

## **TRANSLATION OF METAPHORS AND IDIOMS – MISSION IMPOSSIBLE<sup>1</sup>?**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to present the findings of an experiment with MA students in English Philology, carried out during the translations class included in their academic curriculum. The texts that we used for translating purposes were taken from the business press and they represented quite a novelty for the students, since they had previously received training only in literary translations during their BA studies. The analysis of students' work was made taking into account two methodological aspects: the linguistic dimension as well as the cultural one. During the explicit training throughout the semester, we analysed and translated texts by trying to frame them within the social, political and economic background of the countries where the articles were published. The findings revealed that although the students' linguistic competence was relatively advanced, their intercultural competence was still in need of improvement. In particular, the complex issues of equivalence and non-equivalence at above-the-word level were tackled as part of the course activities, especially collocations, idioms, and metaphors which are culture-bound by nature. An important outcome was the students' improvement in translation strategies awareness.

**Key words:** Business lexis; Linguistic competence; Intercultural competence; Translation competence; Figurative language.

### **1 Introduction**

It is well accepted by now that translation between two languages is very much a matter of cultural transfer and mediation. Developing translation competence in students is intrinsically connected with learning both the source language and the target language culture. According to Nida (1964), linguistic and cultural differences identifiable between the source language and the target language are equally important, and cultural clashes between the representatives of the respective groups are more difficult to handle by the translator than the differing linguistic structures or inherent patterns. The translation activity is dependent on a sound knowledge of both languages and cultures, people's traditions, rites, beliefs or behaviours. This is

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the reasons why educators, especially when it comes to training translators, have to develop appropriate programmes that aim at developing both linguistic and intercultural competences in the two languages, along with proactive attitudes, as well as sound knowledge of history, economy, and politics of the countries or ethnic groups involved.

At the Faculty of History and Philology, University of Alba Iulia, there exist BA and MA programmes in Romanian language and literature and English language and literature. During both BA and MA degree programmes, students have translations courses on their curricula. However, the focus of the programme is on developing the linguistic competence, while attempting, across the curriculum, to develop the intercultural competence, through various activities interspersed in the set syllabuses. The task of the translations instructor is so much more challenging, as the syllabus provides only two to four hours per week for this course. Students also need to develop translation competence and skills, alongside linguistic competence, which is taken to represent “knowledge of and ability to use, the formal resources from which well-formed, meaningful messages may be assembled and formulated” (CEFR 2001: 109). This linguistic competence, also different from the knowledge and skills required to cope with the social dimension of language use and/or the meaning and language use that account for the peculiarities of the speaker, the addressee and other contextual features is necessary, but not sufficient.

## **2 Literature Review**

Culture is inseparable from language, as we mentioned above. Along the same lines, Toury (1978) also mentioned that a translator is faced with at least two languages and two cultures / cultural traditions and patterns. The inherent cultural aspects that are found in a source text must be treated with utmost care in order to find the most appropriate rendering into the target language, employing the right techniques.

Although there exist very few studies on translation competence development, one should mention in this context, i.e. Campbell’s (1998) research based on applied linguistics methodologies. He analysed translation competence of non-native speakers’ translation from their mother tongue into English. His subjects were native speakers of Arabic, studying translation and interpretation at an Australian university. Following his data analysis and interpretation, Campbell designed a three-layered model of translation competence:

1) textual competence (the ability to produce TL texts with “structural features of formal, written English”) (p. 73). Evaluation benchmarks are nominalizations, type/token ratios, word length, passives, prepositional phrases, etc.;

2) disposition (translators’ behaviours in choosing different words when contracting TL texts). The parameters he advances are: persistent vs capitulating; and prudent vs risk-taking. Combinations of the above categories will create four types of disposition:

a) persistent and risk-taking;

- b) capitulating and risk-taking;
- c) persistent and prudent;
- d) capitulating and prudent;

3) monitoring competence, consisting of two sub-categories: self-awareness, and editing.

