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TABLE OF CONTENTS**CHALLENGES IN VALUATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES****Marko Stojanoski, Miljan Adamović, Stefan Milojević 4****INNOVATIVE ESP VOCABULARY TEACHING STRATEGIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON LANGUAGE LEARNING****Ionela Ionițiu 10****FROM LANGUAGE TEACHING TO LEARNING THROUGH LANGUAGE: TEACHING ITALIAN AS A VEHICLE OF KNOWLEDGE****Natalina Hoti 17****THE JURISPRUDENCE OF ALBANIAN CONSTITUTIONAL COURT: THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN DISPUTE****Klajdi Mone 23****ASPECTS OF LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL EQUIVALENCE IN LITERARY TRANSLATION****Eralda Bushati, Viktor Ristani 29**

Challenges in Valuation of Small Businesses

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Abstract

This paper aims to thoroughly examine the specific challenges accompanying the process of small businesses' valuation, with a special focus on their differences compared to large corporations and public joint-stock companies. The analysis covers key factors that hinder objective valuation, including the limited availability of reliable financial data, strong dependence of business performance on key individuals in management roles, low market liquidity, and the presence of subjective assessments in financial reports. The paper aims to provide deeper insight into the challenges faced by businesses' valuation professionals, investors, and business decision-makers, and to offer concrete recommendations for enhancing the methodological reliability and relevance of small business valuation.

Keywords: small businesses, valuation, specificities, challenges.

1. Introduction

The issue of small businesses' valuation has attracted the attention of various authors (Hitchner, 2020; Trugman, 2017; Pratt & Niculita, 2008; Damodaran, 2012). Valuation of small businesses represents a crucial segment of modern corporate financial management, especially in the context of dynamic market changes and increasingly frequent transactions involving entrepreneurial entities (Damodaran, 2012; Hitchner, 2020). Although small businesses often lack publicly available information or standardized reporting practices, their valuation is of great significance for owners and potential investors, as well as for financial institutions, tax authorities, and strategic partners (Trugman, 2017).

Accurately determining value enables informed decision-making in the context of sales, purchases, mergers, inheritance, capital raising, or internal restructuring (Pratt & Niculita, 2008). At the same time, valuation can serve as an instrument for improving business transparency, establishing financial discipline, and identifying growth and development potential. In today's economy, where small businesses form the foundation of economic activity in many countries, reliable valuation becomes an essential tool for risk management and the creation of sustainable business strategies (OECD, 2019).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operate in the same environment as larger businesses but without the accompanying advantages such as adequate capital and extensive human resources. SMEs face increased competitive pressure driven by globalization, legislation, and eased trade barriers, as well as market expansion due to new technologies and innovations (Berry, 2002). While small and medium businesses often excel in adaptability and agility, such as their proximity to customers, openness to new work methods, and risk-taking approach, many micro, small, and medium enterprises are highly susceptible to external shocks (Smit & Watkins, 2012). Although SMEs experience difficulties in absorbing and resolving these disruptions, they must develop the ability to cope with increasing challenges and organizational risks. Indeed, SME owner-managers need to elevate the importance of identifying and minimizing risk in their organizations or risk suffering catastrophic consequences if poorly prepared for potential threats. As Schultz points out, entrepreneurs in small and medium businesses must be familiar with risk identification and analysis to manage risks from various sources (Schultz, 2001). By integrating risk management into their operations, SMEs are better equipped to utilize their resources, thereby enabling them to transform expense-driven activities into ones that generate positive returns. According to Gordon (1994), the essence of corporate governance lies not in maximizing market value, but in ensuring the company's long-term survival. This survival probability can only be increased through a carefully designed investment policy.

1. Definitions of Small Businesses in the EU and USA

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs; also SMBs) are highly relevant to understanding the dynamics of family-owned businesses. Although the term SME is used synonymously worldwide, there is no universally accepted definition. The acronym SME is used by international organizations such as the World Bank, the European Union, the United Nations, and the World Trade

Organization. Geographic location and national legislation significantly influence the specific definitions of SMEs (Simonović et al., 2019, p. 37).

SMEs are considered especially important drivers of economic development and represent a large, diverse, and essential sector globally, being the most significant contributors to national economic growth. Undoubtedly, these businesses are the driving force behind the European economy and the main focus of the European Commission, which seeks to promote entrepreneurship and improve the business environment for SMEs through its policies. Nine out of every ten businesses in Europe are SMEs, and they generate two out of every three jobs. The EU's chief executive, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, stated: "SMEs are the backbone of our economy, creating more than 85% of new jobs in Europe, and we must relieve them from burdensome regulations."

Within the European Union's legislative framework, small businesses are defined according to the European Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC as entities that employ fewer than 50 workers, have an annual turnover not exceeding €10 million, or possess total assets of up to €10 million. To be classified as a "small" business, the enterprise must also be independent, meaning that it is not owned (25% or more) by a larger enterprise or public body, except in specific cases. This definition is primarily applied for statistical purposes, but also forms the basis for determining eligibility for state incentives, tax breaks, and preferential access to financing sources (European Commission, 2020).

In contrast, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) applies a more flexible approach tailored to the specifics of each economic sector. The criteria include the number of employees (up to 500 for most manufacturing companies) or annual revenue not exceeding \$41.5 million, depending on the industry, whether services, retail, construction, or others. The SBA regularly updates these thresholds in accordance with inflation and market changes, thereby enabling a wider range of business entities to qualify as small businesses and gain access to various support programs. In practice, this definition allows a significantly broader spectrum of firms to qualify as small businesses, directly impacting eligibility for government support programs, public procurement, and tax benefits (Tuller, 2008).

The small family-owned business remains one of the most common types of businesses worldwide, and the survival and protection of these enterprises, especially in developing countries, are vital for national economic development. A significant portion of small businesses are indeed small enterprises. In Serbia, unlike in developed countries, the notion of family business is often associated with necessity due to high unemployment and the struggle to secure livelihoods. Typically, this refers to small-scale operations such as craft shops, bakeries, and convenience stores, where most (or all) family members play a role in the business (Mašović et al., 2017, p. 89).

What differentiates Serbia from other countries is the perception of family businesses. While globally, such enterprises represent the foundation of economic development and are nurtured to grow into large companies, in Serbia, they are often seen as a necessity resulting from unemployment and economic hardship. Family businesses in Serbia are generally understood as small-scale ventures across all sectors — craft shops, bakeries, and corner stores, where all family members contribute. Understanding the nature of agency costs and investment risks faced by small family businesses allows for the creation of appropriate financial policies, improved protection of minority investors, and increased risk awareness. This approach supports the sustainable development of these enterprises. At the same time, investment risk assessment helps creditors and investors better evaluate the level of risk these businesses are exposed to, thereby facilitating more informed decisions regarding financial support (Harith & Samujh, 2020).

2. Key Characteristics of Small Businesses

Small businesses possess a number of characteristics that clearly distinguish them from medium-sized and large enterprises, not only in terms of size but also in terms of management structure, business processes, access to capital, and market position (Trugman, 2017). One of the fundamental traits of small businesses is the concentration of ownership and management. In most cases, the owner also serves as the manager, enabling agility in decision-making and rapid market adaptation. However, this role concentration also leads to a high dependence on a single individual, which creates additional risks, particularly in the context of succession, illness, or the departure of a key person (Pratt & Niculita, 2008). Limited access to sources of financing represents another characteristic of small businesses. They most often rely on their capital, loans from family and friends, or short-term borrowing. Access to institutional sources of funding, such as banks, investment funds, or capital markets, is often difficult due to a lack of collateral, financial statements, or credit history (Fazzini, 2018).

Small and medium-sized enterprises are drivers of economic development. According to data from May of last year, SMEs in Serbia contributed to one-third of the total gross domestic product and employed 630,000 people, accounting for 44% of registered employees. A large proportion of these are family-owned businesses. In Serbia, there is no integrated database (at least not publicly available) that identifies which businesses are family-owned and how many of them fall into the small, medium, or large enterprise categories. Furthermore, it would be highly beneficial to have a registry of businesses classified by industry or other relevant criteria. Given the importance of these enterprises for the development of any economy, establishing such a registry is an urgent necessity (Adamović et al., 2022).

Management in small firms often relies on informal processes. Unlike large organizations with clearly defined procedures and hierarchical structures, small enterprises operate through informal arrangements and interpersonal relationships. This fosters

flexibility but can lead to operational weaknesses and difficulties in control (Hitchner, 2020). Market constraints and local orientation are also common traits. Small businesses typically operate at the local or regional level, relying on the stability of local demand, personal relationships with customers, and their established reputation. This focus makes them more vulnerable to changes in the immediate business environment (OECD, 2019).

Nevertheless, despite the challenges mentioned, small businesses exhibit significant flexibility and innovation potential. Their lower organizational complexity allows for a rapid response to changes in consumer preferences and experimentation with new products or services, which often gives them a competitive advantage in dynamic market segments (Damodaran, 2012).

3. Small Businesses vs. Large and Public Companies

Small businesses differ fundamentally from large and publicly traded companies in terms of organizational structure, financial, operational, and market characteristics. The first major difference lies in ownership structure and management. While large companies are typically owned by dispersed shareholders, ownership in small businesses is usually concentrated in the hands of a single individual or a family, resulting in a merger of ownership and managerial roles. This concentration allows for greater agility but also introduces the risk of subjective decision-making without formalized control mechanisms (Pratt & Niculita, 2008).

A second key difference relates to transparency and the availability of information. Public companies are subject to strict regulations regarding the disclosure of financial statements, whereas small businesses often rely on minimum legal requirements, making it difficult to accurately assess their financial position (Hitchner, 2020). There is also a difference in access to capital and the cost of financing. Large companies have access to capital markets, allowing them to issue shares and bonds, whereas small firms primarily rely on internal funding, commercial loans, or alternative forms of financing that often come with higher costs and stricter conditions (Fazzini, 2018).

Finally, in terms of market position and strategic orientation, large companies operate within global value chains, utilizing standardized processes and economies of scale. In contrast, small businesses tend to operate locally, relying on direct customer relationships, greater flexibility, and the ability to specialize in niche market segments (OECD, 2019; Damodaran, 2012).

4. Challenges in the Valuation of Small Businesses

One of the most significant challenges in the valuation process of small businesses is the *limited quality and availability of financial statements*. Unlike public and large companies, which are required to regularly publish audited financial reports in accordance with international accounting standards, small businesses often maintain records in line with minimal legal requirements or even on a simple cash basis, without accrual principles or appropriate categorization of income and expenses (Trugman, 2017).

This practice leads to significant discrepancies between the actual and reported economic value of the company. Moreover, the financial statements of small firms often include so-called discretionary expenses, such as personal expenses of the owner recorded as business expenses, uncollected receivables, or related-party transactions, which further complicate analytical assessment (Fazzini, 2018). In many cases, systematic accounting for depreciation, provisions, or supplier liabilities is also lacking, making it difficult to apply traditional valuation methods such as DCF or comparable company analysis (Hitchner, 2020).

In addition, access to financial reports is often restricted. Small businesses are not obligated to publicly disclose financial statements, which makes it difficult for external investors, creditors, and appraisers to obtain relevant data. In countries with underdeveloped institutional frameworks and inefficient registry systems, this problem is even more pronounced (OECD, 2019).

Therefore, small business appraisers often need to rely on alternative sources of information such as internal books, reports from accounting software, bank statements, tax filings, or direct interviews with owners. This approach requires additional effort, contextual understanding, and professional judgment to achieve a realistic picture of business performance and value (Pratt & Niculita, 2008).

A key characteristic of small businesses is their *high dependency on the founder or owner*, who often simultaneously performs the role of the chief manager. This concentration of responsibility and knowledge in a single person can provide decision-making efficiency and operational flexibility, but also poses a significant risk in the context of long-term business sustainability. In small firms, the owner is typically the central figure in strategy creation, operational control, maintaining relationships with customers and suppliers, as well as handling key financial and legal matters (Pratt & Niculita, 2008). Such dependence complicates business transfer, whether in terms of succession or sale, since the value of the company often lies not in systems or branding, but in the personal competencies and network of the owner. In such valuations, it is essential to consider the so-called “key person risk,” reflected in potential value loss due to the owner's departure for health, family, financial, or professional reasons (Fazzini, 2018). Furthermore, a lack of delegation and the absence of institutionalized processes can limit growth potential, as business functions are not easily scalable or transferable to other employees. This trait of small firms often hinders investment attraction, since investors seek stable management and business models that are sustainable independently of the founder's presence (Trugman, 2017).

A significant factor complicating small business valuation is their *limited market visibility and illiquidity of ownership stakes*. Unlike public companies, whose shares are regularly traded on stock exchanges and have an active market of buyers and sellers, ownership interests in small firms are rarely or never exchanged on open markets. Consequently, there is no objective market price to serve as a valuation benchmark, creating a high degree of uncertainty for investors, buyers, and appraisers (Pratt & Niculita, 2008).

This limited visibility is especially notable in businesses operating locally or in niche market segments, without significant public presence or marketing. Such firms often depend on a limited number of clients or contracts, making them vulnerable to changes in the external environment. Additionally, the lack of publicly available financial and business data leads to low transparency, making it difficult to apply market-based valuation approaches that require comparable transactions or similar firms as a basis (Hitchner, 2020). *Illiquidity* is also reflected in the fact that selling an ownership stake in a small business is often a lengthy and complex process involving thorough due diligence, negotiations with a limited pool of potential buyers, and significant legal and tax barriers. Therefore, valuation often incorporates a Discount for Lack of Marketability (DLOM) to reflect the real risk and lower attractiveness of such investments from a liquidity standpoint (Trugman, 2017; Fazzini, 2018).

A frequent challenge in small business valuation is the *presence of discretionary expenses and related-party transactions*, which distort the objective picture of the company's actual financial condition. Unlike large companies, which are subject to stricter accounting and reporting standards, small businesses often exploit legal flexibility to present costs and revenues in ways that do not fully reflect market realities (Pratt & Niculita, 2008). Discretionary expenses include costs used by the owner for personal or non-operational purposes, but are formally recorded as business expenses. These may include private vehicle costs, travel, entertainment, memberships, or consulting services not essential to the business. In such cases, the analyst must conduct so-called earnings normalization to eliminate these items and determine real operating profitability (Hitchner, 2020). Additionally, small businesses frequently engage in transactions with related parties, such as family members, entities owned by the same individuals, or friends, under non-market terms. For instance, office space might be leased below or above market rate, family employees may receive symbolic or inflated salaries, and goods or services may be sold under preferential terms. These practices compromise the economic integrity of financial reports and hinder the assessment of true profitability and market position (Fazzini, 2018).

For purposes of valuation, such elements must be carefully identified and adjusted to present an accurate picture of the company's potential. Lack of knowledge about the local context, ownership structure, and business practices can lead to significant valuation errors. Therefore, qualitative analysis and direct communication with the owner or accountant are often essential in identifying and quantifying all discretionary and non-market elements (Trugman, 2017).

The Discount for Lack of Marketability (DLOM) is an adjustment applied in the valuation of illiquid ownership interests in small, privately held companies. Unlike publicly traded shares, which can be easily sold on stock exchanges, interests in small firms are not readily marketable, thus reducing their market value. DLOM reflects this risk and typically ranges between 15% and 35%, depending on factors such as legal restrictions, dividend history, dependence on the owner, and the time required to sell the interest. The valuation uses data from restricted stock studies and pre-IPO transactions (Hitchner, 2020; Trugman, 2017). The discount is not applied automatically but is assessed based on the specific characteristics of the company and the market in which it operates (Pratt & Niculita, 2008).

