 2000: 254)
2. "to lose one's courage or confidence" (Spears 2000: 254)
3. "perdre courage" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **se décourager** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. zero equivalence

Since there is no idiomatic expression that expresses a loss of courage in French there is no equivalence between the two expressions. In French, there is a separate reflexive verb to express the mentioned state: *se décourager* meaning to discourage oneself.

**HEEL****(35) dig your heels in**

1. "*We suggested it would be quicker to fly, but she dug her heels in and insisted on taking the train.*" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 188)
2. "to refuse to do what other people are trying to persuade you to do, especially to refuse to change your opinions or plans" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 188)
3. "s'entêter dans l'opposition, s'obstiner." (cnrtl.fr)
4. **se braquer** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. zero equivalence

In the French language, there is no body idiom which corresponds to the English one. However, in French, there is a reflexive verb *se braquer* which has a similar meaning to the respective English idiom and that is to stay firm and not change one's opinion or attitude. (cnrtl.fr)

**(36) hard/hot on sb's heels**



1. "*She ran down the steps with a group of journalists **hard on her heels.***"  
(Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 188)
2. "if you are hard on someone's heels, you are following very close behind them, especially because you are trying to catch" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 188)
3. "Suivre quelqu'un de très " (cnrtl.fr)
4. **marcher sur les talons de quelqu'un** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. partial equivalence

The equivalence between the two idioms is partial. In both English and French idioms, body part which is used are *heels*. However, they differ in structure since in English there is the usage of adjectives *hot* or *hard* and in French translation, they are replaced by verb *marcher* meaning *walk*. Both of those different lexical items serve as a metaphor for being close to someone (while trying to catch them).

### (37) under the heel of someone

1. "*For nine years this isolated community lived **under the heel of China.***"  
(Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 188)
2. "dominated or controlled" (Siefring 2004: 141)
3. "sous la dépendance de quelqu'un" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **sous le(s) talon(s) de qqn**<sup>4</sup> (cnrtl.fr)
5. absolute equivalence

## LEG

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<sup>4</sup> In this expression, it is possible to use the word *le talon* (eng. *heel*) in both singular and plural.

**(38) be on its/one's last legs**

1. "*I don't think there's much we can do about repairing the television. After fifteen year it is **on its last legs**.*" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 227)
2. "be in a bad state, condition, close to breakdown, collapse or death" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 227)
3. "n'avoir plus rien à dire, être à bout de moyens, de ressources" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **être au bout du rouleau** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. zero equivalence

The two respective idiomatic expressions are zero equivalents since French idiom does not contain a body part. The literal translation of the mentioned expression would be to be *at the end of the roller*.

**(39) pull someone's leg**

1. "*Don't believe him. He's **just pulling your leg**.*" (Spears 2006: 524)
2. "to kid, fool, or trick someone" (Spears 2006: 524)
3. "exploiter la crédulité de quelqu'un pour se moquer de lui ou le tromper."  
" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **faire marcher** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. zero equivalence

There is no corresponding body part expression in French for *pulling someone's leg*. It can be translated by verbal expression *faire marcher* literally translated into English as to *make someone walk*. Even though both expressions are somehow related to legs, the equivalence between them is zero.

**NECK****(40) (to be) neck and neck**

1. "*The Republicans had a 30-point lead over the Democrats; today, the Democrats are **neck and neck** on what's supposed to be a bedrock conservative issue.* " (Siefring 2004: 198)
2. "level in a race, competition, or comparison" (Siefring 2004: 198)
3. "Dans une course, une compétition ou une élection, l'adjectif coude à coude désigne deux candidats ou deux animaux très proches, quasiment au même niveau. " (linternaute.fr)
4. **coude à coude** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. partial equivalence

The translated French expression is partially equivalent to English one due to the different choice of constituents. The expression *neck and neck*, denoting proximity, is translated into French as *coude à coude* meaning *elbow to elbow*.