Nevertheless, this model overlooks the essential issue of translation equivalence (grammatical, semantic, pragmatic, cultural, etc.). In particular the cultural and pragmatic characteristics of different languages are extremely important, even for the very speakers of a certain language. A second model was designed by Sofer (1996), who brought forward ten commandments for professional translators:

1. A thorough knowledge of both SL and TL;
2. A thorough “at-homeness” in both cultures;
3. Keeping up with changes in the language and being up-to-date in all of its nuances and neologisms;
4. Always translating from another language into one’s native language;
5. Being able to translate in more than one area of knowledge;
6. Possessing ease of writing or speaking and the ability to articulate quickly and accurately, either orally or in writing;
7. Developing a good speed of translation;
8. Developing research skills, being able to retrieve reference sources needed in producing high quality translation;
9. Being familiar with the latest technological advances;
10. Being able to understand the type of potential one’s language specialty has in a certain geographic area. (pp. 33-37)

By comparing the two models, we can identify a certain down-to-earthiness, a propensity towards practical aspects of the translation profession, by highlighting in particular the personal skills that a translator should develop. Nevertheless, teachers also need to pay heed to the explicit ability to achieve equivalence at lexical, semantic, textual (discursive), pragmatic (c.f. Baker 1992), cultural level (c.f. Katan 2004) that a translator-to-be needs to develop.

Culture consists of explicit and implicit patterns of behaviour, which has been acquired and transmitted by symbols, thus accounting for the distinctive achievement of human groups, including embodiments in artefacts. The quintessential core of culture is made up of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) concepts and ideas, and especially their ensuing values. Culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as results or products of action, while on the other hand, they may represent conditioning elements of future action. I share the view that metaphoric and idiomatic expressions of a given culture empower us to understand how the members of that specific culture map out their experience of the world and record it into their mother tongue. It has been proved by researchers that culture influences metaphors and idioms in a significant way. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980:12), “a culture may be thought of as providing, among other things, a pool of available metaphors for making sense of reality”; and “to live by a metaphor is to have your reality structured by that metaphor and to base your

perceptions and actions upon that structuring of reality.” The premise of these two forefathers of the “conceptual metaphor” theory is that metaphor is not only a stylistic feature of language but that *thought* itself is metaphorical in nature. The conceptual structure is therefore based on correspondences or *mappings* between conceptual domains. These mappings work in a natural way, as some of them are already imprinted in the human mind emerging from background cultural knowledge, in the shape of different similarities between concepts. It has also been stated that metaphors and idioms are intrinsically related to culture as they mirror culture-bound aspects. Different researchers (Lakoff, & Johnson 1980, Lakoff, & Turner 1989, Brown 2003, Reeves 2005) hold that metaphors are essential for our perception of reality, helping us apprehend new concepts by using familiar domains. These are used to explain an unknown situation when other linguistic devices prove powerless or at least insufficient. Maasen and Weingart (1995:9) define metaphors as “messengers of meaning”, a phrase which can be likewise assigned to idioms as they both describe complex entities in condensed form.

According to Avădanei (1994:16) metaphor is present in “absolutely all perceived dimensions of human existence” being not a matter of words but rather conceptual in nature. This is the primary mechanism through which we comprehend abstract concepts and perform abstract reasoning. Metaphors, as already stated by Lakoff (1993: 245) “allow us to understand a relatively abstract or inherently unstructured subject matter in terms of a more concrete or at least more highly structured subject matter.”

In Chițoran’s view (1973: 69-70), there are cultural differences between speakers of different communities, which need to be taken into considerations, especially when these speakers / language users come in contact.

the differences in environment, climate, cultural development, etc., among various communities may be extremely significant, but basically, human societies are linked by a common biological history. The objective reality in which they live is definitely not identical but it is by and large similar (Chițoran 1973: 69-70).