The Discount for Lack of Control (DLOC) is applied when valuation ownership interests that do not provide control over business decisions. A minority owner lacks authority to influence profit distribution, strategic decisions, asset allocation, or company management, which reduces the appeal and market value of such interests. This discount reflects diminished decision-making power and limited access to information, and its size depends on the level of control provided, governance structure, existing shareholder agreements, and the degree of minority rights protection. It typically ranges from 10% to 30%. In practice, DLOC is often used in combination with DLOM, further reducing the estimated value of minority interests in small businesses (Fazzini, 2018; Pratt & Niculita, 2008; Trugman, 2017).

The Size Premium is an additional component in calculating the discount rate used in small business valuations, intended to reflect the higher risk associated with smaller enterprises compared to large firms. Numerous empirical studies, such as those by Ibbotson Associates and Duff & Phelps, consistently show that smaller companies generate higher returns, but with significantly greater volatility and operational risk. This phenomenon is known as the "size effect" and is one of the most persistent anomalies in modern portfolio theory.

Small firms are generally more exposed to market fluctuations, have weaker access to capital markets, lower bargaining power with suppliers and customers, and higher dependence on individuals, typically the owner. They often lack developed internal control systems and standardized procedures, increasing investment risk. Therefore, investors demand a higher expected return on invested capital, mathematically expressed through the size premium.

In practice, the size premium is used within a modified CAPM (Capital Asset Pricing Model), where the base formula:

$r = R_f + \beta (R_m - R_f)$ is extended with an additional term:

$r = R_f + \beta (R_m - R_f) + SP$ where:

- r – discount rate,
- R_f – risk-free rate of return (e.g., government bond yield),
- R_m – expected market return,
- β – beta (systematic risk coefficient),
- SP – size premium.

The premium is determined based on market databases such as Ibbotson SBBI and Duff & Phelps Cost of Capital Navigator, which classify companies by size (revenue, capitalization, or assets) into quantiles or deciles. Typical premiums for the smallest firms in the bottom deciles range from 4% to 8%, while for larger firms, the premiums are much lower or not applied at all. Omitting the size premium in small business valuation may result in an unrealistically low discount rate, leading to an overvaluation of the company and increased risk for potential investors (Damodaran, 2012; Hitchner, 2020; Trugman, 2017).

Key Person Discount (KPD) is applied in situations where the value of a small business is significantly tied to a single person, most commonly the founder, owner, or manager, whose role in day-to-day operations has a crucial impact on the company's revenue, clients, reputation, and strategic decisions. In such cases, the business is highly personalized, and its performance and market position depend on the skills, knowledge, and network of one individual.

This situation is particularly common in family businesses, artisan workshops, specialized consulting firms, and service sector companies. If that person were to leave the company, it would result in significant destabilization, loss of client trust, and a decline in revenue, which directly affects the company's value.

In the valuation process, KPD is applied as an adjustment to the overall value of the business, especially if succession is not ensured, the management team is underdeveloped, or business processes are not institutionalized. The size of the discount depends on the degree of dependency on that person and can range from 5% to 25%, depending on the sector, business complexity, and the existence of *key person retention agreements*.

Estimating this discount requires a qualitative assessment that includes an analysis of ownership structure, organizational hierarchy, formality in management, and relationships with key customers or suppliers. It is also recommended to review existing *key person insurance* policies and succession plans within the company, if available (Fazzini, 2018; Trugman, 2017).

Application of the Discounted Cash Flow (DCF) Method in the valuation of small businesses requires special attention due to limitations regarding data availability and reliability. Unlike large companies that maintain detailed and consistent historical reports, small businesses often lack formalized financial projections and standardized balance sheets. Therefore, estimating future cash flows involves greater subjectivity and uncertainty. Additionally, revenue and cost projections in small businesses often depend on key individuals, seasonality, local market conditions, and discretionary expenses, further complicating the modelling of future performance. In this context, appraisers rely on normalized statements, adjusted EBITDA values, and qualitative information obtained directly from management. Due to the higher risk, the DCF analysis uses a higher discount rate that includes the size premium, discount for illiquidity, key person risk, and other specific factors. It is also recommended to use conservative assumptions and perform sensitivity analyses to identify key value drivers and risks that can significantly impact the estimated value (Damodaran, 2012; Hitchner, 2020; Koller et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Valuing small businesses is a complex process that requires a specific approach due to numerous structural and informational limitations. Unlike large and publicly traded companies, small businesses are characterized by insufficient transparency, high dependence on individuals, limited access to capital, and pronounced illiquidity of ownership interests. In this context, traditional valuation models such as asset-based, income-based (DCF), and market-based approaches must be adjusted to reflect the real conditions of small business operations.

The use of discounts and premiums, such as the discount for illiquidity, minority interest discount, size premium, and key person discount, becomes essential for achieving a fair and sustainable valuation. At the same time, the quality of the valuation depends not only on quantitative methods but also on the appraiser's ability to understand the business context, ownership structure, and long-term prospects of the analyzed enterprise.

The small family business remains one of the most common types of enterprises in the world, and the survival and protection of these businesses, especially in developing countries, are important for national economic development. Therefore, the valuation of such entities is one of the key issues. This topic should receive more academic attention within national research frameworks.

Innovative small businesses often face difficulties in profiting from their intellectual property due to numerous limitations, and this challenge remains under-researched.

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Innovative ESP vocabulary teaching strategies and their impact on language learning

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Abstract

The acquisition of English vocabulary is essential for allowing individuals to communicate effectively, understand a variety of texts, and articulate their thoughts accurately. Conventional approaches to vocabulary teaching, including rote memorization and separate vocabulary exercises, have frequently proved to be inadequate in developing profound understanding, encouraging contextualization, and accommodating different learning preferences. In light of these shortcomings, many creative techniques have arisen, utilizing technology, contextualized learning, and personalized learning strategies to transform vocabulary instruction. This paper shows that new methods are better than traditional ones for helping students remember information long-term and understand it deeply. Technology tools like interactive vocabulary apps and virtual reality games make learning more engaging and fit different learning styles. Contextual learning, which uses real texts, examples, and storytelling, helps students grasp vocabulary by placing new words in meaningful situations. Personalized learning, tailored to individual needs, improves results for all learners, ensuring vocabulary lessons are relevant, engaging, and effective. By encouraging the use of innovative techniques such as VR, MALL, or MOOC, this study seeks to enable educators to transform vocabulary instruction, improve language skills, and support lifelong learning practices for civil and mechanical engineering students in ESP (English for Specific Purposes).

Keywords: ESP (English for Specific Purposes), ICT (information and communication technology), MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses), MALL (Mobile-assisted Language Learning), Virtual Reality (VR).

1. Introduction

Integrating ICT (Information and Communication Technology) into education has many positive effects on learning. It prepares students for the job market by developing their digital skills, which are vital for success in today's tech-driven society. ICT also makes learning more engaging by allowing students to use technology outside their normal routines. Courses for English for Specific Purposes that include multimedia elements can cater to different learning styles and are often more interesting than traditional teaching methods. Additionally, ICT tools enhance instruction by providing access to diverse resources, fostering interaction among students and teachers, and helping learners manage their own studies effectively. Teaching ESP urgently requires reform and innovation to adjust to the new educational circumstances, the rapid pace of globalization, and societal demands. Interactive English teaching, emerging as a new educational concept and approach, was developed in this context. It focuses on student-centered learning and enhances students' language acquisition and holistic development through diverse interactive activities, bringing renewed energy and optimism to ESP teaching. Before teaching ESP vocabulary, educators need to understand the specific challenges involved and consider their students' language skills. Students in technical colleges need the right English technical terms to communicate well with others, both personally and technically. They rely on teachers to equip them with effective and commonly used words and phrases to improve their communication skills. Educators teaching ESP should focus on vocabulary that students can use in their daily lives. If they teach terms that students cannot apply immediately, the words will likely be forgotten quickly. This makes the efforts to teach them ineffective. It is important for educators to choose vocabulary that connects with students' experiences outside the classroom to ensure long-lasting learning and application.

This paper investigates innovative and interactive methods for introducing and teaching new technical vocabulary, such as MALL, MOOC, or VR technology. First and foremost, it would be quite advantageous to make use of these technologies to display images, drawings, or short films since they are relatively universal and comprehended by most individuals; this is likely the most effective method for presenting new technical vocabulary. Their goal would be to disrupt the conventional method of unidirectional instruction, focus on encouraging students' engagement and proactivity in learning, and enhance the comprehensive development of students through various interactive activities. By thoroughly investigating the concepts, techniques, and real-world examples of interactive English teaching, we can gain a deeper understanding of its significant impact on students' language acquisition, thus providing more evidence-based and efficient guidance for future English instruction. Combining different resources can create a blended learning environment. You can use Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) for daily practice to build vocabulary. Signing up for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) provides structured learning and theoretical

knowledge. Additionally, using virtual reality (VR) can help with practical applications and improve fluency. Integrating virtual reality (VR) into language education can help teachers and educators by creating an engaging learning environment that boosts social interaction. Immersing students in the target culture enhances their understanding of cultural traditions and allows them to connect lessons to real-life situations. Deeply immersive VR provides valuable opportunities for language learners, offering culturally rich experiences that simulate real-life interactions. These simulations encourage active participation and lead to a deeper, personalized language understanding. Additionally, VR allows students to apply their knowledge practically and learn from their mistakes in a safe environment.

Consequently, numerous educators have chosen to incorporate MALL tools like Kahoot, Quizlet, and Memrise, along with MOOCs such as Coursera and VR technology to capture their students' attention in the classroom and encourage them to acquire new vocabulary. This research explores the extent to which these tools impact teachers' effectiveness and the students' acquisition of specialized academic vocabulary, as well as the optimal ways to utilize these resources for the best results. The research employs a survey and semi-structured interviews with five lecturers from Ovidius University of Constanta's Faculty of Civil and Mechanical Engineering. The interviews centered on how often these tools are used, their effectiveness, personal insights, and suggestions for better future implementation of these applications. Findings reveal that mobile applications for vocabulary acquisition positively influence the teaching and learning of vocabulary, boost academic skills, and improve the retention of academic vocabulary. Furthermore, the study offers strategies for using all relevant applications effectively in vocabulary instruction and learning.

2. Literature review

With advancements in science and technology and the continuous evolution of educational concepts, we can predict that the future of ESP teaching will focus more on the integration of online methods, utilizing big data, artificial intelligence, and other cutting-edge technologies to thoroughly analyze students' learning needs and characteristics, in order to offer them a more tailored and effective learning experience. Simultaneously, future ESP education will focus more on developing cross-cultural communication skills, assisting students in better adjusting to the challenges of the globalization era.

According to Rivers (1983, p.125), building a strong vocabulary is important for using a second language well. Without a wide range of words, we cannot communicate clearly, even if we know grammar and sentence structures. Vocabulary acquisition is crucial for learning a language. It is increasingly essential to meet the requirements of learners engaged in a specific subject area. English instructors ought to provide students with the terms that are genuinely significant for their academic pursuits. Consequently, it is important for ESP educators to create a list of words that includes specialized vocabulary. To stay updated with technological advancements, it is also important for educators to offer e-learning resources. The study of vocabulary instruction strategies does not have a lengthy background, starting from 1999. According to Read (2004), English educators ought to invest more effort in discovering methods that can enhance our students' vocabulary skills through contemporary techniques that have been shown to be effective. In order to adapt to the trend of globalization, ESP teachers should devise a flexible method of teaching vocabulary for their students to genuinely use and compensate for conventional vocabulary teaching methods.

This research contends that in the context of globalization, English teachers, particularly those educating adult learners in higher education, ought to implement the revised, innovative methodologies to instruct their students in English vocabulary. The rationale is that their students will be entering actual global communities, where clear and fluent communication must be supported by adequate vocabulary.

There have been numerous investigations into Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), MOOC, and VR, concentrating on their efficiency, application, and influence on language acquisition. The educational environment is experiencing a major change as a result of the swift growth and broad acceptance of mobile technologies (Wang et al., 2024). This change in technology has not only influenced everyday life and working habits but has also transformed how students interact with educational materials, rendering Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) applications progressively essential in contemporary language instruction (Chwo et al., 2018; Hou and Aryadoust, 2021; Miralpeix and Muñoz, 2018). All these studies have indicated that MALL can greatly improve language learning results. For instance, Fageeh (2013) revealed that learners utilizing mobile applications for vocabulary acquisition exhibited superior retention and involvement in contrast to conventional approaches. Some top Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) applications are noted for their efficiency and ease of use. Duolingo is popular for its gamified approach, offering lessons in different languages through interactive activities to improve reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Memrise combines language learning with cultural insights, using videos of native speakers and activities to help users learn vocabulary and expressions in context. By investigating the ways in which the combination of three particular MALL applications—Kahoot, Memrise, and WhatsApp can assist ESP university students in learning and remembering specialized vocabulary more efficiently, we aim for our research to add to a wider comprehension of how various MALL applications can work together to improve vocabulary learning among ESP students.

MOOCs, or Massive Open Online Courses, have created great interest among people studying educational technology. These courses offer learning opportunities to many individuals, making education more accessible. Higher education institutions are incorporating MOOCs as a useful supplement to traditional teaching. Recent studies on MOOCs show they are valuable resources for both teachers and students in learning different subjects. Massive open online courses (MOOCs) have become very popular

among people in higher education, including students and teachers, since their rise in 2012 (Creed-Dikeogu and Clark 2013; Kop 2011). These courses are mostly free or low-cost and promote participation from many students (Zhang 2013). They offer flexible learning options regarding time and location. The main requirement to join an MOOC is an Internet connection. Overall, MOOCs are improving global access to higher education (Kop 2011; Koutropoulos et al. 2012). Learning behavior in MOOCs involves various activities like watching videos, completing assignments, participating in discussions, reading materials, social interactions, and making study plans. Unlike traditional courses, MOOC learning behavior tends to be fragmented, unplanned, and generally considered less important (Huang 2024), but interacting with other learners can offer extra learning materials and viewpoints, aiding learners in grasping course material from various angles.

Language acquisition has evolved considerably in the last ten years, owing to improvements in technology and teaching approaches. With the emergence of VR/AI, immersive learning resources, and customized education platforms, language learning in 2025 is poised to be more captivating and reachable than it has ever been. The use of Virtual Reality (VR) in language education is an exciting advancement. This technology creates immersive environments where learners can practice speaking and listening in realistic situations. By simulating real conversations and cultural contexts, VR helps students experience languages in a way that was not possible before. VR generates a real atmosphere, which is leading numerous individuals to adopt and engage with it. Furthermore, VR technology serves as a tool that distinctly improves the educational process. According to Andujar and Buchner (2019), VR has emerged as a resource that may offer unlimited potential as a part of educational objectives. Educators have recognized that VR possesses pedagogical potential due to its prospective educational applications and immersive environment for learners (Savin-Baden, 2010). Consequently, virtual worlds provide substantial pedagogical advantages and a significant impact on language acquisition (Peterson, 2006). Moreover, VR has the capacity to introduce authenticity to a learning setting. VR offers learners the opportunity to encounter real sites within the immersive atmosphere (Andujar and Buchner, 2019), which enhances their motivation to learn. Alfadil (2017) found that using a second-life world for teaching English helped students improve their vocabulary and that VR made learning easier. Ferguson et al. (2020) noted that the VR environment increases students' retention through narrative games, leading to better language acquisition, including reading and vocabulary. Since VR has been shown to enhance learning, many language teachers are expected to use VR technologies in higher education (Lin and Lan, 2015). We strongly believe that integrating this technology can encourage ESP students and help them work well with classmates as they explore new places and experiences in the classroom with their teachers' guidance. Teachers have the opportunity to be creative in their teaching by using VR to make lessons more engaging and help students think about their experiences. Additionally, VR offers different ways to teach that boosts students' motivation to learn, such as through teamwork, role-playing, and problem-solving activities. Platforms such as Google Expeditions and Nearpod VR, their growing affordability, and their ability to transform conventional teaching methods despite challenges in content creation and teacher training have rendered complex topics easier to understand, fostering student involvement and empathy. VR has great potential in education but faces challenges like high development costs and the need for proper technological support. A literature review by Christian et al. (2021) on VR use in higher education during the COVID-19 crisis shows its growing importance. Their findings indicate that VR enhances learning experiences, motivation, and understanding in fields like engineering and medicine for university students. While technological advancements have made various VR applications possible, issues with equipment and funding remain.

