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Hungarian Influence in English Idiom Production

A Case Study

Abstract

Within the limits of just a small-scale study, which is the pilot study of my PhD research, the present article aims to discover the potential Hungarian L1 influence in English idiom production. The method selected included the selection of 50 English idioms and their Hungarian (idiomatic) equivalents on the basis of literal and idiomatic meanings. I conducted the study with same-same, similar-same, different-same, L2 only transparent, and L2 only opaque idiom pairs. The experiment was a sequence of a production task and ratings for familiarity, motivation, and predictability. Involving 30 Hungarian students of English, I attempt to see whether there is any statistical difference between the subjects' language levels and the production scores of the idiom categories.
Keywords: cross-linguistic similarity, English, Hungarian, idiom

1   Introduction

The pilot study attempts to explore the potential Hungarian L1 influence in English figurative language production. My research intends to contribute to understanding the factors influencing English idiom production with Hungarian students, since Hungarian and English have been examined only by a small-scale study conducted by Aradi (2019). Moreover, very few studies examined offline production, which is another focus of my article.

This study focuses on idiom production in English. Having consulted with a number of dictionaries, 5 idiom categories reflecting a degree of literal and non-literal sameness and each including 10 idiomatic expressions (expression pairs) were established. As not all the English idioms selected have a Hungarian idiomatic equivalent, only a Hungarian non-idiomatic explanation was provided for the respondents. Applying the 50 expressions (expression pairs), a test was used, which was completed by 30 Hungarian university students of English.

2   Previous studies

In the next three sections, I wish to sum up the theoretical background, the factors influencing the idiom production as well as methodology on the basis of the literature reviewed.

2.1   Theoretical background

Several researchers have conducted some research in cross-linguistic influence on idiomatic language use between a number of languages. Comprehension and production of a language may be measured by means of offline and online tasks, always depending on what the researchers wish to analyse (García et al. 2015: 118). Although the majority of the researchers investigate both comprehension and production in L2, as these connect to each other to a large extent, the current article confines itself only to the ways of L1 influencing the idiom production in L2.

Offline tasks are selected to explore language interpretation on the part of the individual, but such tasks cannot reveal anything about language processing (García et al. 2015: 118, referring to Sanford, et al. 2004). Translation into L2 (e.g. Cieślicka 2006a, Irujo 1986, Irujo 1993), sentence rating (García et al. 2015: 120, referring to Skoufaki 2008) or paraphrasing (García et al. 2015: 120, referring to Van Lancker-Sidits 2003) are all examples for offline measuring. The subjects are given tests with some idioms to work with (interpretation, translation, etc.) (García et al. 2015: 118). The researcher must be cautious, because, as Xia (2019: 43) hints, the use of certain offline task types may lead to distorted results, i.e. idiom types in a production translation task may result in scores influenced by transfer; therefore, sentence completion task (Cieślicka 2006a) and discourse completion task in L2 conversations (Türker 2019)[1] have been in use.

Unlike offline tasks, online ones measure the real-time language processing (García et al. 2015: 118, referring to Mitchell 2004 and Swinney 1979). Offline and online tasks are regarded as elements in a continuum (García et al. 2015: 119). For example discourse completion/gap-filling (e.g. Cieślicka 2006b, Irujo 1986) may be an in-between task (García et al. 2015: 119). Online measures have data like speed and accuracy, but offline tasks can measure only the amount of the subjects' knowledge (García et al. 2015: 122, referring to Bolger and Zapata 2011). Discussing the difference between receptive offline and receptive online tasks, Xia (2019: 109) mentions that offline tasks have no time restriction and the subjects' reaction times are measured in online tasks; technically, offline tasks do not require too much apparatus (pen-and-paper tests, electronic documents or online questionnaire), but online tasks require some software and computers as a minimum.The offline tasks involve judgement tasks, interpretation (or paraphrasing) tasks, sentence correction, (Xia 2019: 109–115). Online tasks include lexical decision task using metaphorical expressions as priming items, self-paced reading, maze task (Xia 2019: 115–120). My present research and review on the literature concentrate on offline research.