Nevertheless, our world is made up of things, and we deal with them on a daily basis, we need to communicate about them, and to position ourselves in relation to these things, people or objects. This represents a characteristic that is typical of all human societies, and therefore different language systems are not exactly untranslatable, as the perception of human reality is characteristic of all humans regardless of the culture they belong to.

With reference to translation of metaphor, an interesting theory is provided by Nili Madelblit (1996), i.e. the ‘Cognitive Translation Hypothesis’, according to which we can identify two types of conditions in the translation process: Similar Mapping Condition (SMC) and Different Mapping Condition (DMC). Madelblit (1996: 493) states that “the difference in reaction time is due to a conceptual shift that the translator is required to make between the conceptual mapping systems of the source and target languages”, and this is the reason why metaphorical expressions are more complicated and time-consuming to translate if they resort to a different

cognitive domain as compared to that of the equivalent expression in the target language. That is to say, a translator's task becomes more difficult and lengthy when they have to look for a different conceptual mapping (a different cognitive domain) for a metaphorical expression. A different cognitive equivalent for metaphors in SL that has to be identified in the TL makes the translator's job so much more intricate, and the result, in the second situation of different mapping condition, may very rarely be a metaphor. Most often, it is a paraphrase, a simile, a footnote (the translator's explanation of the concept, or altogether omitted).

### **3 Research Methodology**

Starting from the assumption that translation of metaphors and idioms still may be possible, I hold that only by delving into the cultural peculiarities and conceptual mind-sets of the source and target language, and by understanding similarities and differences in the two cultures, this may be achieved.

For the purposes of this paper, I will only present one article from the translation experiment I carried out with the MA students in English Language and Literature, 1<sup>st</sup> year, as part of their course in Translation Theory and Practice. The 15 informants were all at an upper-intermediate to advanced English language proficiency, some of them already teachers of English (5), and 9 of them already held a translator's licence (obtained from the Ministry of Justice), although none was a professional translator. In Romania, one can become a certified translator (with a licence from the Ministry of Justice) upon completion of BA studies in English Philology, or upon successful passing of an examination with the Ministry of Culture. The experiment consisted in selecting 7 relevant articles in Romanian and 7 in English, assigning the students to do the translation individually, then collecting the translations, analysing them from a cultural transfer perspective, and re-doing the translation as a collective work during class. The results were then interpreted individually by the students, who tried to explain the problematic issues that they encountered. The teacher made initially a hand-coded identification of metaphors and "unusual" phrases or expressions, and then compared them with the students' own list of these idiomatic expressions. Annex 1 presents one text that we translated from English into Romanian and some of the results obtained from the students' own translations will be presented in this article. The teacher's own list of figurative language is presented in bold characters.

The experiment that I undertook was the result of the problem statement that students of English language and literature still have difficulties in translating cultural concepts from one language into another. The issues at stake in this case are whether:

- there exist universals and particulars in metaphorical and idiomatic language in business English and Romanian, in particular in journalese (the genre that was handiest for us to analyse);

- the correspondence, equivalence and non-equivalence in translating the business press from English into Romanian and vice versa are accessible to MA students and whether they are familiar with the appropriate translation strategies;
- there are differences in the informants' translations of the same texts and the reasons for similarities or variances;
- the translation strategies employed by the students were correct and yielded appropriate results;
- the teacher may come up with recommendations and good practice as to the translation strategies used in the case of figurative business language.

#### 4 Results and Interpretation

The text that I will present below was published in the print edition of *The Economist*, 5 February 2009. It is a text that made reference to the economic crisis that hit the whole world at that time, and it presents the economic and social reality of the United States of America. The challenge posed by this article to Romanian students is this very reference to a reality that they were not familiar with and that was linguistically rendered, in particular by the American society.