Despite emphasizing that MALL, MOOC, and VR serve as excellent instruments for education, even within professional environments, these thrilling developments and continuous research suggest that the future of learning appears poised for a significant shift into their engaging world, presenting various challenges and possibilities for both teachers and students.

3. Methodology

This study uses a systematic review to evaluate how effective new methods are in teaching English vocabulary. The systematic approach ensures a complete and clear assessment of the current evidence, which helps in forming conclusions and providing practical recommendations. To tackle the shortcomings of conventional methods and investigate the possibilities offered by the innovative approaches, we have created a questionnaire that centers on the subsequent research questions: 1. How effective are the innovative methods in fostering long-term retention and significant vocabulary acquisition among ESP civil and mechanical engineering students? 2. What effects do these new methods have on learner engagement, motivation, and perspectives regarding vocabulary learning? 3. How do the new methods contrast with conventional methods concerning their effectiveness in improving English vocabulary acquisition? The study focuses on English language learners who come from diverse backgrounds, learning styles, and proficiency levels. It includes 113 students from various educational fields, such as civil and mechanical engineering. Moreover, those involved in the interviews conveyed predominantly favorable opinions regarding the efficacy of MALL, MOOC, and VR applications as educational resources. The results illuminate the benefits of incorporating these applications in enhancing academic vocabulary learning and the overall educational experience.

4. Finding results and discussions

Teaching vocabulary in an English for Specific Purposes lecture is essential for a technical student's language acquisition and communication abilities. After all, without sufficient vocabulary, it's challenging to express thoughts, ideas, and emotions about

our identity and how we perceive our surroundings. However, this objective should be met without forcing students to memorize technical vocabulary lists related to ESP that will be forgotten following the next assessment. It was vital to explore these teaching methods for instructing technical vocabulary to ESP learners, whether in-person or through online English instruction. What is the most effective method for teaching technical vocabulary in ESP classes? The results of this investigation provide strong evidence that innovative techniques can significantly enhance English vocabulary learning and retention for English language learners. These techniques, which include technology-driven resources like MALL, MOOC, or VR, contextually driven learning strategies, and tailored learning approaches, have shown greater effectiveness than conventional methods in encouraging long-term retention, stimulating deep comprehension, and enhancing the contextualization of vocabulary knowledge. The efficiency of innovative strategies in learning is linked to several key factors. Technology, like interactive vocabulary apps and virtual reality games, provides engaging and personalized experiences that suit different learning styles. This interactivity boosts student motivation and involvement. Additionally, contextualized learning methods, using real texts, examples, and storytelling, help students understand vocabulary more deeply by placing new words in meaningful contexts. This approach enhances their ability to use vocabulary effectively in real-life situations.

On the other hand, some researchers acknowledge the need to create a technical framework for teaching vocabulary (Nation, 2013; Tlukova, 2019). It's beneficial to consider how learners will remember a word while preparing for an exam, using this as a basis to figure out how to retain what has been instructed. In simpler terms, it should not introduce new technical terminology in isolation. If the instructors aim to develop a contextual experience (an engaging narrative, a collection of visuals, a conversation) that makes a lasting impact, then when it's time for students to retrieve a specific list of technical terms, they will be able to recall these words with ease, enhancing their ESP technical vocabularies during every session. Moreover, self-educated learners mention several techniques they use to learn technical jargon. They study technical discussions and watch documentary videos with English subtitles, which helps with pronunciation. They also read English technical literature and magazines that interest them. Many learners install language learning apps like Babbel and Duolingo on their smartphones to practice their language skills in their free time.

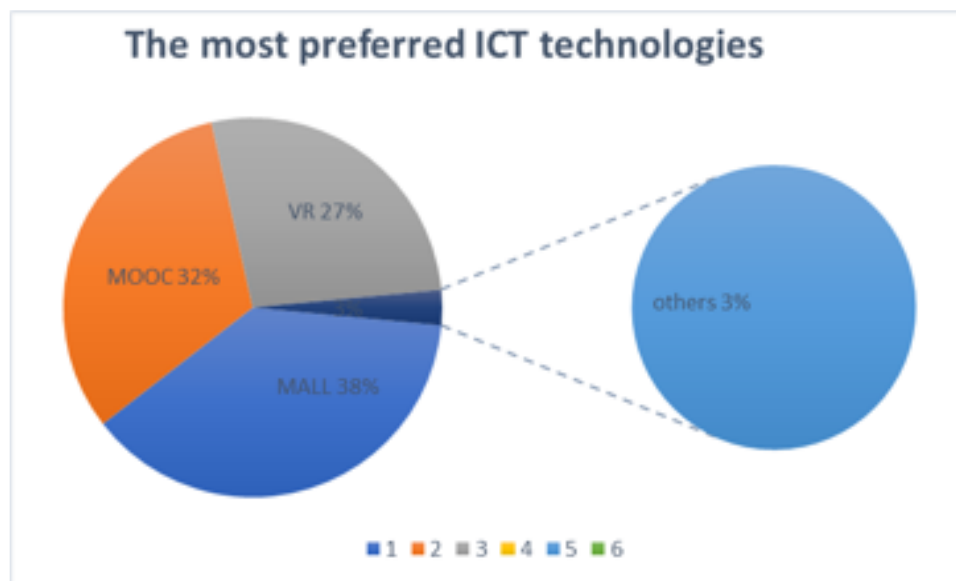


Figure 1. The most preferred ICT technologies (source: survey answers processed by the author)

According to the graph above, 38% preferred MALL, 32% selected MOOC, 27% chose Virtual reality, and 3% chose others. The MALL approach, in contrast to face-to-face interactions or traditional textbooks, fosters a student-centered teaching methodology that significantly aids in enhancing students' vocabulary development and fostering their self-directed learning practices. When it comes to the effects on learners' motivation and engagement, the findings also revealed that 72% of the participants were convinced that MALL provided users with more task control and a user-friendly interface. Additionally, 45% of the respondents found MALL to be significantly more convenient, desirable, and suitable for completing their tasks than the traditional teaching methods. Consequently, the teachers interviewed recommended incorporating MALL as a teaching strategy, as it offers students a variety of activities to engage with irrespective of time and location, while also motivating interaction among peers and instructors in the target language.

Teachers can enhance their teaching efficiency by using Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which are considered a popular new trend in education. Since nowadays students mostly learn from their phones and computers, they will feel comfortable with the MOOC model because this is how they usually access knowledge. This teaching method promotes flexible, independent, and social learning by using YouTube to provide video lessons, social media to disseminate content, and Google Docs links or sites for academic content, activities, or quizzes. Concurrently, ESP teachers can also make use of other Internet + products such as WeChat, WhatsApp, Weibo, and other platforms, enabling learners to communicate with teachers in real-time via mobile devices.

Moreover, to comprehend the large-scale challenges within the civil and mechanical engineering fields, both language teachers and learners can use Internet technology to browse the electronic library and find the educational materials they require among the vast library resources. In other words, all the educational content and teaching activities, and tasks should concentrate on a certain subject, which means that we should cover all subject-specific information, knowledge, and skills. To be more specific, when we teach Civil or Mechanical engineering English, we will start by familiarizing students with some professional vocabulary and appropriate phrases associated with civil and mechanical engineering, by showing them pictures, and short films they can find on YouTube to encourage them to interact and communicate with their colleagues, to arouse their interest and curiosity, to elicit and provide assistance whenever needed, etc. Consequently, we reached the conclusion that all of the instructional materials and activities are directly tied to their major, requiring Internet training and interdisciplinary teamwork, cross-professional cooperation, and collaboration.

27% of the students recognize virtual reality as an important educational resource, asserting that it improves the learning process by creating a more enjoyable and interactive environment. They contend that VR not only engages learners but also acts as a strong motivator. Additionally, virtual reality provides an entertaining and dynamic way for students to immerse themselves in language learning, underscoring its value as an effective teaching tool for language practice. Thereby, we may infer that VR serves as a practical method for facilitating language education. Many scholars engaged in language acquisition suggest that since our students, identified as digital natives, thrive and operate effectively within virtual realities, it is imperative to instruct them within their intrinsic context rather than attempting to draw them into traditional classroom settings (Solomon Sunday et al., 2020; Hamilton et al., 2020). The visual components and engagement with multimedia systems are highly favored by university students when understanding course material. Virtual Reality (VR) plays a pivotal role in education by facilitating a clearer understanding of abstract concepts through realistic simulations. This technology is particularly prevalent in health and engineering sciences fields, where students can immerse themselves in simulated real-world scenarios. When asked about the benefits of VR, the teachers involved in the query acknowledged that virtual reality technologies are predominantly used for enhancing speaking, listening, and reading competencies, along with vocabulary acquisition, whereas writing skills tend to be overlooked.

According to the data displayed in the figure below, ESP students selected the most often used and effective MALL apps.

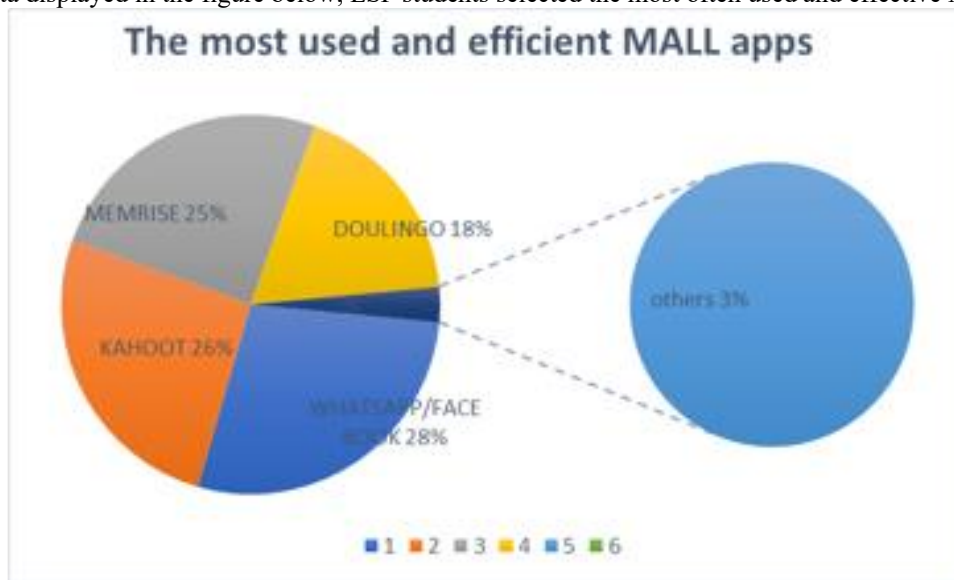


Figure 2. The most used and efficient MALL apps (students' perspectives).

Messaging applications like WhatsApp, Telegram, and Facebook provide students the ability to engage with the English language regardless of time and location. They also have the potential to enhance the quality of educational experiences. Technologies on mobile learning may serve as valuable supplements to language instruction at various educational levels since they can create authentic, communicative tasks for ESP students. The findings indicate that 26% of the ESP students have a favorable opinion of teachers employing Kahoot! to teach specialized vocabulary. Students feel more welcome and engaged in a classroom that encourages everyone to participate in activities. Kahoot! enhances interaction among students and is seen as valuable for boosting their motivation, participation, and overall classroom experience. Kahoot! is a great tool for students who enjoy technology and can inspire them to learn. It can enhance learning results and make the classroom more exciting by using multimedia like images and sounds. Lessons that use Kahoot! are often viewed as more engaging and useful than traditional teaching methods. As a result, vocabulary sessions using Kahoot! were regarded as stimulating, interactive, collaborative, uplifting, and beneficial to students' learning outcomes since the game promoted student-to-student "discussion" and increased the likelihood of receiving teacher feedback.

25% of the ESP students believe that, through repetition and context, Memrise can provide a range of engaging learning tasks that are intended to help them increase their vocabulary, enhance their pronunciation, and strengthen their memory. Combining sound

study techniques with the platform's integrated tools is essential for maximizing Memrise, particularly for language acquisition. On Memrise, you may increase your vocabulary and fluency by creating your own language learning activities in a fun and customized way. Using Memrise's course creation tools, you may develop unique activities using these innovative ideas. With a range of interesting activities created to help English learners expand their vocabulary, enhance their listening comprehension, and increase their confidence in real-world interactions, Memrise is a great resource. It can still be utilized well for learning engineering-related English by integrating tailored content and focused tactics with general English classes. Prioritize courses that use formal language, passive voice, and technical terminology, all of which are common in engineering settings.

Since Duolingo was the first free language-learning program that competes with expensive paid courses, the ESP students acknowledged the fact that it offered a lot of self-paced practice to help them build a strong foundation in English. One of them commented: "The app has a clear and organized layout, showing a list of modules on the home screen. Each lesson focuses on a specific topic, either grammatical, like verb tenses or nouns, or thematic, such as arts, tourism, engineering, or sports. There are multiple lessons in each module, and you need to complete a certain number of lessons to move on to the next group of modules. Typically, each lesson takes about three to four minutes to finish".

Teachers can utilize online resources to gain insights into social and communication practices. The stereotypical approach to ESP or the traditional teaching method, which focuses on the translation of technical terminology between English and the native language, may be perceived as tedious and lacking significance for learners. This teaching method is increasingly viewed as outdated in the current context. In contemporary society, communication occurs in a multimodal manner, where individuals often share written messages alongside images, videos, and animated content. Using YouTube with Duolingo and Memrise is a good way to learn English for engineering. Each tool has unique benefits that create a well-rounded learning experience. Memrise helps with vocabulary and listening by teaching technical terms with audio from native speakers, and it lets you mimic real engineering conversations. Duolingo focuses on grammar and sentence structure, emphasizing intermediate grammar, and includes stories for better comprehension. YouTube offers real-world listening and context by providing educational channels where you can take notes, learn new words, and use English subtitles.

In conclusion, a successful approach to learning English for engineering is by utilizing mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), massive open online courses (MOOCs), and virtual reality (VR). MALL allows learners to use tablets or smartphones anytime and anywhere, with apps like BBC Learning English, Kahoot!, Quizlet, Duolingo, and Memrise focusing on vocabulary and workplace communication. Learners can improve pronunciation and learn vocabulary through voice input or short videos while traveling. Students can also learn technical English through free or low-cost courses from top universities via MOOCs, with platforms like Coursera, edX, and FutureLearn offering specialized English for engineering courses. VR helps students practice speaking and listening in real-world engineering contexts through immersive simulations. Tools like ALT SPACE and Mondly VR enable users to engage in conversations and practice in professional settings, simulating team meetings, lab tours, and safety talks.