**(41) risk your neck**

1. "*I'm not going to **risk my neck** climbing over a twenty-foot wall!*"  
(Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 267)
2. "to do something very dangerous" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 267)
3. "risquer sa vie" (linternaute.fr)
4. **risquer sa peau** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. partial equivalence

The only difference between the source and target - language expressions is the usage of different lexical items in terms of body parts. English word *neck* is replaced with French word *peau* meaning *skin*.

## NOSE

(42) **have a good nose**

1. "*Henry must **have a good nose** for antiques.*" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 229)
2. "Be good at detecting or discovering things." (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 229)
3. "Être capable de découvrir ce qui est tenu caché" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **avoir le nez fin** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

(43) **lead somebody by the nose**

1. "*They simply didn't know what they were doing and they were **led by the nose** by a manipulative government.*" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 273)
2. "to control someone and make them do exactly what you want them to do" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 273)
3. "faire faire à quelqu'un ce que l'on veut, avoir une grande influence sur quelqu'un" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **mener par le bout de nez** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. partial equivalence

The only element that makes the two expressions partial equivalents rather than total ones is the additional element *le bout* (eng. *the top*) in the French translation.

## SKIN

**(44) be skin and bone/bones**

1. "*We saw a few stray dogs that were nothing but **skin and bones**.*"  
(Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 356)
2. "to be extremely thin" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 356)
3. "Être très maigre" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **n'avoir que la peau sur les os** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. partial equivalence

Even though idioms in both languages have the same meaning and body parts as constituents - *skin and bones*, they differ in structure. A literal translation of French idiom would be *to have only skin on the bones*. The two idioms are partial equivalents.

**(45) jump out one's skin**

1. "*I suddenly heard a loud bang and nearly **jumped out of my skin**.*"  
(Seidl, McMordie 1998: 230)
2. "make a sudden uncontrolled movement out of fear or shock" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 230)
3. "Avoir un brusque mouvement du corps sous l'effet d'une intense émotion, d'un sentiment de menace" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **sursauter** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. zero equivalence

In French, there is a specific verb which is used to express surprise or shock and that is *sursauter*. Since the respective expressions are completely different in the two languages, they are considered zero equivalents.

## TEETH

(46) **grit your teeth**

1. "*I can't do anything to change the situation so I'll just have to **grit my teeth** and put up with it.*" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 385)
2. "to accept a difficult situation and deal with it in a determined way" (Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms 2002: 385)
3. "montrer de la fermeté dans l'adversité" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **serrer les dents** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

(47) **lie through one's teeth**

1. "*I knew she was **lying through her teeth**, but I didn't want to say so just then.*" (Spears 2000: 248)
2. "to lie boldly" (Spears 2000: 248)
3. "mentir effrontément" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **mentir comme un arracheur de dents** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. partial equivalence

The body part that is included in both source and target - language idiomatic expression related to lying is *teeth*. However, in French translation, there is the usage of lexeme *arracheur*. Namely, *arracheur de dents* refers to the ancient occupation of a "tooth puller"; thus the literary translation would be: *lie as a tooth puller*. These two expressions are examples of partial equivalents.

**(48) show one's teeth**

1. "*We thought Bob was meek and mild, but he really **showed his teeth** when Jack insulted his girlfriend.*" (Spears 2006: 604)
2. "to act in an angry or threatening manner" (Spears 2006: 604)
3. "menacer" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **montrer ses dents** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

**TONGUE****(49) be on the tip of one's tongue**

1. "*Now what's her name again? Wait it's **on the tip of my tongue.***" (Siefring 2004: 293)
2. "be almost but not quite able to bring a particular word or name to mind" (Siefring 2004: 293)
3. "être sur le point de s'en souvenir, de l'avoir naturellement à l'esprit, ou de l'écrire" (cnrtl.fr)
4. **être sur le bout de la langue** (collinsdictionary.com)
5. absolute equivalence

**(50) hold one's tongue**

1. "*I could have told my neighbour whose ball broke his kitchen window, but I thought it best to **hold my tongue.***" (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 231)
2. "say nothing, keep quiet". (Seidl, McMordie 1998: 231)
3. "se taire" (cnrtl.fr)

4. **tenir sa langue** (collinsdictionary.com)

5. absolute equivalence

## 9. RESEARCH RESULTS

The research was based on the analysis of fifty (50) English idiomatic expressions and their translations into French. Twenty-two (22) of those idioms were translated by total equivalents in the target language and seventeen (17) were examples of partial equivalence. Zero equivalence occurred in the translation of eleven (11) expressions. These results in percentage (%) are depicted in the figure below.