From the very outset, the title “paying the piper”<sup>2</sup> is an idiom that conjures up a story that Romanian kids are not very familiar with. In order for the students to understand the underlying meaning of “paying the piper” we watched the beginning of the children’s movie and explained that story, and more importantly, the moral behind it.

Seven of the students managed to use a Romanian idiom, “după faptă și răsplată”, while two used the expression to bear the consequences (which is correct, but not idiomatic), four employed phrases containing the verb *to pay* or the noun *payment*. Sadly, two students preferred to leave it out altogether and gave no translation to the title.

Table 1 Semantic rendering of the title “Paying the piper”

după faptă și răsplată <sup>3</sup> (Romanian idiom)	bear the consequences <sup>4</sup>	phrase containing to pay/payment	no translation
7	2	4	2

The next challenging expression was “capping the non-equity based remuneration of executives”, which made reference to the corporate practice in the United States at that time to compensate the executives for the bad performance of the company, as a result of the generalised crisis. As non-business students, they lacked the specialist

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<sup>2</sup> pay the piper – idiom, to face the results of one’s actions; to receive punishment for something.

<sup>3</sup> any deed will have consequences.

<sup>4</sup> accept responsibility for the negative results or effects of one’s choice or action.

knowledge in economic phenomena to understand that non-equity referred to something else than justice, which was the denotative meaning of their dictionary.

Nevertheless, eight students managed to understand the meaning (later on I learned that they had reliable mono- and bilingual dictionaries), although the rendering into Romanian sounded rather awkward. Even the verb “to cap<sup>5</sup>” was mistakenly translated by the majority of the students (to forge, to break, to stop, etc.). The noun “executives” was translated in most cases as “executivi”, although this word is not completely adopted by the contemporary Romanian language, and is used preponderantly in business jargone. The management theory in Romanian uses the syntagm “manageri de vârf”, or “directori executivi”. One translation was “executive”, which would be the Romanian plural, feminine form, which is completely erroneous in the context, probably assignable to a mere typo.

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1 „parasutisti”. Oprirea cresterii excesive a remunerarii neechitabile pentru  
 conducatorii companiilor c  
 2 arile, altele decat cele de capital bazate pe remuneratia directorilor din companiile  
 care primesc „asi  
 3 il-out-uri noi. Limitand inegalitatea bazata pe remuneratia executivelor in companii  
 primind o „asistenta  
 4 mai noi in situatia de a falimenta. Falsificand remuneratia non-echitabila a  
 directorilor de companii care  
 5 oilor cautionari. A cresta / fisura salarizarea/remuneratiei nebazata pe capital a  
 directorilor executivi d  
 6 ment. Limitarea la 500.000 \$ pe an a salariului/remuneratiei ce nu se bazeaza pe  
 capital al directorilor  
 7 mai pentru cautiunile noi. Plafonarea salariilor/remuneratiei directorilor companiilor  
 alta decat in instru  
 8 Stoparea remuneratiei executivilor bazate pe inechitate in companii  
 9 ntru sprijinurile financiare recente. Limitarea remuneratiei inegale a managerilor de  
 varf din cadrul comp  
 10 spat eliberati / scosi din impas. Plafonarea remuneratiei nebazata pe capital a  
 directorilor in compani  
 11 prima data probleme financiare. Plafonarea remuneratiei nereferitoare la capital,  
 pentru directorii d  
 12 ati salvate de greutatile financiare. Plafonarea remuneratiei non-capitaluri de  
 executivi in companii care  
 13 neficiat recent de ajutor financiar. Plafonarea remuneratiei non-equity-based a  
 directorilor in companii c  
 14 de aceste ajutoare financiare. Aplicarea altei remuneratii decat cea de capital  
 pentru directori in compa  
 15 ar pentru noii garantii. Limitand neechitatea remuneratiilor directorilor din companii  
 care primesc „asi

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Fig. 1 Translations of “capping the non-equity-based remuneration<sup>6</sup> of executives”

As can be seen from the figure above, out of the 15 informants, one left the term in English, not knowing what *non-equity-based remuneration* means, and six perceived *non-equity* as *inequity*, eight understood that equity refers to the “value of the shares issued by a company”, although the rendering in Romanian was rather unclear in most of the cases (e.g. which is not based/unbased on capital; applying a different remuneration from that of capital, etc.).