5. Conclusions

Our research indicates that there is a necessity for ongoing enhancement of the teaching methods and techniques to foster the communicative competence of the learners. One such method could be the innovative, interactive instruction of students in foreign language vocabulary, as communication is hardly feasible without lexical knowledge. As a result, the issue of employing innovative techniques within the teaching process warrants investigation, and hence, more focus should be directed towards their application by foreign language instructors. The findings of this study revealed and confirmed that teaching and learning through MALL, MOOCs, and VR were inspirational and demanding, especially for the teachers. It was therefore recommended that educators actively interact with their students through social media platforms. Furthermore, both educational institutions and students ought to explore and adopt various technological alternatives to address issues related to education and career pathways. Even if, at first, the teachers had no basic knowledge of setting up a virtual classroom to link up with students, and they struggled when preparing for lessons, whereas students had trouble grasping the materials provided without proper counseling and guidance and faced problems in submitting the assignments or tasks, the current study established that the innovative ESP vocabulary teaching strategies facilitated authentic real-world experiences aligned with scaffolding principles. Additionally, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) provided vital resources that were accessible at any time and from any location. Furthermore, Virtual Reality offered students the opportunity to engage with and navigate various social skills and behaviors. Language learning in 2025 looks exciting due to the impact of AI, immersive technologies, and personalized learning experiences. As students and teachers adapt to these changes, language education will become more accessible, engaging, and efficient. Embracing these advancements will help people navigate the increasingly connected world and take full advantage of the benefits of being multilingual.

We trust that this research has made a meaningful impact in the area of English language teaching, offering important insights and useful suggestions for educators aiming to transform vocabulary teaching and enable students to reach their language learning objectives.

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From Language Teaching to Learning through Language: Teaching Italian as a Vehicle of Knowledge

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Abstract

In today’s university context—marked increasingly by internationalization, student mobility, and the growing presence of learners with diverse language competencies—Italian is called upon to play not only a communicative role but also an epistemic one. The shift from teaching the language to learning through language represents a crucial challenge for rethinking the teaching of Italian as a vehicle of knowledge, and not merely as an object of study. In the academic sphere, language is not just a support for comprehension but an active tool for constructing knowledge, mediating between disciplines, and accessing scientific culture.

This contribution aims to reflect on the role of Italian as a vehicular language in university programs, drawing on the multi-year experience of the degree courses taught in Italian at the Catholic University “Our Lady of Good Counsel” in Tirana. Special attention is paid to the quality of language teaching within specific disciplinary instruction and in educational materials. Promoting an integrated approach—one that considers the linguistic and cognitive dimensions of learning—means making higher education more accessible, equitable, and inclusive. In this regard, teacher training plays a key role, focusing on the mindful use of academic language and the enhancement of students’ plurilingual repertoires.

Rethinking Italian as a vehicular language in academia also means recognizing its inclusive and transformative potential: a capacity to support complex educational paths, foster participation, and promote genuine equity in learning and knowledge production processes.

Keywords: didactics, Italian, vehicular language, learning, university

Introduction

This study aims to highlight the importance of learning a foreign language for academic study in a university context. In such settings, the student is no longer a passive recipient but an active participant, thus affirming the central role of the learner in the language and subject learning process.

The Catholic University “Our Lady of Good Counsel” (hereinafter UCNSBC) is one of the first private academic institutions operating within the Albanian higher education system. Founded with the aim of offering high-quality academic programs, it launched its first degree programs in the 2004–2005 academic year, thanks to specific bilateral agreements with prestigious Italian universities.

By virtue of these international cooperation agreements, UCNSBC can confer joint or double degrees, which are fully equivalent, in terms of legal validity, to those issued in Italy. This feature gives academic qualifications awarded by the University significant added value, ensuring that students can use their degrees not only in Albania but also in Italy and, more broadly, within the European higher education area.

The first agreements were signed with the University of Rome “Tor Vergata” (for the degree programs in Medicine and Surgery, Dentistry and Dental Prosthetics, Physiotherapy, and Nursing) and with the University of Bari (for the programs in Economics and Pharmacy). Over time, the network of collaborations expanded to include the University of Bologna, the University of Palermo, and, more recently, the University of Florence, particularly in the fields of Applied Sciences, Architecture, and Engineering.

Over the years, UCNSBC’s academic offering has gradually diversified and strengthened, and currently includes bachelor’s degrees, master’s degrees, first- and second-level master’s programs, executive master’s degrees, as well as doctoral programs, all aligned with international academic standards¹.

Before the start of this study, several fundamental theoretical questions were outlined, accompanied by the definition of specific objectives to be pursued throughout the research. The guiding questions that have shaped the investigation fall within the framework of applied linguistic studies and are as follows:

- Which teaching strategies prove most effective in acquiring subject-specific content through an active and conscious use of the Italian language?
- What is the impact of using Italian as the language of instruction on the development of students’ linguistic and disciplinary competences?

¹ The data were taken from the official website of the Catholic University “Our Lady of Good Counsel”: www.unizkm.al

- What challenges and opportunities arise from the use of Italian as a medium of instruction in complex academic contexts characterized by linguistic and cultural diversity?

The main objectives that this research aims to achieve, with particular focus on the role of language as a vehicle for learning, can be outlined as follows:

- To analyze the use of the Italian language as a medium of instruction within university subject areas.
- To assess the effectiveness of teaching approaches based on content learning through the active and integrated use of language.
- To explore methods for teaching Italian as a foreign language (FL) in academic contexts.
- To investigate the use of language as a functional tool for the construction and development of disciplinary knowledge.
- To examine the concept of “language as a vehicle for learning” from a glottodidactic perspective.
- To contextualize the analysis within the broader framework of language education in higher education.

The aim of this study is to offer a critical reflection on the transformation of the Italian language from an object of learning to a means of learning, in line with the principles of contemporary language pedagogy and the educational needs of complex and multilingual academic contexts.

Theoretical Framework and Context of the Study

A key reference for the description and assessment of language competences is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), developed by the Council of Europe. The CEFR provides a shared international framework for defining levels of language proficiency, organized along a progressive scale ranging from A1 (beginner) to C2 (advanced mastery). These levels are widely used in educational and institutional settings to describe learners’ language abilities in a transparent and comparable way, both in Second Language (L2) and Foreign Language (FL) learning contexts (Council of Europe, 2018).

In the university context, the CEFR plays a strategic role in curriculum design and in the assessment of language competences, as it allows for the establishment of clear standards for course admission as well as for the certification of competences at the end of academic programs. The definition of language proficiency levels thus proves particularly useful in ensuring consistency and transparency in assessment processes, promoting academic mobility and equity in access to higher education.

The updated version of the CEFR, published in the 2020 *Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020), introduces an expanded perspective on language competences, with a specific focus on academic and professional contexts. The document strengthens the action-oriented approach of the original framework, emphasizing communicative interaction, learner autonomy, and linguistic and cultural mediation—key elements for a pedagogy aimed at developing real and transferable skills.

These guidelines are particularly significant in university contexts marked by linguistic and cultural diversity, where the design of academic programs must necessarily take into account the variety of students’ linguistic backgrounds and their differing educational needs. In this scenario, the CEFR serves as a valuable tool not only for the assessment and certification of competences but also for the development of inclusive teaching pathways, capable of promoting equitable access to disciplinary knowledge through the conscious use of language as a medium for learning. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) stands out as a fundamental tool in the field of language education, as it fosters alignment and coherence between curriculum, teaching practices, and assessment processes within educational institutions (Piccardo, 2020).

Teaching Italian – The Case of UCNSBC

Since the establishment of UCNSBC, the language of instruction in all degree programs (Medicine and Surgery, Dentistry and Dental Prosthetics, Physiotherapy, Nursing, Pharmacy, Economics, and Architecture) has been Italian. This means that, in addition to teaching Italian as a Foreign Language (FL), all subject-specific courses are also taught in Italian. This situation has given rise to the need to conceptualize, plan, and teach Italian with a specific purpose—namely, teaching and learning *through* the language. For more than 20 years, the Italian language has served as a tool for accessing knowledge across a variety of disciplines.

Below is a summary table of Italian language instruction across the various degree programs².

N.	Degree program	Number of teaching hours of Italian language
1.	Medicine and Surgery	590
2.	Dentistry and Dental Prosthetics	210
3.	Pharmacy	210
4.	Physiotherapy	210
5.	Nursing	420
6.	Economics	210
7.	Architecture	210
	Total	2060

Table 1 – Teaching of Italian Language in Degree Programs

² The data presented in Table 1 and Table 2 have been sourced from and elaborated based on the curricula and course syllabi of the Faculties and their respective degree programs.

N.	Course	Number of teaching hours
1.	Italian language and culture	1140
2.	Italian for Specific Purposes	280
3.	Spoken Italian	320
4.	Academic writing	320
	Total	2060

Table 2 – Breakdown of Subjects in Italian Language Teaching

Over the years, the teaching of the Italian language at UCNSBC has increasingly taken on the role of a medium of instruction in university contexts. To quote Coonan, micro-language courses are an *example of teaching that uses non-linguistic content to pursue strictly linguistic objectives* (Coonan, 2002). This reflects a shift from the traditional focus on language teaching centered on grammar towards an emphasis on language for academic and professional purposes.

Methodology

The present study, conducted using qualitative research methodologies, has allowed for a broader and more detailed understanding of the use of the Italian language as a medium of instruction within the academic context under examination, as well as its impact on both disciplinary and linguistic learning.

The methodological framework is twofold: on one hand, it aims to describe the teaching practices adopted during Italian language instruction, organized into various curricular components (Italian language and culture, Italian for Specific Purposes, Spoken Italian, and Academic Writing), where Italian acts as a mediating tool between diverse disciplinary content and students with varying levels of language proficiency; on the other hand, it seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of these practices in relation to the development of language competences and the acquisition of disciplinary content.

As previously mentioned, the chosen observational context is represented by an Italian-oriented university located abroad.

For data collection, a variety of tools were employed: systematic classroom observations, interviews with instructors, and analysis of teaching materials used in Italian language instruction.

The final phase of the research involved qualitative analysis of the collected data, aiming to identify recurring patterns, challenges, and potentialities within the observed processes.

Research Context

The study was conducted within the Italian-language degree programs at the Catholic University "Our Lady of Good Counsel," with particular focus on Italian courses attended by Albanian students in the medical and healthcare programs. The investigation was structured around two main areas: on one hand, the observation of disciplinary teaching sessions where Italian is used as the medium of instruction; on the other hand, the analysis of academic writing workshops aimed at the same group of learners.

Classroom observations were structured according to a qualitative ethnographic design and focused on CLIL (*Content and Language Integrated Learning*) contexts, with the aim of analyzing the communicative and linguistic strategies adopted by instructors in conveying specialized content (Medicine, Dentistry, Physiotherapy, Nursing, and Pharmacy). Particular attention was given to three main dimensions: linguistic simplification and conceptual reformulation practices, signals of interaction and active participation by students, and modes of linguistic mediation of content. Balboni, when discussing the vehicular use of the second language (L2), expresses himself in the following terms:

Negli ultimi anni è in progressiva diffusione il *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL): si tratta dell'uso veicolare della lingua non nativa per studiare contenuti non linguistici. [...] Il principio di fondo è che l'acquisizione della lingua è facilitata quando non ci si concentra sulla lingua stessa ma la si usa per fare qualcos'altro, come in questo caso in cui la si utilizza per acquisire altri contenuti (Balboni, 2008)³.

A similar observational methodology was applied to the academic writing workshops, with the aim of investigating the support practices for the development of textual and argumentative competence in the second language (L2), in relation to the needs of the various disciplinary fields.

At the same time, the analysis of teaching materials included a corpus composed of slides, handouts, adopted texts, assigned tasks, and students' written productions. The examination of these materials focused on the linguistic-communicative dimension of academic content, with the intent to identify recurring lexical and discourse patterns, the management of specialized terminology, and any interference caused by learners' interlanguage.

³ In recent years, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has spread progressively: it involves the vehicular use of a non-native language to study non-linguistic content. [...] The fundamental principle is that language acquisition is facilitated when the focus is not on the language itself but on using it to do something else, as in this case, where it is used to acquire other content (My translation).

Data Analysis

The data analysis revealed a complex and nuanced picture of the teaching practices observed in the examined university context, highlighting a progressive focus on the integration of language skills and disciplinary content, although with significant variations depending on the degree program and disciplinary field (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Pérez-Cañado, 2012).

Classroom observations allowed the identification of numerous examples of teaching activities with a high degree of linguistic-disciplinary integration, attributable to a *content-based instruction* approach (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 2003) and, in some cases, to CLIL models adapted to the university context (Cinganotto, 2016). Among the practices identified, the following stand out in particular:

- The analysis and guided discussion of scientific texts in Italian (academic articles, excerpts from specialized manuals) related to medical and healthcare topics, aimed at developing disciplinary literacy (Airey, 2011);
- The use of authentic materials from disciplinary sources (anatomy, chemistry, physics, pathology, etc.), intended to promote contextualized language learning oriented toward the cognitive and professional needs of students (Gilmore, 2007);
- The production of oral summaries and presentations by students, developed from content learned both during instruction in vehicular Italian and through independent study, with the goal of strengthening re-elaboration and presentation skills in L2 and FL (Dalton-Puffer, 2007);
- The drafting, presentation, and collaborative analysis of scientific written texts carried out within academic writing workshops, with particular emphasis on group work and metalinguistic reflection in an academic context (Hyland, 2004; Swales & Feak, 2012).

Overall, the observed practices confirm the importance of an integrated approach to linguistic and disciplinary teaching, capable of fostering not only second language acquisition but also the development of academic and professional communicative competencies in specialized contexts (Llinares, Morton & Whittaker, 2012).

Discussion

The data emerged from classroom observations and the analysis of teaching materials highlight a growing trend toward the integration of language and content in the observed educational programs, consistent with the literature on *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Dalton-Puffer, 2007). In particular, the teaching practices identified indicate an increasingly conscious use of the Italian language not only as a vehicle for transmitting disciplinary knowledge but also as an object of metalinguistic reflection and a tool for building academic skills.

The use of authentic materials, the discussion of specialized texts, and reworking activities (summaries, oral and written presentations, cooperative learning) seem to promote a progressive *linguistic acculturation* (Schleppegrell, 2004) of students into academic discourse, understood as a set of linguistic, rhetorical, and cognitive practices specific to disciplinary communities. This aspect is particularly significant in a context like Albania, where Italian, although not an official language, plays a highly specialized functional role.

However, the degree of integration between language and content is not uniform: significant differences are observed between courses and instructors, likely due to variables such as the teacher's linguistic training, familiarity with CLIL methodologies, the type of disciplinary content covered, and the students' level of language proficiency. In some cases, teaching practices are limited to a linguistic transposition of the disciplinary content, without effective linguistic-pedagogical mediation to facilitate accessibility and critical reworking by the students (Gajo, 2007).

Finally, there is an emerging need for systematic training of university instructors engaged in teaching in a second or foreign language, so that they can develop appropriate language teaching skills, particularly regarding the planning of language activities integrated with content, linguistic scaffolding, and support for written and oral production in the academic context.

Main Results

Among the most significant results emerging from this study is the effectiveness of Italian, used as a vehicular language, in the university context of the Catholic University "Our Lady of Good Counsel" (UCNSBC). In particular, a progressive and significant integration between linguistic skills and disciplinary competences is observed, emerging as a key factor in facilitating academic learning in L2 and FL (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Dalton-Puffer, 2007).