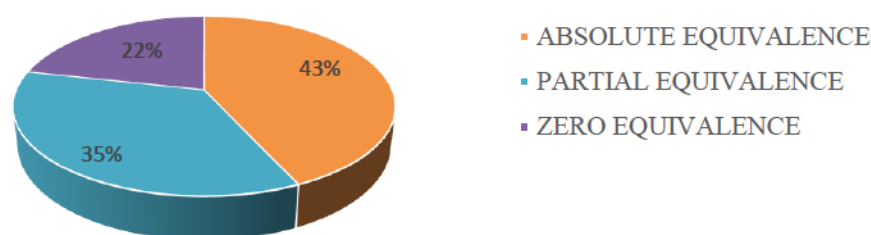


Figure 1 : The representation of the equivalence type in the translation of body idioms from English into French

## 10. CONCLUSION

This work sought to provide an insight into the translation of English body idioms into French. After the elaboration of fundamental phraseological and translational terminology, the focus was transferred to the translational analysis. The results of the research lead to the conclusion that most of the English idiomatic expressions with body parts can be translated by completely equivalent French expressions. A slightly smaller number of expressions was translated by



providing partially equivalent French expressions. An even lower percentage of expressions translated with zero equivalents serves as a demonstration of similarity of those two languages, considering, not only figurative language but also the structure and choice of lexemes. Those similarities are, as stated earlier, a result of the long history and mutual influence of the two respective languages. Finally, it can be observed that the hypothesis stated in the introduction was confirmed.

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## SUMMARY

This final paper focuses on the analysis of idiomatic expressions with body parts in English and French with an emphasis on the translation. Since the two languages have been historically related and greatly influenced one by another, the aim is to present how their lexical and syntactic similarities are visible in figurative language i.e. in the expressions with parts of the body. The first part of this work provides general terminology concerning phraseology and idioms and explains translation strategies and the relationship between two respective languages. Furthermore, the main part of the work consists of the analysis of the fifty (50) selected idiomatic expressions with a wide range of body parts and concludes with the results obtained by that analysis. Those results demonstrate how many expressions were translated by absolute, partial or, zero equivalents.

Key words : phraseology, idioms, body parts, translation, equivalence, English, French.

## SAŽETAK – IDIOMATSKI IZRAZI S DIJELOVIMA TIJELA U ENGLESKOM I FRANCUSKOM

Ovaj se završni rad fokusira na analizu idiomatskih izraza s dijelovima tijela u engleskom i francuskom jeziku s naglaskom na prijevod. S obzirom na to da su dva jezika povijesno povezana te da su u velikoj mjeri utjecali jedan na drugog, cilj je prikazati kako su njihove leksičke i sintaktičke sličnosti vidljive u figurativnom jeziku, tj. u izrazima s dijelovima tijela. Prvi dio ovog rada bavi se općom terminologijom frazeologije i idioma te objašnjava postupke prevođenja i odnos dvaju jezika. Nadalje, glavni dio rada čini analiza od pedeset (50) odabranih idiomatskih izraza sa širokim rasponom dijelova tijela, a završava s rezultatima koji su dobiveni tom analizom te pokazuju koliko je izraza prevedeno potpunim, djelomičnim ili nultim ekvivalentima.

Ključne riječi: frazeologija, idiomi, dijelovi tijela, prijevod, ekvivalentnost, engleski, francuski.