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[1]   Xia (2019: 43) refers to Cieslicka (2006), which is Cieslicka (2006a) in my thesis; also Xia's (2019: 43) Türker (2016) is Türker (2019).

2.2 Factors influencing idiom production considered here

On the basis of the literature reviewed, there is a huge number of factors influencing idiom production, but my current research concentrates to cross-linguistic similarity, familiarity, and transparency (motivation and predictability). We can establish two different groups from these on the basis of how intrinsic they are to the idioms. The first group of idiom-related properties are cross-linguistic similarity and transparency. The second set is the category which has factors extrinsic to the expression, such as context, task type, proficiency level.

2.2.1 Cross-linguistic similarity

The correlation between L1 and L2 is frequently modelled by the Parasitic Hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, when a learner has to learn a new L2 word or expression, most probably they establish some connection (by means of translation, see Cieślicka (2015: 215)) between the L2 element and the conceptual structure of the L1 counterpart. Over time, these links disappear, as there is a gradually lesser need for the L1 in retaining the L2 element (Cieślicka 2015: 214). Parasitic processing is especially advantageous in the case of L1-L2 idioms with the same form and meaning, as the student may map the L2 idiom onto the L1 equivalent Cieślicka (2015: 214–215).

This hypothesis is clearly seen at work in idiom learning when the L1-L2 idioms overlap, i.e. they are both figuratively and literally equivalent (Cieślicka 2015: 216). What we can see in the literature is that 1) in comprehension tasks, L1-L2 idioms with the same meaning and similar form are likely to score higher than idiom pairs with dissimilar forms but 2) in terms of production tasks, negative L1 transfer occurs more frequently in the case of L1-L2 idioms meaning the same and having similar form than in the case of different idioms (Cieślicka 2015: 216). Also, Cieślicka (2006b: 232–233) posits that similar-same idioms appeared to be the most difficult for learners, yielding more wrong answers than different idioms in her production task. It is same-same idioms that scored the highest in production in Irujo's articles and similar-same ranked as second most difficult (Irujo 1986: 292, 1993: 214).

Alternatively, if an L2 idiom lacks an L1 equivalent, students may analyse the L2 idiom literally to find its non-literal meaning (Cieliśka 2015: 216–217). Hardly surprisingly, same-same idioms are the easiest for the subjects in general. Cieślicka (2015: 216–217) says that when an idiom has an L2 counterpart with different conceptual basis, the learner can reason from the literal meanings of the idiom constituents or from the idiom context. The figurative meaning of transparent L2 idioms may be easy to identify through such literal analysis, as in the case of *to take the bull by the horns*, where a metaphor or hyperbole may be inferred from the literal interpretation (Cieślicka (2015: 217, referring to Nunberg et al. 1994).

Transparency may be influenced by etymology (*bury the hatchet* – a symbolic act of making peace), common metaphor domains (*blew his top* – ANGER IS HEAT) or imageability, i.e. how easy it is to form an image about the figurative meaning (*foam at the mouth* – an image of an angry person) (Cieślicka (2015: 217). If an idiom is not transparent, i.e. opaque, the subjects are unlikely to identify the figurative meaning of the idiom, even if it has some context (cf. Cieślicka (2015: 217). For example, *chew the fat* is opaque and has no Polish translation equivalent in a Polish-English scenario, this is why the literal analysis of the idiom's constituents would not lead to the successful derivation of its figurative meaning (Cieślicka 2015: 218).

2.2.2   Familiarity

Familiarity is another influencing factor in idiom processing, and it is discussed in several articles, e.g. Abel (2003), Carrol et al. (2018), Titone et al. (2015). Abel (2003: 336) considers familiarity as the subjects' knowledge of the meaning of the idiom. Her instructions indicate that this understanding of familiarity implies the respondent's intuitive self-assessment: "For each of the following idioms, you will have to decide how well you know the meaning of the idiom" (Abel 2003: 338).