Linguistic training, specifically aimed at developing competencies in academic and specialized Italian, has contributed to a deeper understanding of specialized content by Albanian students (Hyland, 2006; Swales & Feak, 2012). The data collected indeed highlight progress in lexical competence (with particular reference to scientific terminology), argumentative skills, and the management of formal registers in academic discourse (Airey, 2011). This progression is accompanied by an increase in active participation in class and a strengthening of intrinsic motivation, as the language is perceived not as an end in itself but as a means of accessing the construction of disciplinary knowledge (Lasagabaster, Doiz & Sierra, 2014).

The teaching staff, aware of the heterogeneous linguistic needs of the students, adopts strategies oriented towards *language-aware teaching* (Andrei, 2020), developing linguistic-disciplinary materials *ad hoc* based on authentic texts from various specialized fields. These materials serve linguistic and conceptual mediation and contribute to creating inclusive and differentiated learning environments (Llinares, Morton & Whittaker, 2012).

In addition to the good methodological practices identified, the implementation of individualized language tutoring programs has been noted for students whose linguistic competence levels are below the required standards, with the aim of bridging gaps and ensuring equal opportunities for access to academic discourse (Pecorari & Malmström, 2018).

Finally, the use of Italian as a vehicular language has not only facilitated greater accessibility to content but has also stimulated more critical and reflective learning processes, promoting in students the development of increasing linguistic and cognitive autonomy in managing disciplinary knowledge (Cummins, 2000; Bertocchi & Salvatori, 2020).

Conclusions

The results obtained confirm the educational potential of Italian as a vehicular language in international university contexts, outlining a framework in which linguistic learning is closely intertwined with disciplinary learning. The use of Italian as a medium of instruction goes beyond mere linguistic transmission, functioning as a pedagogical tool capable of promoting more active student participation, deeper understanding of specialized knowledge, and more conscious and reflective linguistic development (Llinares et al., 2012; Lasagabaster et al., 2014).

In the contemporary academic context, the focus is no longer solely on “teaching a language,” but rather on training students in the language of knowledge — that is, the linguistic-cognitive repertoire that enables access to, processing of, and production of knowledge across different disciplinary fields (Hyland, 2006; Bertocchi & Salvatori, 2020). From this perspective, language acquisition occurs simultaneously with content acquisition, following an integrated approach grounded in the theoretical principles of *Content and Language Integrated Learning* (CLIL) (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010).

From a linguistic perspective, students have shown significant progress in mastering specialized vocabulary, producing written texts that are coherent, cohesive, and aligned with academic registers, as well as in comprehending complex disciplinary texts (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010; Dalton-Puffer, 2007). From a cognitive-disciplinary viewpoint, the use of the vehicular language has facilitated not only access to content but also its critical processing and its oral and written expression (Airey, 2011).

Learning through language thus proves to be an effective, inclusive teaching strategy that responds to the increasing linguistic and cultural complexity characterizing contemporary universities (Pecorari & Malmström, 2018). The integrated approach, typical of CLIL models, has been shown to foster authentic and contextualized learning, capable of supporting the development of transversal and professional skills, as well as linguistic and disciplinary competencies. Coonan (2002) emphasized the importance of *contact with the foreign language in its vehicular function, as it constitutes a qualitatively better language learning situation than that which normally exists in a traditional foreign language classroom*⁴.

In light of the results obtained, some relevant implications emerge for instructional design in university courses taught in a foreign language:

- *Teacher training*: It is advisable to develop structured professional development programs for university instructors involved in teaching in a second language (L2), with particular focus on the teaching of language for specific purposes (LSP), linguistic mediation of content, and the adoption of inclusive strategies (Basturkmen, 2010; Andrei, 2020).

- *Integrated curricula*: It is recommended to design integrated teaching modules, jointly developed by language teachers and subject-matter instructors, in order to ensure a genuine synergy between the linguistic and content dimensions of academic knowledge (Bertocchi & Salvatori, 2020; Cinganotto, 2016).

- *Centrality of writing*: Academic writing is confirmed as a fundamental tool for accessing scientific discourse and developing critical thinking. It is therefore recommended to systematically include academic writing workshops in university curricula taught in a second language (L2) as a means to strengthen students' communicative and argumentative skills (Hyland, 2004; Swales & Feak, 2012).

In summary, the present study helps to highlight the strategic value of integrated language and content teaching in multilingual university contexts and supports the need for institutional language policies attentive to the quality of linguistic-disciplinary training (Pérez-Cañado, 2012).

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The Jurisprudence of Albanian Constitutional Court: The Political Parties in Dispute

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Abstract

This paper aims first to give an understanding of political parties. Before dealing with the various specifics related to the topic, we must know what a political party is, of course, in a brief way. History has shown that in its beginning there were no real political parties, but only groups with opposing interests. This is seen in a general overview of the world. In Albania, however, political parties would begin to develop or appear more on the scene after the 1920s. Over the years, parties were consolidated as groups of individuals with the same views and beliefs that aim to influence power and governance. After the years of dictatorship in Albania, political pluralism was established, and parties began to play an important political role. This and other concepts about parties were initially sanctioned in the 1998 Constitution and then in more detail in law no. Law no. 8580 dated 17.02.2000, "On Political Parties".

During the existence of political pluralism in Albania after the dictatorship, political parties have been part of various constitutional conflicts. Political parties have often addressed the Constitutional Court to request the declaration of unconstitutionality of normative acts, decisions of the Central Election Commission, the law on elections, etc. In some cases, parties have themselves become part of the constitutional control by the Constitutional Court in compliance with the principles established in Article 9 of the Constitution.

Keywords: Constitutional Court, Political Parties, Albania, Dispute Resolution.

1. Introduction

Political parties are an essential element of political life. Political parties are not phenomena that have arisen in the contemporary era. There are authors who argue that political groups, although they did not have the organized form of today's political parties, existed in ancient times, especially in Greece and Rome. In Greece they mention the political wars between supporters of the agrarian and commercial currents. In Rome, political wars between supporters of the Greek brothers and their enemies are well known, as well as between Caesar and Pompey, etc. In the time of feudalism, political wars in Italy between the partisans of the Papacy and those of the emperor are noteworthy. These authors also mention the birth of the two traditional English parties, the Whigs and the Tories in the 17th century or the birth of political clubs in France before and during the French Revolution of the 18th century. In the classical liberal period, they were treated as parliamentary groups such as: "The Right" or "The Left", deprived of real stability in the country. This era was then accompanied by the expansion of voting and the transformation of political parties from elite group organizations into true mass parties. The latter are characteristic of contemporary states. All this brought about the necessity of constitutional recognition of political parties as an important social formation, which happened for the first time in Italy with the Constitution after the Second World War.

Most of the different authors tried to give definitions of political parties by distinguishing different elements such as, plurality of persons, organization, purpose, content, etc. The French constitutionalist Benjamin Constant defined a political party as: "a gathering of people who adhere to the same political doctrine". Marx and Engels in their definitions of political parties emphasized ideology, while Lenin emphasized the organizational aspect.

Historical sources speak of the existence of various political parties in Albania, in Albanian lands outside the current borders and in the diaspora since the beginning of the 20th century. Thus, in the early 1900s, two parties were created in Elbasan, the People's Party and the Beyleri Party, while a pro-Italian party was created in Shkoder. Political parties were not created only within the territory of Albania, but also in the Albanian diaspora around the world, for example: in the USA the Autonomist Party was created, in Skopje the Hoxhe Party was created. In Romania, two parties were created in the Albanian community, a pro-Slavic and a pro-Greek one.

After the Lushnja Congress, two political parties were created in Albania, the People's Party with the main leaders Fan Noli and Ahmet Zogu, and as a counterweight to this party, the Progressive (Democratic) Albanian Party was created.

The period 1945-1990 is characterized by unipartyism, the party state and after the 90s, political pluralism is established in Albania. So, what is observed is that political parties existed in Albania later than in Europe. Of course, the parties of that time could not have the current organization of modern parties.

2. Current Legislation on Political Parties

The fundamental changes occurred after the 90s when the Albanian law on political parties gave a complete and clear definition of political parties. Thus, the law defines that: "political parties are voluntary associations of citizens based on ideas, beliefs and views or common political interests, which aim to influence the life of the country through participation in elections and representation of the people in elected bodies of power". Of course, this definition in the first article of the law seeks to give a clearer understanding not only of what a political party is, but also of the conditions that must be met to form a political party.

Political parties in the Albanian Constitution are presented in three paragraphs (article 9):

- "1. Political parties are created freely. Their organization must comply with democratic principles.
2. Political parties and other organizations whose programs and activities are based on totalitarian methods, which incite and support racial, religious, regional or ethnic hatred, which use violence to seize power or to influence state policy, as well as those with clandestine characters are prohibited by law.
3. The financial resources of parties, as well as their expenses, are always made public."

The Constitution in the first paragraph pays special attention to the fact that the organization of political parties must be in accordance with democratic principles. This is an important element for having a state of law and moreover that the Albanian Constitution was adopted in 1998, 8 years after the fall of the dictatorship in Albania and the one-party system of the party-state. Since Albania came from such a negative experience, the position that the Albanian constitutionalists wanted to maintain in drafting this article is that of the European spirit that the organization and functioning of political parties must be in accordance with the law and must not violate human rights or incite racial, religious hatred, etc. (second paragraph of Article 9 of the Albanian Constitution).

Constitutionalists are not satisfied with only the organization and functioning but have also foreseen the control by the state over political parties (Article 9/3 of the Albanian Constitution). This control would be necessary in many cases. The Constitution cannot require forms of control only in relation to the ideology followed by the parties, but also in relation to their internal organization. This is because the state must ensure respect for the rights of citizens, members of political parties, by these organizations themselves. This control can extend to the resolution of conflicts that arise between subjects, mainly through the courts.

3. Political Parties and the Constitutional Court

European states embraced the American concept of control and protection of constitutionality late. For the first time in Europe, the Constitutional Court was established in Austria in 1920. The Austrian experience influenced many other European countries that established Constitutional Courts.

In Albania, the Constitutional Court was established in 1992 after overthrow of the dictatorial system.

According to the Constitution, the Constitutional Court guarantees respect for the Constitution and makes its final interpretation (Article 124). This 19-year experience of guaranteeing constitutionality in Albania serves to strengthen the rule of law. Article 131 of the Albanian Constitution defines the functions of the Constitutional Court and Article 134 defines the subjects that may address the Constitutional Court. Both articles indicate the mutual relationship between the Constitutional Court and political parties.

I – In the first case (Article 131/d of the Constitution), the Constitutional Court decides on the constitutionality of parties and other political organizations as well as their activity. So, if Article 9 of the Constitution states that political parties must be established in accordance with the law, etc., it is the Constitutional Court that guarantees this in practice. The control that the Constitutional Court performs organization and creation of political parties leads to the fact that in practice there are no cases that come into conflict with the principles established in Article 9 of the Constitution.

Based on its organic law, the Constitutional Court annuls the act of creating a party when it judges that its creation conflicts with the Constitution. It also decides to prohibit the activity of a party or its deregistration, when it concludes that this activity is unconstitutional.

II – In the second case, Article 134 of the Constitution defines the subjects that can initiate proceedings before the Constitutional Court. These subjects are divided into two groups:

subjects that can exercise the request unconditionally, subjects that can exercise the request conditionally only for issues related to their interests.

The second group of subjects includes political parties that initiate proceedings before the Constitutional Court only for issues related to their interests. Therefore, the Albanian Constitution has not only taken care of to show the way of organization, functioning or goals of political parties, but it has given them an important active role.

The question that arises is how political parties play this active role in practice, for which specific cases can they address the Constitutional Court?

Practice has shown that political parties have addressed the Constitutional Court quite often for various reasons. Initially, legitimacy is determined if in each case political parties have the right to address the Constitutional Court.

The cases based on which political parties have addressed the Constitutional Court so far are different. In the following we will interpret some cases

4. Control of normative acts.

An efficient tool is also considered the possibility of setting in motion the Constitutional Court to control normative acts whether they are in accordance with the Constitution. For such an issue to be raised by political parties, interest in this issue must be proven, which immediately leads to the legitimacy or not of the request. From the practice of the Constitutional Court, it has been determined that interest is considered justified if the applicant himself manages to prove that the negative consequence is direct, i.e. it derives directly from the act under review, is real and is closely related to the functions of the respective organization. This is the case where the Socialist Party has filed a request with the Constitutional Court with the aim of examining the compatibility with the Constitution of Albania of the agreement signed between the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Greece "On the delimitation of their respective areas, the continental shelf and other maritime areas belonging to them on the basis of international law".

The Constitutional Court considers that the possibility of political parties putting it into motion exists when they oppose the provisions of normative acts, which violate their constitutional status and with it their participation in the exercise of the state will. For this reason, the Court is responsible for examining whether a constitutional body has violated the rights of political parties through the normative act issued by it. In this case, the political party is legitimized in its requests, if it is a question of respect by a constitutional body of its status deriving from the Constitution, during the electoral process, such as the financing of political parties by the state, giving all parties an equal chance to take power, etc. The Constitutional Court not only legitimized the Socialist Party but also accepted its request by declaring the agreement in question unconstitutional.

5. Participation of Political Parties in Elections

In the other case, the Popular Union of Albanian Pensioners Party has addressed the Constitutional Court, requesting the repeal as incompatible with the Constitution of the Republic of Albania of Article 68 and Article 71 of Law No. 10019, dated 29.12.2008 "Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania". According to the applicant, the regulation provided for by Articles 68 and 71 of the Electoral Code creates an insurmountable barrier for new political entities wishing to participate in the elections, as it conditions their participation in the electoral race with the support of 10,000 people who must sign before a notary or at the CEC. According to the PBPSH, this violates equality in elections between political forces.

Participation in elections by political parties is assessed by the Constitutional Court as fulfilling the conditions set out in Article 134/1, f and 134/2 for the interest that a political party must have when addressing the Constitutional Court. The reasoning of the decision states that: "In this case, it is about the participation of the applicant in the general elections, which is fully within the mission, purpose and main interest of a political party, since only through participation in the electoral process can a party receive formal support from the voters and enable the participation of its candidates in the Assembly. In this way, it can realize that its political program is a governing program".

The Constitutional Court in this decision justifies the interest that the PBPSH must have to be able to make a request to it. Of course, the closest connection of political parties is that with the electoral system. Political parties in the electoral system and especially in the electoral process, from the pre-election campaign, the presentation of candidates, the formation of electoral bodies, the monitoring of elections to the distribution of mandates, appear as a very important determining factor. Therefore, an electoral system in a representative democracy cannot be thought of without the existence and functioning of political parties. This special position that political parties have in relation to elections also determines their interest in having legislation and rules that are as clear and fair and possible. The Constitutional Court finally accepted the request of PBPSH.

The interest of the requesting subject, the political party, has been proven in another case. In decision no. 1, dated 07.01.2005 of the Constitutional Court, the requesting party is the Social Democratic Party of Albania, which has requested the declaration of incompatibility with the Constitution of the Republic of Albania of the expression "who have participated in the elections" in the first and third sentences of article 73, point 1 of law no. 9087, dated 19.06.2003 "Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania". And in this case, the Constitutional Court has legitimized the requesting party, the Social Democratic Party, to address it. The decision states that: "The applicant's claim for the unconstitutionality of point 1 of article 73 of the Electoral Code and for the connection that this legal provision has with the aim of the political party to be an equal and competitive subject in elections, carries in itself the interest to be considered within the meaning of article 134, point 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania as an initiating subject of the abstract judgment of the constitutionality of the legal norm". The distinctive feature of such a request is that it sets in motion an abstract and objective control of the law, since the interest sought to be protected is not simply individual, but is an interest related to the respect of constitutional principles and the regular functioning of the rule of law. From this perspective of the problem, the Constitutional Court considers the Social Democratic Party, in the capacity of the applicant, as a legitimate subject and that has an interest in the matter under consideration. Finally, the Constitutional Court accepts the request.