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<sup>5</sup> to cap v. to prevent from growing or spreading: set an upper limit on sth.

<sup>6</sup> *equity-based compensation* – stock or pseudo stock programs an employer uses to provide actual or perceived ownership in the company which ties an employee's compensation to the long-term success of the company. The most common examples are stock options.

Table 2. Semantic rendering of the expression “non-equity-based remuneration”

inequity	stock or pseudo stock programs	no translation
6	8	1
1 incorrect lexical rendering	7 unclear renderings	English version

As can be seen in Figure 2 below, *executives* in the expression “failed executives” was translated as “directors” – 11 cases, “managers” – 2 instances, no translation in one case. *Failed* was translated as “shipwrecked” (3), “bankrupt” (3), “broken down” (1), “fallen down” (1), “in danger” (1), “unsuccessful” (1), “laid off” (1), “incompetent” (1), “about to drown” (1), “crumbled” (1), no translation (1). At times I had the impression that students were using Google Translate™ for their translations (which I obviously could not prove), as words/phrases which were used metaphorically were left untranslated, but the pre-position of the adjective “failed” is not typical for the Romanian speaker (in Romanian, adjectives are usually post-positioned). Moreover, the phrase “golden parachutes<sup>7</sup>” was mostly translated word-for-word (rather inaccurately, as the figurative load of the business idiom was lost).

1	interzicerea „parasutelor de aur” pentru managerii care au esuat probabil va fi
2	interzicerea beneficiilor compensatorii in cazul directorilor falimentari este posibil
3	si a bonusurilor pentru directorii care au esuat ar putea părea celor mai mulți dintre
4	interzicerea platilor compensatorii pentru managerii companiilor falimentare este
5	interzicerea „parasutelor de aur” pentru directorii prabusiti, sunt de natură să
6	interzicerea pachetelor de plăți compensatorii pentru directorii falimentari este
7	iterzicand „parasutele aurite/de aur” pentru directorii care clacheaza este de natura
8	interzicerea „colacilor de salvare” pentru directorii in pericol este perceputa
9	a interzice / bloca „parasute de aur” pentru directorii executivi care au decazut ar
10	interzicerea „parasutelor de aur” pentru failed directorii probabil vor fi simtite
11	interzicerea „colacului de salvare” pentru directorii concediati in urma preluarii firmei vor fi percepute
12	interzicerea acordării beneficiilor pentru directori incompetenți este probabil consi
13	oferind „parasutele de aur” pentru executivele fara success este ca si cand ai lovi
14	interzicerea „parasute de aur” pentru directori esuati e posibil sa lovească majoritatea americanilor ca
15	interzicerea „colacilor de salvare” pentru cei care sunt pe cale sa se inece este p

Fig. 2 Translations of “failed executives” and “golden parachutes”

Table 3. Translation of “failed”

bankrupt	shipwrecked	other	no translation
3	3	8	1
		laid off	
		incompetent	
		unsuccessful	
		about to drown	
		fallen down / debased	
		in danger	
		who had a breakdown	

<sup>7</sup> a generous severance agreement for a corporate executive in the event of a sudden dismissal (as because of a merger).