Unlike Abel (2003), Carrol et al. (2018: 28) define familiarity as the extent to which one feels that they know the meaning of the expression. From methodological point of view, familiarity was rated by means of scales (Likert-tests) in Abel (2003: 338) and Carrol et al. (2018: 28). It follows from this that the respondents' ratings kept varying, and, as a consequence, familiarity is subjective and cannot be measured mathematically (Abel 2003: 345).

Titone et al. (2015: 173) define familiarity in a different manner; namely, how often the respondent meets the spoken or written form of the idiom, irrespective of knowing its non-literal meaning. We must note, however, that Titone et al. (2015: 173) refer to "subjective impression"; therefore, their familiarity is actually subjective frequency.

Apart from the meanings of "familiarity" so far discussed, this term may refer to the knowledge of idiom meaning, which means whether the subject knows its meaning. Laufer (2000: 191) uses familiarity in this sense. In my research, familiarity means the respondents' intuitive knowledge of the idiom, and used a Likert-scale to measure it. Therefore, my definition and method are the same as used by Carrol et al. (2018).

2.2.3   Transparency

According to Carrol et al. (2018: 28, 37), transparency refers to the extent to which an idiom's figurative meaning can be guessed. This would be predictability in Langlotz's terminology (2006: 89). Transparency is understood in the same manner in Carrol et al. (2018) as Langlotz's (2006) predictability. This is what we can conclude from the instructions given to the subjects to measure transparency in Carrol et al. (2018: 28): they were asked how transparent they thought the phrase was. This was explained as how easily they thought they could guess the meaning of the phrase based on the individual words." For example, *saw logs* is easy to understand on grounds of the parallel between the sounds of sawing and snoring (Cieślicka 2015: 213, referring to Cacciari and Glucksberg, 1991; Glucksberg, 1993). However, the idiomatic meaning of *take the gilt off the gingerbread* cannot be inferred from the literal meanings of the constituents (Cieślicka 2015: 213). As regards production, scores increase with transparency in production (Charteris-Black 2002: 126, Irujo 1986: 293, Irujo 1993: 213). Referring to a number of authors (Irujo, 1986, Steinel et al. 2007, and Yorio, 1989), Cieślicka (2015: 217) claims that transparency has a facilitating effect in idiom production.

Transparency includes two aspects: predictability and motivation. Predictability is, as discussed above, the ability to guess the figurative meaning. Motivation is, however, the capability of seeing the connection between the literal and figurative meanings of an expression. Unlike decomposability and compositionality, transparency is used to describe the relation between the literal meaning and the non-literal – Langlotz (2006: 113) uses the term *motivation*. For example, this link is clearly observable in the case of *rock the boat* 'spoil a comfortable situation'; *rock* stands for spoiling and *boat* stands for the comfortable situation, so this idiom

displays a salient literal-figurative relationship (Langlotz 2006: 113), but *red herring* is opaqe to many speakers, as the literal-figurative correlation of the idiom is unclear (Langlotz 2006: 45). Motivation does not necessitate that one is able to tell the figurative meaning on the basis of the literal meanings of the words in the idioms; motivation is necessary but insufficient to predict the idiomatic meaning (Langlotz 2006: 114). In other words, motivation means that the subject sees the relation between the figurative and the literal meaning of the idiom, while prediction means that the subject is capable of inferring the figurative meaning of the idiom on the basis of the literal meaning of its constituents.