In another case, the Constitutional Court, rigorously implementing the Law on the Main Constitutional Provisions, gives reasons that today are linked to Article 9 of the Albanian Constitution. In this case, the Presidency of the Communist Party has addressed a request to the Constitutional Court and has requested the declaration of unconstitutionality of Law No. 7591, dated 16.07.1992, for changing the content of the letter "b" of Article 6 of the Law "On Political Parties", etc.

The Constitutional Court in its reasoning mentions that the legal prohibition of the creation and activity of political parties, when their goals and activities are anti-national, anti-communist, Marxist-Leninist, etc., does not contradict the principle of party pluralism. According to the Main Constitutional Provisions, the Republic of Albania is a legal and democratic state. From this it follows that the goals and activities of political parties should be developed only on democratic principles. The activity of political parties that are based on anti-democratic principles such as the violent overthrow of the constitutional order, the abolition and restriction of democratic freedoms of citizens, the dictatorship of the proletariat, class warfare, etc. cannot be permitted.

For these reasons, the Constitutional Court, relying on the Law on the Main Constitutional Provisions, has rejected the request made by the Presidency of the Communist Party. In the case when political parties will address the Constitutional Court with a request, they must first be parties with democratic principles, respecting fundamental human rights and freedoms to guarantee the rule of law in practice.

A group of political parties consisting of the Social Democratic Party, the Democratic Alliance Party, the Union Party for Human Rights, the Democratic Party, and the Democratic Union Party have addressed the Constitutional Court. The subject of the request is "The repeal as unconstitutional of the letters "ç and d" of article 66 and point 3 of article 87 of law no. 8609, dated 08.05.2000 "Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania"".

This request comes as a need for the proper implementation of the Electoral Code and the respect of the principle of equal elections sanctioned in article 1/3 and article 45/4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania. The Constitutional Court, in the reasoning of the decision, states that only point "d" of article 66 of law no. 8609, dated 08.05.2000 "Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania" should be declared unconstitutional. The decision states that: "the repeal of letter "d" of article 66 of the Electoral Code will allow the mandate of the joint deputy to be counted for each party in proportion to the votes received by them in that electoral zone".

An interesting case is the request made by the Legality Party and the Social Democratic Party to the Constitutional Court for the repeal of the Decision of the Central Election Commission no. 1355, dated 13.07.1997, "On the announcement of the final result of the referendum, based on article 18/1 of Law no. 7866, dated 06.10.1994 "On Referendums" and the repeal of the decision of the Central Election Commission dated 13.07.1997 on the results announced by the election commission of zone no. 2.

Because the Legality Movement Party is known as the "initiator of the referendum", the Constitutional Court legitimizes it to make a request. Therefore, the interest that a political party must have in addressing the Constitutional Court in this case is easier to prove due to the fact that this party has initiated the referendum on the form of government.

A series of decisions of the Constitutional Court are those that decide on the registration of candidates for deputies, i.e. accepted requests. Political parties have often addressed the Constitutional Court requesting the annulment of decisions of the Central Election Commission that have decided not to register candidates for deputies for the requesting parties, such as, for example, decision no. 11, date 10.05.1996, request made by the Christian Democratic Party; decision no. 12, date 13.05.1996, request made by the Social Democratic Union Party; decision no. 13, date 14.05.1996, request made by the Democratic Alliance Party; decision no. 15, date 15.05.1996, request made by the "Union for Human Rights" Party; decision no. 20, dated 17.05.1996, request made by the Democratic Right Party; decision no. 22, dated 21.05.1996, request made by the Democratic Alliance Party; decision no. 32, dated 21.07.1997, request made by the Democratic Party.

6. On the Election Results

Not in all cases when political parties have passed the Constitutional Court are they legitimate, because the interest in a certain issue must necessarily be proven. Thus, the Constitutional Court has not accepted the request of the National Unity Party addressed to it to request the repeal, as incompatible with the Constitution, of Instruction no. 991/3, dated 02.03.2010 "On an amendment to Instruction no. 13, dated 12.02.2009 "On the determination of the service fee for actions and services of the judicial administration, the Ministry of Justice, the Prosecutor's Office, the Notary and the Immovable Property Registration Office". Among other things, the Constitutional Court reasons that: "the possibility of political parties to put the Constitutional Court in motion exists when they oppose the provisions of normative acts, which violate their constitutional status and, with it, their participation in the exercise of the state will. Such may be the acts that determine the declaration of assets, their financing by the state or other entities, the manner of organizing and exercising their political activity not only during elections but also in the period between them, etc." Therefore, the connection of interest with the filing of the request according to the Constitutional Court is a necessity for the progress of the process before it.

The Constitutional Court has also held the same position in decision no. 100, dated 20.12.2010. In this case, the Albanian Pensioners' Popular Union Party has requested the Constitutional Court to annul the decision no. 602, dated 1.8.2009 of the Central Election Commission "On the announcement of the final results of the elections for the Assembly of Albania in 2009" as contrary to Article 1/3 of the Constitution. The Constitutional Court has argued that the Albanian Pensioners' Popular Union Party is not legitimate within the meaning of Article 134/2 of the Constitution. The Constitutional Court, having established that the Albanian Pensioners' Popular Union Party has previously addressed it, assesses that the applicant is not legitimate in his requests for the announcement of the results of the elections as invalid, since he fails to argue his direct, personal and real interest. This request can only be made by political parties that have participated in the elections or by candidates for deputy. Since the applicant did not participate in the elections, he cannot be legitimate in his inquiries regarding the manner of conducting the parliamentary elections or the formation of the elected body.

The Party for the Protection of Workers' Rights has filed a request with the Constitutional Court, requesting the repeal as unconstitutional of Article 122/6; of the word "eight" in Article 146/1; of the second part of point 5 of Article 158 "no appeal shall be made against it", of the Electoral Code.

The party requests the declaration of Article 158/5 as unconstitutional because no appeal is allowed against the decisions of the Electoral College. For the above party to be subject to addressing the Constitutional Court, it must prove a legitimate interest in the case in question. The Constitutional Court shall address the issue by providing the relevant arguments. The mere fact that the Party for the Protection of Workers' Rights opposes the provisions of the Election Code, i.e. the law regulating elections, does not necessarily mean that it is a priority entitled to address this, Court. Its being an electoral subject does not mean that it has unlimited legitimacy. The political party that seeks the repeal of a normative act must prove a direct interest in the matter and argue the negative consequences that have occurred or are expected (with certainty and not with the probability that they will occur) that it will suffer from the implementation of the norms that it opposes in Court. The decision determines that the coalition of which the applicant was a part, has exercised the right to appeal against the decisions of the CEC to the Electoral College. Therefore, regardless of the outcome of the appeal, he has managed to exercise his right guaranteed by the Constitution and chemistry has been reviewed by a court designated by law. Therefore, the requesting subject, the political party, failed to prove the legitimate interest in addressing the Constitutional Court.

Some of the cases when parties have addressed the Constitutional Court regarding various electoral problems such as registration of candidates for deputies, completion of documentation, etc. have been rejected by the Constitutional Court, such as: decision no. 16, dated 16.05.1996, request made by the National Party of Legality; decision no. 19, dated 17.05.1996, request made by the Agrarian Party of Albania; decision no. 24, dated 15.06.1996, request made by the Democratic Alliance Party, Social Democratic Party; decision no. 27, dated 19.07.1997, request made by the Socialist Party; decision no.28, dated 19.07.1997, request made by the Democratic Alliance Party; decision no.30, dated 19.07.1997, request made by the Christian Democratic Union Party, the Socialist Party, the Christian Democratic Party.

7. Control of the Constitutionality of Political Parties.

In the series of cases related to political parties, the Constitutional Court has not always been initiated by political parties, but there have also been cases when it has been invested in other subjects for cases related to political parties.

The President of the Supreme Audit Office of the Republic of Albania has addressed the Constitutional Court, requesting the repeal, as incompatible with the Constitution, of the expression "but it shall also cover gifts and assistance received in other ways", in the second sentence of Article 23 of Law No. 8580, dated 17.02.2000 "On Political Parties". In this case, the Constitutional Court ensures that in practice this law is in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Albania and specifically with Article 9/3 thereof. In its decision, the Constitutional Court reasons by emphasizing that the Supreme Audit Office of the Republic of Albania, as the highest institution of economic and financial control, extends its activity to a certain circle of legal entities. According to Article 163 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, the entities subject to the control of this body are state institutions for their economic activity, central and local government bodies in the manner of use and protection of state funds as well as legal entities in which the state has more than half of the shares or shares, or when their loans, credits and obligations are guaranteed by the state.

In the sense of the constitutional provision, political parties remain outside the group of these legal entities to be controlled for their economic and financial activity.

Examining the request submitted from this perspective, the Constitutional Court considers that even the gifts and assistance that political parties receive from parties or international alliances of parties, domestic or foreign political organizations and foundations, which are recognized as their financial and material sources, cannot be subject to control by this constitutional body.

This fact does not mean that political parties should avoid declaring in relation to the assistance or gifts that they benefit from legal sources, because based on Article 9/3 of the Constitution they have the legal obligation to make their financial sources public. Failure to comply with this constitutional obligation in the sense of Article 131 letter "d" of the Constitution constitutes

constitutional jurisdiction and one of the powers of the Constitutional Court to decide on the constitutionality of the activity of political parties.

8. Conclusions

As we have mentioned in this paper, political parties are an essential element of political life. They have changed a lot from their genesis to the present day in terms of organization, functions and the role they play. In the period 1945-1990 in Albania there was a single party and political pluralism was lacking. After the 90s, this situation changed, and political pluralism was established. Once, the only factor in politics was the party-state, while after the 90s and onwards there are a considerable number of political parties. Albanian legislation and the 1998 Constitution have attached particular importance to political parties. In the Albanian Constitution, in the section on fundamental principles, a special article is provided for political parties. In Article 9 of the Constitution, it is determined that the organization of political parties must comply with democratic principles. Criteria were established that avoid the creation of dictatorial parties or unipartyism.

The Albanian constitutionalism is not limited to Article 9 of the Constitution, which defines the organization and functioning of political parties. Articles 131/d and 134/1/f define the relationship of political parties with the Constitutional Court.

From the study of practical cases in this paper, the conclusion is reached that political parties are not only an important political factor, but also an important subject that has set the Constitutional Court in motion. Of course, the issues raised were those directly related to political parties, issues that have to do with are with the electoral system, with elections or with normative acts. Political parties are often legitimized by the Constitutional Court as subjects to address it. In some cases, the requests have been accepted and in other cases they have been rejected. This is not important, but what is important is the jurisprudence that the Constitutional Court has established in arguing the interest that political parties should have in raising constitutional issues. Even though the most frequent cases when political parties have addressed the Constitutional Court are election periods, the Constitutional Court has given arguments that will serve political parties to pay special attention to the interest that they must prove to raise such issues.

This conclusion is not only when parties address the Constitutional Court, but also when the Constitutional Court controls the constitutionality of political parties as a constitutional obligation. Although cases are not frequent, this is an additional guarantee for having a constitutional and democratic party.

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 Decision no. 24, dated 15.06.1996 Decision no. 93, dated 10.12.2010
 Decision no. 27, dated 19.07.1997 Decision no. 100, dated 20.12.2010
 Decision no. 28, dated 19.07.1997 Decision no. 87, dated 22.07.2011

Aspects of linguistic and cultural equivalence in literary translation

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Abstract

In this article, we explore the concepts of translational and cultural equivalence as pivotal elements in the field of *literary translation*. Specifically, we examine how the notion of equivalence—recognized as a fundamental principle in *translation theory*—is realized, challenged, and redefined in the process of translating literary works across languages and cultures. Our focus is on how translations can preserve the meaning, tone, spirit, and *cultural nuances* of the original text while balancing fidelity to the source material with an awareness of the attitudes and norms of the target audience.

Equivalence should be understood not as a static endpoint, but as an active, *interpretive process* that unfolds in response to the *translator's own subjectivity* and cultural context. This paper engages with theories of functional and dynamic equivalence, *post-structuralism critiques*, and cultural approaches to translation, critically interrogating conventional notions of accuracy and fidelity.

We also address specific challenges in the translation process, such as the translation of untranslatable terms, *culture-bound references*, historical context, and the translator's role as an interpreter.

By connecting theory to practice, this study draws on examples from various literary translations, particularly from English to Albanian, to illustrate how equivalence is achieved in actual translation scenarios. Ultimately, we advocate for a redefined, dynamic, and case-specific understanding of equivalence that recognizes the translator not only as a linguistic intermediary, but also as a *cultural mediator* and a creative agent.

Keywords: Literary translations, cultural nuances, translation theory, cultural mediator, translator's subjectivity, interpretive process, post-structuralism critiques, culture-bound references.

1. Introduction

Translation extends beyond simple linguistic replacement; it embodies a process of interpretation and creativity that exists at the crossroads of language, literature, and culture. The intricacies involved in literary translation amplify this complexity, are responsible for not only conveying semantic content but also preserving tone, style, and cultural nuances inherent in the original text. Within this sophisticated framework, equivalence has emerged as a pivotal yet frequently debated concept within translation studies.

Equivalence broadly describes the relationship characterized by similarity or correspondence between a *source text* (ST) and its *target text* (TT). However, it is neither an *absolute nor unchanging construct*. Over recent decades, scholars have proposed various models to understand equivalence—ranging from formal and *dynamic equivalence* introduced by Nida in 1964 to *textual-linguistic equivalence* proposed by Catford in 1965—and more contemporary theories emphasizing *functional and cultural aspects* put forth by Nord (1997) and House (2015). These theoretical advancements underscore an increasing awareness that translation is shaped by *sociolinguistic variables* along with historical contexts; thus rendering meaning both fluid and subject to negotiation.

In literary translations specifically, challenges escalate: translators frequently face difficult choices between remaining true to their source material while ensuring *resonance within the target audience's culture*. Ensuring *translational fidelity* while maintaining *cultural resonance* demands a high level of *interpretive sensitivity* and *analytical precision*. Cultural references may lack direct equivalents; idiomatic expressions or metaphors might not correspond across languages which obliges translators to partake in what Toury (1995) terms "*norm-governed behavior*"—making decisions influenced both by *established linguistic norms* as well as *cultural expectations*.

The journey toward equivalence is often obstructed by challenges unique to literary texts, including: *untranslatability*, *tonal fidelity*, *historical distance*, *cultural distinctiveness*, which demand that translators act not merely *as transmitters* but *as creative mediators*, striking a compromise between remaining faithful to the source and making the text accessible and meaningful to new readers. Such a perspective recognizes the translator as:

- A *linguistic operator* who manages textual fidelity.

- A *cultural mediator* who bridges diverse worldviews.
- A *stylistic co-producer* who shapes literary form and aesthetic experience.
- An *intercultural commentator* who negotiates meaning across languages and societies.