The phrasal verb “bail out”<sup>8</sup> is even trickier for a translator, as it is used with a double meaning – the denotative meaning of *jumping out of a plane*, and being financially *saved from disaster*. In the text under scrutiny, the noun form was used – *bail-outs* in order to refer to the executives who have been rescued from a difficult situation. As can be seen in the figure below, students did not fully understand the meaning of the phrase in the broader socio-economic context. The most frequent translation strategy was that of explicitation, in six cases with “the ones who...”, in one instance with the English term being left as such (untranslated). Only four subjects grasped the idea of executives rescued from a difficult situation. Four instances referred only to financial help/support, while three translations referred to the more specialised meaning of “bail out”, i.e. to set (a person) free by giving such money to a court of law, e.g. the new guarantors. There was one semantic error – “the new reimbursements” and one hypernym of *bail-outs*, i.e. the companies for which these people used to work (“entities saved from financial hurdles”), and one attempt at a metaphor, which is actually senseless in Romanian, i.e. “parachuters”.

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1	ape 400,000 de dolari, iar regulile vor fi aplicate si <b>viitorilor „parasutisti”</b> .
2	de dolari si ca regulile se vor aplica numai <b>noilor salvati de la faliment</b> .
3	400.000\$ iar regulile se vor aplica doar pentru <b>sprijinurile financiare recente</b> .
4	se vor aplica doar <b>celor care au beneficiat recent de aceste ajutoare financiare</b> .
5	doar 400,000 dolari si normele se vor aplica doar pentru <b>noii garantii</b> .
6	dolari si regulile se vor aplica doar <b>celor mai noi in situatia de a falimenta</b> .
7	Obama insusi castiga 400.000\$ si regulile se vor aplica doar <b>noilor cautionari</b> .
8	ile vor fi puse in aplicare doar pentru <b>cei proaspat eliberati / scosi din impas</b> .
9	astiga doar 400.000 dolari, si normele se vor aplica numai pentru <b>cautiunile noi</b> .
10	entariile se vor aplica doar <b>celor care au beneficiat recent de ajutor financiar</b> .
11	gulile urmeaza fi aplicate doar <b>noilor entitati salvate de greutatile financiare</b> .
12	400.000 dolari si regulile se vor aplica numai la <b>bail-out-uri noi</b> .
13	regulile se vor aplica doar <b>celor care au pentru prima data probleme financiare</b> .
14	se vor aplica doar <b>celor care au beneficiat recent de aceste ajutoare financiare</b> .
15	400.000 de dolari si faptul ca normele se vor aplica numai la <b>noile rambursari</b> .

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Fig. 3. Translation of “new bail-outs”

In the following I will present the results of the translation made by students of the expression “to curb fat-cat salaries”. In two instances, “to curb”<sup>9</sup> was translated with an idiom (Rom. locuțiune verbală) “a ține în frâu” (literally “hold the reins of huge salaries”). This represents an interesting strategy, when a mere verb in the SL is translated through a metaphorical expression in the TL. Otherwise, the verb was translated as can be seen below (Fig. 3 and Table 4). While “to cut” may be understandable, as salaries is usually associated in the collective mind with this verb, it is unexplainable why one student translated it as “to polish”.

Table 4. Translation of “to curb”

idiom	to reduce / to lower	to limit	to control	other
2	5	4	2	2
				to cut
				to polish

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<sup>8</sup> *bail out* v. phr. 1. to jump out of a plane that is going to crash; 2. to escape from a situation that you no longer want to be involved in; *bail sb out of sth* to rescue somebody from a difficult situation.  
<sup>9</sup> to control or limit sth that is not wanted.

“Fat cat salaries<sup>10</sup>” was also translated as follows: three times *swollen*, four times as *big*, two as *huge*, one as *whopping*, one *fat*, and in one instance the phrase was left intact, post-positioned, and in three cases there was no translation (in general, salaries was followed by another noun in the genitive case (e.g. of the rich men, of the privileged).