This paper aims to explore concepts of *translational integrity* alongside *cultural equivalence* from both *theoretical viewpoints*, as well as *critical analysis perspectives*. It investigates how notions of equivalence do not serve merely as *ultimate objectives*—or “*perfect matches*”—but rather function dynamically within *context-specific negotiations* influenced significantly by *translator agency* along with *individual aesthetic preferences*. Through connecting key theoretical constructs with practical illustrations drawn from English–Albanian literary translations, *this study aims to deepen the understanding of how equivalence is constructed and negotiated in the context of real-world literary translation.*

2. Theoretical Framework

The *notion of equivalence* has historically been a *critical aspect* of *translation theory*, particularly in the context of *literary translation discussions*. Its interpretation has undergone significant transformation over time; it has shifted from being perceived as an *objective standard for precise correspondence* to being recognized as a *relative and negotiated outcome*—often unstable throughout the process of translation. It is now clear that *cross-linguistic equivalence*, along with other forms of *translational equivalence*, is not an *inherent quality*, rather, it emerges from an ongoing assessment of the *interaction between source and target texts*, a dynamic process which enables a better understanding of the complexity involved in achieving true equivalence in translations.

2.1. Formal and Dynamic Equivalence (Eugene Nida)

Eugene Nida, one of the most influential figures in translation studies, fundamentally reshaped the discourse on translation equivalence with his groundbreaking work in the 1960s. In his seminal book *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964), *Nida* introduced two key approaches to achieving equivalence in translation: *formal equivalence* and *dynamic equivalence*

- *Formal equivalence* is particularly appropriate for texts where precision is critical, such as legal, religious, or historical documents. In literary translation, *formal equivalence* can sometimes produce unnatural results and it may result in a target text that feels “foreign” or ‘awkward’ to the reader if the source language’s structures are very different from those of the target language. The translator’s goal is to produce a target text that mirrors the linguistic structure, vocabulary, and grammatical patterns of the original as closely as possible. This approach seeks to preserve the literal meaning, word order, and syntax, maintaining a strong connection to the source language’s form.
- *Dynamic equivalence*, also called *functional equivalence*, prioritizes naturalness and readability in the target language, so the text “feels” right to its new audience, aiming for the same effect as the original text. In literary translation, the translator must adapt the message and style to fit the cultural expectations, norms, and linguistic conventions of the target audience rather than merely reproduce word-for-word translation (*Nida, 1964*).

2.1.3 Critiques and Limitations

Neither *formal* nor *dynamic equivalence* alone can fully address the complexities of translation. *Formal equivalence* can produce translations that are technically accurate but stilted or obscure to the target reader. *Dynamic equivalence*, on the other hand, risks over-adaptation or loss of source text specificity, potentially leading to translations that read more like interpretations or adaptations than faithful translations. In practice, translators often use a spectrum of strategies between formal and dynamic equivalence, making case-by-case decisions about when to remain literal and when to adapt creatively.

2.2. Textual-Linguistic Equivalence (J.C. Catford)

J.C. Catford’s contribution to translation studies, particularly through his 1965 work *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, brings a structuralist and linguistic perspective to the concept of equivalence, defining equivalence in terms of *linguistic levels* and emphasizing the inevitability of *shifts* — or changes — between source and target texts. He distinguishes between *two main types of shifts* in translation:

a) *Level shifts*: changes from one linguistic level to another, for example, translation shifts from one level of language to another, for instance, a *grammatical element* in the source language is translated as a *lexical element* in the target language.

Example: An English modal verb (grammatical) might be translated into Albanian using an adverb or a lexical phrase. (You can swim here= *ketu mund te besh* not-you can do the swimming here)

b) *Category shifts*: changes within the same level, such as changes in word class (e.g., noun to verb), structure, or sequence.

- *Structure shifts*: Changes in syntactic structure, e.g., active voice in English becoming passive voice in Albanian. eg They built the house last year/ *Shtepia u ndertua* vjet.- The house was built last year
- *Class shifts*: Changes in word class, e.g., a noun in English becoming a verb in Albanian.

Example: The decision was difficult = We decided with difficulty

- *Unit shifts*: Differences in the rank or unit size of linguistic items, e.g., a phrase in ST translated as a single word in TT.

Example: The English idiomatic phrase “kick the bucket” (meaning “to die”) is translated as a single Albanian verb expressing the same concept.

Intra-system shifts: Changes within the same linguistic system, e.g., a change in tense or number.

Example: The English past tense might be translated into a perfective form in Albanian, reflecting differences within verb aspect systems. (He wrote a letter-he has written a letter)

Catford’s framework works well for technical or legal texts, where it is very important to preserve the exact meaning and function of terms. In these texts, shifts are controlled and precise. In literary works, it is not enough to simply replace words or structures; the translator must adapt the tone, style, cultural nuances, and figurative meaning the author intended

2.3. Functional and Skopos -Oriented Theories (Katharina Reiss & Christiane Nord)

The *German functionalist theories* that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s presented a substantial challenge to the conventional understanding of equivalence as simple sameness. These theories underscored *functionality and purpose* as critical criteria, notably illustrated through *Skopos theory*. Scholars such as *Reiss (1977)* and *Nord (1997)* argued that translation must serve a distinct role within the context of the target language, assessing *equivalence* based on the *communicative objectives* of the translated text rather than strictly adhering to fidelity with its source. This shift represented a move away from *traditional focus on exact alignment between source and target texts*, favoring instead an emphasis on function or objective—known in this context as *Skopos*—to inform translational decisions. This perspective promotes *creative adaptations* that allow translators to capture *not just literal meaning but also thematic essence through imaginative adjustments*.

2.3.1 Historical and Theoretical Background

Katharina Reiss and Christiane Nord are two of the key theorists who developed and popularized functionalist approaches:

- *Katharina Reiss (1977)* initially proposed a typology of texts based on *their communicative functions*—informative, expressive, and operative—and suggested that different text types require different translational strategies.
- *Christiane Nord (1991, 1997)* developed this further with *Skopos theory*, which argues that translation is a *goal-oriented activity*. The purpose (*skopos*) of the translation dictates the translator’s choices, focusing on the needs and expectations of the target audience.

2.3.2 Core Ideas of Functionalism and Skopos Theory

1. Translation as Purpose-Driven Activity

Unlike earlier models which emphasize linguistic equivalence as the primary goal, *functionalist theories* assert that translations are made for a purpose within the target culture. The *intended function* of the target text—whether to inform, persuade, entertain, or educate—shapes how the translation is produced.

2. Equivalence as Functional Correspondence

Equivalence is reframed not as identity but as *functional correspondence*—the target text should fulfill the same function for its audience as the source text does for its original audience. This may require adaptations, omissions, or additions that depart from source text fidelity but serve the communicative purpose better.

3. Freedom and Creativity of the Translator

This model recognizes the translator as active agents who make *strategic decisions* based on the translation’s purpose, allowing creative modifications to better fit the target audience’s culture and expectations.

Functionalist theories are especially useful in literary translation, where capturing cultural nuances, tone, and artistic effect is vital. For example, when translating *Vanity Fair* into Albanian, references to English social customs may be adapted or explained to ensure the text remains meaningful for Albanian readers.

However, some critics warn that emphasizing function over fidelity can risk misrepresenting the source text and may introduce subjectivity or inconsistency, especially if the translation’s purpose is unclear. Despite this, supporters argue that recognizing purpose and context leads to more transparent and effective translations.

2.4. Cultural and Descriptive Approaches (Susan Bassnett, Gideon Toury)

In the late 20th century, translation theory expanded significantly through what we now call the *cultural and descriptive approaches*. These perspectives moved beyond purely linguistic or functional views, emphasizing that translation is always a culturally and ideologically shaped act.

2.4.1 Susan Bassnett: Translation as Cultural Negotiation

In her seminal work, *Translation Studies* (first published in 1980, with later editions in the 1990s), Susan Bassnett argues that translation is not just a transfer of words between languages, but a process of cultural negotiation. It depends on how the translator interprets and adapts cultural elements for the target audience.

2.4.2 Gideon Toury, a leading figure in *Descriptive Translation Studies*, proposed that instead of telling translators what they *should* do, we should study what they *actually* do. His approach focuses on norms—that is, the social and institutional expectations that guide translation behavior. Toury identifies three types of norms:

- *Preliminary norms* – decisions about what texts or genres to translate.
- *Operational norms* – decisions made during the translation process, especially regarding language and culture.
- *Textual norms* – the stylistic features of the final product.

2.5. Foreignization vs. Domestication (Lawrence Venuti)

Lawrence Venuti's influential work, *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995), revolutionized the field of translation studies by bringing attention to the ethical and cultural implications of translational choices. Central to Venuti's thesis are the concepts of *domestication* (making translation natural and familiar to the target culture) and *foreignization* (preserving elements of the source culture).

2.5.1 Venuti's Critique of Translator Invisibility

A key part of Venuti's critique is aimed at the “invisibility” of translators. In much Western translation practice, translators are expected to make their work seamless and transparent, as if the text was originally written in the target language. This *invisibility* supports domestication but, according to Venuti, silences the translator's voice and erases the cultural and ideological differences involved in translation. He advocates for translator visibility — through prefaces, footnotes, or stylistic choices — so that readers recognize the intercultural dialogue taking place.

In literary translation, these issues are especially important. Venuti's framework helps us understand that translation is not just about conveying meaning accurately but also about negotiating cultural difference and artistic style. The choice between *domestication* and *foreignization* influences how cultural identities are represented, preserved, or transformed in the target text. Finally, while *foreignization* can sometimes make texts feel “strange” or difficult, and *domestication* can increase readability, Venuti encourages translators to thoughtfully balance these strategies, embracing the ethical and political responsibilities involved in translation.

3. Untranslatability and Culture-Specific Terms

One major issue is the presence of words, idioms, social customs, or historical references deeply embedded in the source culture, but lacking direct equivalents in Albanian. Translators often have to choose between *domestication* —adapting terms to something more familiar for the Albanian reader —or *foreignization*—retaining the original terms and explaining them.

For example, in William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, the term “season” refers to the London social season, a concept tied to aristocratic social events, which has no exact counterpart in Albanian culture. A *domesticated* translation might generalize it as “*kulmi i jetës mondane*” (the peak of social life), while a *foreignized* version might keep “*Sezoni*” and add a footnote explaining the tradition. Similarly, military titles such as “*Life Guards*” have no direct Albanian equivalent, so translators might use “*Garda Mbretërore*” (Royal Guard) and provide contextual explanation.

Idiomatic expressions also pose challenges. The English idiom “as cool as a cucumber” is culturally specific; a literal translation sounds odd. Instead, translators interpret the meaning—calmness under pressure—using phrases like “*i qetë dhe i ftohtë si akull*” (calm and cold as ice).

Wordplay and puns are particularly difficult to render while preserving style and tone. For instance, the phrase “*Revenge may be wicked, but it's natural*” contains a moral paradox. A straightforward translation loses the rhythm, so translators may adapt it to capture the ironic and philosophical nuance.

Social and hierarchical references, like “*Lady Bareacres*” or “*Miss Pinkerton's Academy for Young Ladies*,” reflect English class systems or institutions unfamiliar in Albania. These often require *domestication*, *foreignization*, or additional explanations so the target audience can grasp their significance.

3.1. Tone, Mood, and Narrative Voice

In literary texts, *tone* (author's attitude), *mood* (atmosphere created), and *narrative voice* (distinctive style or personality of the narrator) are crucial stylistic elements that contribute significantly to the overall impact and meaning of a work. Translating these subtle features presents one of the most formidable challenges in literary translation, as they require a delicate balance between faithful representation and creative adaptation.

3.1.1 Importance of Tone and Mood

-Tone refers to the author's or narrator's attitude toward the subject matter or audience. It can be formal, ironic, humorous, sarcastic, melancholic, or any other affective stance.

Consider Wilde's famous *paradoxical epigram*:

- *Original*: “I can resist everything except temptation.”

- *Literal Albanian translation*: “Duhet të rezistoj gjithçkaje, përveç tundimit.” (I have to resist everything except temptation.)

While accurate in meaning, this translation:

- *Diminishes the paradox*: The English version’s witty contradiction (“resist everything except temptation”) is an elegant play on words that highlights human weakness humorously.
- *Loses rhetorical elegance*: The balance and brevity in the original contribute to its stylistic charm.
- *Misses tone calibration*: Without idiomatic or stylistic adjustments, the humor may fall flat.

To better capture *the tone*, a translator might opt for a more idiomatic Albanian expression or restructure the sentence to *preserve the paradoxical humor*, for example:

- “Mund të rezistoj gjithçkaje, përveç tundimit – dhe ai më tund vazhdimisht.” (I can resist everything except temptation — and it constantly tempts me.)

This introduces a playful element, keeping the paradox alive and more natural in Albanian..

-Mood, on the other hand describes the emotional atmosphere or feeling evoked in the reader by the text, such as suspense, joy, gloom, or nostalgia.

- For instance, the *gothic atmosphere* in *Edgar Allan Poe’s* works is built through intricate sentence structures and vivid vocabulary. A translator who opts for simplified or modern Albanian phrases may inadvertently dilute the haunting mood.

3.1.2 Narrative Voice: Maintaining Authorial and Narratorial Identity

The narrative voice, whether *first-person*, *third-person omniscient*, *unreliable*, or *experimental*, is a key marker of style and perspective. In *Vanity Fair*, the formal and often ironic narrator addresses readers directly with a broad social overview, which needs to be preserved to keep the satirical tone.

For example, the phrase “*It is possible that Becky was one of those young ladies who are endowed with a genius for getting on in the world*” carries subtle irony. A too-literal translation loses this nuance. A better version might be: “*Perhaps Becky was one of those young ladies naturally gifted at rising in life—at any cost.*”

3.1.3 Tone, Mood, and Narrative Voice – Examples from *Vanity Fair*

Example 1: Irony and Satire

- *English*: “It is possible that Becky was one of those young ladies who are endowed with a genius for getting on in the world.”
- *Tone*: Subtle irony, questioning Becky’s moral integrity while admiring her ambition.
- *Too literal Albanian*: “Është e mundur që Becky të ishte një nga ato zonjusha me talent për të ecur përpara në jetë.” (It is possible that Becky was one of those young ladies with a talent for getting ahead in life)
- *Better version (preserving irony)*: “Ndoshta Becky ishte nga ato zonjusha që kanë dhunti të lindur për t’u ngritur në jetë – me çfarëdo çmimi qoftë.” (Perhaps Becky belonged to that order of young ladies endowed with an innate talent for climbing the social ladder — be it at any cost.)

Example 2: Authorial Intrusion

- *English*: “Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or having it, is satisfied?”
- *Challenge*: Maintaining rhetorical rhythm and philosophical tone.
- *Albanian translation*: “Kush prej nesh është i lumtur në këtë botë? Kush e arrin dëshirën e vet? Dhe nëse e arrin, a ndjehet i kënaqur?” (Who is happy in this world? Who attains what he desires? And having attained it, is he satisfied?)

Further Examples of Irony and Satirical Tone

1. Satire of Morality and Society

Original:

“This is a *Vanity Fair*, a world where everyone is striving for something—pleasure, fame, money, or power.”

- *Tone*: Philosophical irony; Thackeray’s omniscient narrator moralizes while portraying characters’ pettiness.

- Albanian suggestion:
“Kjo është Panairi i Kotësisë – një botë ku secili vrapon pas kënaqësisë, famës, parasë apo pushtetit.” (This is Vanity Fair — a world wherein all men and women pursue, with restless zeal, the fleeting shadows of pleasure, fame, wealth, or power.)

Commentary: While this phrase translates well literally, it’s the tone and context that carry the irony. The translator must ensure the moral voice and detachment of the narrator remain intact throughout.

2. Understatement as Irony

Original:

“Becky had no objection to going to church. She went to church as a matter of business.”

- Irony: This undercuts religious sincerity with materialistic motives.
- Albanian version:
“Becky nuk kishte asgjë kundër të shkonte në kishë. Ajo shkonte në kishë si pjesë e biznesit të saj.” (Becky had no objection to attending church; indeed, she went there as a necessary branch of her trade.)

Commentary: The phrasing must mirror Thackeray’s dry, sardonic tone, avoiding emotional or moral exaggeration that could ruin the subtle effect.

3. Mock Heroism

Original:

“Rawdon was brave—as brave as a lion—when there was no danger.”

- Tone: Biting irony, undermining heroic image.
- Albanian version:
“Rawdon ishte trim – trim si luan – kur nuk kishte rrezik.” (Rawdon was a lion in courage — provided there was no danger to test it)
- Optional variation to emphasize irony:
“Rawdon tregonte trimëri... por vetëm kur ishte i sigurt që s’kishte asnjë rrezik.” (Rawdon showed his 3.3. *Historical Distance and Temporal Equivalence*

Translating literary works from different historical periods presents the challenge of balancing modern readability with preserving historical authenticity, a concept known as temporal equivalence. Translators must decide whether to modernize the language or preserve the historical flavor by negotiating the *temporal gap* between the original work and the contemporary audience. As languages and cultures evolve, texts from earlier periods develop layers of *historical resonance* that may be unfamiliar or inaccessible to modern readers. This phenomenon creates a tension between preserving the *historical authenticity* of the source text and ensuring the *readability and relevance* of the translation for the target audience—a tension at the heart of what we may call *temporal equivalence*.

3.2 The Problem of Diachronic Displacement

Texts written centuries ago often employ vocabulary, idioms, grammatical structures, and references that are no longer current, even in their source language. Translators working with such texts must determine how much of this *archaism* to retain. Do they render the text in *modern target language* for clarity, or attempt to mirror the *historical distance* and stylistic formality of the original? Take, for example, *Charles Dickens*, whose novels combine Victorian English, complex syntax, and cultural allusions that paint a vivid portrait of 19th-century Britain. An Albanian translation of *Bleak House* or *Oliver Twist* risks *anachronism* if the translator uses overly modern expressions that clash with the historical setting and characters’ worldview.

- Example: Translating a Dickensian phrase like “He was a man of low breeding but high ambition” into Albanian as “Ishte një njeri pa edukatë, por me shumë ambicie” (He was a man without manners, but full of ambition. may be clear), but the choice of “pa edukatë” (without manners) and “ambicie” (without ambition), (modern and direct) could lose the subtle class markers and social tone of the original. A more era-appropriate rendering like “Një zotëri me sjellje të rënda, por dëshira të larta për ngritje” (A gentleman of uncouth manners, yet aspiring to the highest of ambitions.) might better preserve the tone and historical nuance.

3.2.1 Modernization vs. Archaization

This dilemma is often framed as a *spectrum* between *modernization* (updating the language and tone) and *archaization* (preserving older forms of expression). Each strategy has trade-offs:

- *Modernization* ensures accessibility and engagement for present-day readers but can distort the historical texture or misrepresent the author's voice.
- *Archaization* maintains historical authenticity but risks alienating readers through obscurity or stiffness, especially if the target language no longer supports such archaic forms naturally.

In Albanian, which has undergone rapid standardization and modernization—especially post-1990—the gap between literary Albanian and its earlier forms can be dramatic. Translating Shakespeare or Shelley into 21st-century Albanian, for instance, means confronting the lack of an established poetic or archaic register equivalent to Early Modern English.

3.2.2 Temporal Equivalence in Practice

Let's consider *Thackeray's* narrative intrusions. In *Vanity Fair*, the narrator's 19th-century diction and moral commentary are central to the reading experience. A literal translation may obscure these nuances, while a modernized version might shift the tone entirely.

- The phrase: "*The world is a looking-glass, and gives back to every man the reflection of his own face.*" may be flattened if rendered in simplified contemporary Albanian as "*Bota të pasqyron ashtu si je.*" (The world shows you nothing more nor less than yourself)

While communicative, this version lacks the rhetorical elegance and philosophical resonance of the original. A more temporally aligned version as "*Bota është si një pasqyrë, që çdo njeriu i kthen pas hijen e fytyrës së vet.*" (The world is but a looking-glass, faithfully casting back to each of us the very shadow of our own countenance — whether we be pleased to see it or not.) preserves rhythm, metaphor, and tone while maintaining a 19th-century flavor.

3.2.3 Historical Distance and Temporal Equivalence – Examples from *Vanity Fair*

Example 1: Archaic Language and Social Conventions

- *English*: "A modest dinner party, where a boiled leg of mutton formed the principal dish."
- *Explanation*: This reflects the 19th-century British middle-class domestic scene.
- *Translation approach*: Should preserve the simplicity and class-specific detail.
- *Albanian suggestion*: "Një darkë modeste familjare, ku këmba e zier e deles ishte pjata kryesore." (A modest family supper, at which the boiled leg of mutton formed the principal dish.)
(Preserves historical flavor without modernizing the setting.)

Example 2: Outdated Expressions

- *English*: "He has cut me in the park, and no longer nods when we pass."
- "To cut" here means to deliberately ignore someone.
- *Literal translation*: "Më ka prerë në park dhe nuk më përshëndet më." (He cut me in the park, and no longer acknowledges me)
- *Better version*: "Më ka shpërfillur në park dhe nuk më jep më as një tundje koke." (He slighted me in the park, and will no longer grant me so much as a nod)
(Clarifies old idiom with modern clarity while retaining social context.)

3.3 The Translator's Voice and Agency

Traditionally, the role of the translator was perceived as that of a *neutral conduit*, a mere channel through which the original text's meaning passes transparently into another language. However, modern translation theory challenges this notion by emphasizing the *translator's active agency*—the conscious and creative role the translator plays in shaping the final text, mediating cultural nuances, and ultimately influencing how the target audience interprets the source material. Translators often exercise creative liberties to prioritize effect over form, introducing new metaphors, modifying syntax, and adjusting register. This dynamic is

particularly pronounced in poetry or experimental prose, where a literal translation can result in an unreadable or stilted output. In numerous English-Albanian translations, the translator's presence is evident through footnotes, interjections, or subtle shifts in tone to align with local cultural norms. This approach, while at odds with the notion of "invisible translation" (*Venuti, 1995*), reflects the practical realities of cultural mediation.

3.3.1 Translator as an Active Creator

- Translators are not passive recipients of meaning but *co-creators* who interpret, reframe, and sometimes reshape the text. They frequently exercise *creative liberties* to maintain the original's aesthetic and communicative impact, which may involve:
 - Introducing new metaphors or culturally resonant imagery.
 - Modifying syntax to preserve rhythm or flow.
 - Adjusting the level of formality or register to suit the target audience.

Recognizing the translator's agency encourages ethical transparency, where translators openly acknowledge their interpretive contributions rather than disguising them. It also underscores the need for translators to possess deep cultural competence and literary sensitivity to balance fidelity with creative adaptation. This approach fosters dialogue between source and target cultures, enriching both by allowing translations to resonate authentically within new cultural contexts. The *translator's voice and agency* are central to the art and practice of literary translation. Far from mere conduits, translators function as *intercultural mediators, creative collaborators, and critical interpreters* who shape how texts are received and understood. Their active participation, through choices in style, tone, and cultural adaptation, transforms translation into a dynamic and nuanced process—one that is as much about re-creation and negotiation as it is about linguistic fidelity.

3.3.2. Translator's Voice and Agency – Examples from *Vanity Fair*

Example 1: Translator explaining culture

- *Original phrase*: "The auctioneer's hammer fell."
- *Literal meaning*: An item has been sold at auction.
- *Albanian version with translator's note*:
 "Çekiçi i ankandit ra." (The auctioneer's hammer fell.)
 (Footnote: "Ky është një moment vendimtar në ankand, që tregon mbylljen e shitjes.")=This is the decisive moment of the auction, marking the close of the sale.

Example 2: Voice through register and syntax

- *English*: "She flung herself on the sofa, laughing hysterically."
- *Direct translation* might be overly literal or flat.
- *Albanian (stylized)*: "U hodh mbi divan dhe shpërtheu në një të qeshur hysterike." (She threw herself upon the sofa and burst into a hysterical fit of laughter.)
 (Slightly elevated diction maintains drama and pace.)

Example 3: Translator's stylistic interpretation

- When Becky is described as "*not a person to be trifled with*", a translator may choose:
 - *Direct version*: "Nuk ishte person për t'u marrë lehtë." (She was no woman to be trifled with)
 - *Stylized rendering (with more nuance)*: "Nuk ishte nga ato që mund të nënvlerësohej pa pasoja." (She was not a woman to be lightly set aside, nor to be underestimated without peril.)

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, translational and cultural equivalence in literary translation is a complex, negotiated process that defies simplistic formulae. The creative mediation by translators enables the source text's essence, emotion, and meaning to be reinterpreted and revitalized, allowing it to speak powerfully to new audiences while honoring its original spirit. This dynamic process enriches both source and target cultures, fostering intercultural dialogue and expanding literary horizons.

Equivalence involves far more than word-for-word correspondence; it encompasses the translator's ongoing interpretation, negotiation, and creative transformation of the source text. The translator's choices are influenced not only by the textual content but also by an awareness of the target audience's cultural expectations, literary traditions, and socio-historical context. As such, equivalence is inherently malleable and contingent, varying with the aims and constraints of each translation project.

This article has delved into the intricate and multifaceted aspects of translational and cultural equivalence within the specialized field of literary translation. By critically analyzing both theoretical frameworks and practical illustrations—particularly in relation to English-Albanian translations—we have established that equivalence transcends a simplistic, purely linguistic interpretation. Rather, it should be viewed as a dynamic, context-sensitive process rooted in interpretation that is influenced by the complex interactions among language, culture, literary forms, and aesthetic values.

Theoretical frameworks such as Nida's dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes the effect on the target reader, and Venuti's foreignization, which highlights the importance of cultural difference, provide useful conceptual tools. Yet, practical translation endeavors reveal that no single approach guarantees a perfect equivalence. Instead, successful translation requires a flexible, case-specific strategy that balances fidelity with adaptation.

In contexts involving literature, achieving equivalence often requires reinterpreting rather than merely reproducing original works. The various challenges posed by untranslatability issues such as *tonal fidelity discrepancies* or *historical distances* highlight an urgent need for solutions extending beyond mere word-for-word correspondence. These complexities offer translators valuable opportunities for creative mediation—allowing them to reconstruct meaning in ways that resonate profoundly with new audiences while remaining true to the core essence of the original text.

Contrary to previous scholarly perspectives on this topic, this study advocates for an understanding of equivalence that emphasizes *interpretive depth* alongside *cultural sensitivity* and *practical applicability*. Under this framework, translators emerge not just as *technical linguists* but also *serve vital roles as cultural mediators, collaborative creators stylistically engaged with their work while facilitating intercultural dialogue*.

Appendix: Case Study – Translational and Cultural Equivalence in *Vanity Fair*

This appendix provides a detailed case study on the complexities of achieving translational and cultural equivalence in William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, focusing on real or potential translation challenges in the English–Albanian context. The analysis illustrates key categories discussed in the article—untranslatability, cultural references, tone, irony, historical distance, and translator agency—offering example passages and commentary on their implications for translation.

A. Untranslatability and Culture-Specific Expressions

Original Passage	Challenge	Translation Suggestion (Albanian)	Commentary
"He was as cool as a cucumber."	Idiom has no equivalent in Albanian	"Ishte i qetë si akull." (He was ice-cold)	Cultural substitution needed to preserve meaning and imagery.
"Public school"	UK-specific institutional reference	"Shkollë e mesme private" (A private academy for young ladies)	Domestication avoids confusion; footnote may explain nuance.
"Season" (as in social season)	Cultural/historical specificity	"Sezoni i shoqërisë së lartë" or "koha e ballove" (The season of balls)	Foreignization with explanatory note helps preserve cultural layer.

B. Tone, Mood, and Narrative Voice

Original Passage	Tone	Albanian Translation	Commentary
“She flung herself on the sofa, laughing hysterically.”	Dramatic	“U hodh mbi divan, duke qeshur histerikisht.” (She threw herself upon the sofa and burst into a hysterical fit of laughter.)	Maintain vividness and emotional tone.
“I can resist everything except temptation.” (Wilde, used analogously)	Irony, wit	“Mund t’u rezistoj gjithëkaje, përveç tundimit.” (I can resist everything except temptation — and it constantly tempts me.)	Literal translation preserves paradox if tone is maintained.
“Becky was one of those young ladies... with a genius for getting on in the world.”	Subtle irony	“Becky ishte nga ato zonjusha që e dinin mirë si të përparonin në jetë.” (Perhaps Becky belonged to that order of young ladies endowed with an innate talent for climbing the social ladder — be it at any cost)	Preserve ironic praise and narrative voice.

C. Cultural References and Social Class

Original	Issue	Albanian Version	Strategy
“Lady Bareacres gave her a stare that would freeze water.”	British nobility & sarcasm	“Zonja Bareacres e shikoi me një vështrim që do ngrinte edhe ujën.” (Mrs. Bareacres looked at him with a gaze that could curdle water)	Literal with cultural hint; explanation of title may be needed.
“Miss Pinkerton’s Academy for Young Ladies”	English education system	“Akademia e Zonjushës Pinkerton për zonjusha të reja” (Miss Pinkerton’s Academy for Young Ladies)	Literal with archaic styling; signals class-based schooling.

D. Irony and Satire

Original	Tone	Albanian Suggestion	Challenge
“Revenge may be wicked, but it’s natural.”	Moral irony	“Hakmarrja është mëkat, por është plotësisht e natyrshme.” (Revenge is a sin, yet perfectly natural.)	Recasting tone for moral ambivalence.
“Rawdon was brave—as brave as a lion—when there was no danger.”	Mock-heroism	“Rawdon ishte trim si luan – kur nuk kishte asnjë rrezik.” (Rawdon was a lion in courage — provided there was no danger to test it)	Irony must be explicit yet subtle.
“She went to church as a matter of business.”	Satirical	“Shkonte në kishë si pjesë e strategjisë së saj.” (She attended church as part of her strategy.)	Highlights hypocrisy, avoids overstatement.

E. Historical Distance and Temporal Equivalence

Example	Period-specific Issue	Albanian Translation	Commentary
“A modest dinner where a boiled leg of mutton was the principal dish.”	19th-century domesticity	“Një darkë modeste me këmbë deleje të zier si pjatë kryesore.” (A modest family supper, at which the boiled leg of mutton formed the principal dish.)	Preserve historical texture with clear imagery.
“He has cut me in the park.” (meaning: ignored me)	Archaic social idiom	“Më shpërfilli në park, nuk më përshëndeti fare.” (He slighted me in the park, and will no longer grant me so much as a nod)	Clarifies outdated usage with natural modern rendering.

F. Translator's Voice and Agency

Strategy	Example	Note
Paratextual explanation	"Life Guards" as military unit	Translator can use footnote to explain British army structure.
Stylistic mediation	Becky's manipulative language	Translator may adjust register to signal manipulation while staying faithful.
Creative adaptation	Use of metaphors not present in Albanian	New metaphors may be crafted to preserve emotional/aesthetic effect.

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