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1	când un președinte a încercat să țină în frâu salariile uriașe a fost în anul
2	dată când un președinte a încercat să reducă salariile umflate a fost în 1993,
3	oară când un președinte a încercat să limiteze salariile babane a fost în 1993
4	dată când un președinte a încercat să micșoreze salariile uriașe a fost în 199
5	dată când un președinte a încercat să controleze salariile foarte „grase” a fos
6	presedinte a încercat să tina în frau salariile umflate a fost în 1993, cand Bi
7	un președinte a încercat să limiteze salariile mari a fost în 1993, cand Bill
8	presedinte a încercat să taie salariile bogatasilor a fost în 1993, cand Bill
9	când un președinte a încercat să reducă salariile umflate a fost în 1993, cand
10	președinte a încercat să controleze salariile persoanelor privilegiate a fost în
11	când un președinte a încercat să slefuiască salariile a fost în 1993, cand Bill
12	când un președinte a încercat să reducă salariile fat-cat a fost în 1993, când
13	un președinte a încercat să reducă salariile mari a fost în 1993, cand Bill
14	când un președinte a încercat să limiteze salariile mari a fost în 1993, cand
15	un președinte a încercat să limiteze salariile mari a fost în 1993, când Bill

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Fig. 4 Translations of “curb fat cat salaries”

For reasons of space, I will only concentrate on yet another difficult sentence: “Perks were devised that got around<sup>11</sup> the cap<sup>12</sup>”. In the following I will give the translations provided by the students, of whom, unfortunately, only a few managed to understand the real meaning.

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1	Beneficiile acordate au fost astfel stabilite că s-au depășit așteptările
2	Câștigurile suplimentare au fost astfel gândite încât să ocolească limita de
3	buget
4	Câștigurile suplimentare erau astfel ticluite încât să treacă de limitare
5	Beneficiile au fost înțelept planificate astfel încât să se încadreze în
6	limitele plafoanelor
7	Beneficiile au fost împărțite,
8	Avantajele au fost concepute încât să influențat...
9	Creșterile exacerbate au fost divizate astfel încât să s-au redus la
10	“înflorire/creștere”
11	Castigurile suplimentare au fost concepute ...
12	Indemnizatiile speciale au fost concepute care that got around the cap
13	S-au gasit beneficii care au ocolit plafoanele
14	Câștigurile suplimentare au fost concepute să ocolească limita/plafonul
15	Beneficiile au fost împartite în așa fel încât să limiteze suma de bani ce
16	va fi cheltuită
17	Ridicările au fost divizate în jurul valorii de capac
18	Beneficiile au fost înțelept planificate astfel încât să ocolească plafoanele
19	Indemnizatiile speciale au fost concepute să fie acordate celor “mari”

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Fig. 5 Translations of “Perks were devised that got around the cap”

The past participle in “were devised” was translated as “established”, “thought out”, “planned” (2), “conceived” (5), “concocted”, “found”, and unfortunately, as “divided” (4), which proved that those students did not understand the difference between *devise* and *divide*.

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<sup>10</sup> unreasonably high salaries and bonuses.

<sup>11</sup> to find a way of dealing with a problem or of avoiding it.

<sup>12</sup> a limit on the amount of money that someone can spend or charge.

The phrasal verb “get around the cap” was correctly translated in only four cases out of 15, and in one instance, the word “budget” was not exactly appropriate to the context (see Table 5 below).

Table 5. Translations of “got around the cap”

the limit was avoided	distorted meaning	other translation	no translation	untranslated English version
4	2	6	2	1
	- to remain within limit	- that went beyond expectations		
	- to limit the sum of money that will be spent	- to be given to the “big ones” - were reduced to an increase - were divided - divided the lid value - that they influenced		

### 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

With reference to the five questions that underlie the current research, the following may be stated:

1. There exist universals and particulars in metaphorical and idiomatic language in business English and Romanian, in particular in journalese. In the case of universals, the translation of metaphors is much easier than in the case when the domains are different in the two languages.
2. Translation-theory related correspondence, equivalence and non-equivalence in translating the business press from English into Romanian and vice versa are in general terms accessible to MA students, although they still need extensive practice in order to become more familiar with the appropriate translation strategies.
3. There were clear differences in the informants’ translations of the same texts. The reasons for similarities and variances were assignable to the mental processes that they carried out in order realise transfer from one conceptual mapping to a different one.
4. The translation strategies employed by the students were most of the time not correct and the results were not the ones expected by the teacher. Cultural substitution was achieved in less than 50% of the cases, while 40% of the translations were realised through paraphrase. Word-for-word translation was also employed, as well as omission. However, in many cases, I was confronted with the lack of specific linguistic knowledge of the students.
5. The teacher’s task of making translation strategies more familiar and accessible to students and equipping them with adequate knowledge and skills needed in the process of intercultural transfer is by no means an easy one. Teachers may come up with recommendations and good practice as to the translation strategies used in the case of figurative business language, but only after explicit training and plenty of practice. The classroom work is not sufficient, and this needs to be complemented with specific practice, especially in communicational settings.

As for recommendations for further research and applications, given the fact that all languages are culture-bound, students need to be made aware of the fact that precedence should be given to the target culture before translating one term from the SL into the TL. Students also have to understand that using different translation strategies might be needed, so that sometimes paraphrasing might be a good solution for rendering a culture-specific concept.

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**Annex 1****Executive pay****Paying the piper**

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**Will Barack Obama's reform of executive pay work?**

CREATING political theatre by **cracking down on executive pay** may prove to be the easy part for Barack Obama. Coming up with a sensible and effective way to compensate senior managers at companies bailed out by the American taxpayer will be far trickier—and the new president's first effort, unveiled on February 4th, is unlikely to be his last.

**Capping the non-equity-based remuneration of executives** in companies receiving “exceptional assistance” at \$500,000 a year and banning “**golden parachutes**” for **failed executives** is likely to strike most Americans as fair, or even generous, given that Mr Obama himself earns a mere \$400,000 and the rules will apply only to **new bail-outs**. Indeed, after the outrageous payment of billions of dollars in bonuses by Wall Street firms that had survived only because many more **billions had been injected into them** by the government, the executives should probably be grateful for getting off so lightly. Moreover, executives will be allowed grants of restricted stock (which they cannot sell until the taxpayer is repaid), so they may yet end up making a fortune.

Last time a president tried to **curb fat-cat salaries** was in 1993, when Bill Clinton signed a law restricting the tax deductibility of executive pay to \$1m. This merely prompted a **burst of creativity**. Perks were devised that **got around the cap**, and there was a boom in paying executives with shares and options that, thanks to the **bull stockmarket** of the 1990s, made everybody far wealthier than they would have been using the old pay formulae.

Mr Obama has the dubious advantage of trying to cap pay amid a severe economic downturn, rising unemployment and structural changes in finance that will reduce pay anyway. A recent study of Wall Street pay, carried out by Thomas Philippon and Ariell Reshef for the National Bureau of Economic Research, found several periods during 1909–2006 when **remuneration plunged**, and argued that now could be another such period.

Nonetheless, even in these tough times, talented bankers are likely to find opportunities elsewhere that promise far more than \$500,000. And even those that do not leave may simply choose to work less hard, says Alan Johnson, a pay consultant. As a result the new rules may weaken the management of rescued banks—just as low pay arguably weakened regulation and helped cause the financial crisis.

Will Mr Obama's message to bosses that they have “got responsibilities not **to live high on the hog**” lead to restraint in executive pay more broadly? Ira Kay of Watson Wyatt, a pay consultant, thinks it might, because rising pay on Wall Street in recent years led to higher pay elsewhere—a trend that may now operate in reverse.

In the long run, the more significant change may be Mr Obama's decision to give American shareholders a vote on executive compensation, through a “say on pay” resolution. A vote is certainly more sensible than a **crude** government limit—especially if it is extended to all public companies, not just those bailed out by Uncle Sam. A similar reform is reckoned to have made at least some difference in Britain, and not before time.