According to Carrol et al. (2018), decomposability is the ability to which extent one is able to map the figurative meaning of an idiom onto the constituent words of the idiom: "the contribution of the individual words" (Carrol et al. 2018: 23, 37). A number of researchers understand that concept in a similar manner (Cieślicka 2015: 213, Abel 2003: 338), but Carroll et al.'s (2008) instructions in their rating task imply that Carrol et al.'s (2018) decomposability would be motivation in Langlotz's (2006) terminology. This is what we can deduce from the instructions they gave to their respondents to determine decomposability (Carrol et al. 2018: 28): " they were presented with the phrase and were told what it actually means. They were then asked 'Now that you know this, how easy is it to see the connection between the individual words and the figurative meaning?'" That suggests that Carrol et al.'s (2018) decomposability would be Langlotz's (2006) motivation.

2.3 Methodology

L1 transfer may be examined through what figurative language the respondents use. We need to remember that there are two methods to analyse L1 transfer: corpus research and testing. Corpora must be large to provide a considerable amount of L2 data; therefore, corpus analysis is quite time-consuming a method (cf. Xia 2019: 105–106). Moreover, students' essays are a natural, authentic sample of language, which potentially includes a wide array of figurative language. This is an advantage if we intend to analyse metaphoric use. Using concordancers, one can see the collocations most frequently used by students (Xia 2019: 104), which is a method enabling the analyst to compare the student's essays with native speaker's essays (Xia 2019: 105).

The other method is testing, measuring and providing in large amounts what the researcher whishes to analyse, i.e. testing is a more productive method than corpus research. Unlike in the case of essays, tests include expression categories established by the researchers (Xia 2019: 106). Also, tests can be used for testing both comprehension and production, but essays are a means of production analysis only. A problem of testing could be that, by means of instructing the students while conducting the test, we may unintentionally distort the data obtained from the students' L2 production; namely, asking them to use metaphors may cause them to guess in the course of completing the task (Xia 2019: 107); therefore, the actual knowledge of metaphor use remains hidden. Tests are, however, designed for some purpose; therefore, language use is instructed and limited, according to what figurative language the analyst aims to examine.

Production tasks in tests may be of various types: 1) free completion task, 2) completion task with some given words, and 3) completion task as a multiple choice task 4) translation (cf. Xia 2019: 106). It is the free completion task that approximates essay writing the most of all, as students are supposed to complete the task with their own wording (Xia 2019: 106). Type 2 limits the students' free formulation more, but it enables us to gain the linguistic data we intend

to analyse – an alternative could be here translation, in the course of which the students produce the correct L2 equivalent for the L1 translation (Xia 2019: 106). As mentioned before, tests may serve to measure comprehension and production as well; multiple choice tasks require both the receptive and productive knowledge to complete the gaps (Xia 2019: 106–107). These techniques have, however, some disadvantages. If the researcher opts for free completion, transferred knowledge (figurative) expressions may remain undiscovered (Xia 2019: 107); completion task with some given words, and 3) completion task as a multiple choice task may cause the students to rely on mere guessing the figurative meaning and linguistic form of the expressions (Xia 2019: 107). Another issue may be that in the course of L1 translation, the presence of L1 may have an unnecessarily strong interference with L2, thus leading to distorted results (Xia 2019: 107).

3   The Pilot Study

In the next paragraphs, I describe the objectives, participants, materials, method and procedure included in the pilot study. Then, the results are discussed and followed by a conclusion as well as further research possibilities.

3.1   *Objectives*

The study had the objective of discovering any statistical difference between 1) the production scores of the five idiom categories and 2) between the production scores, idiom types and language level (exploring the potential Hungarian influence on idiom production). Intuitively, I hypothetized that there would be such difference.

3.2   *The participants*

The pilot study involved randomly-selected respondents (young adults, n = 30). They are all majors of English at the University of Nyíregyháza and native speakers of Hungarian.

3.3   *Material*

English-Hungarian idiom pairs may be established according to the sameness of literal and figurative meanings. The syntax of the members of the idiom pairs differ, as selecting idiom pairs with members of the same syntax would have probably restricted the selection of the idioms. As mentioned earlier, my English-Hungarian idiom categories were as follows: same-same, similar-same, different-same, L2 only transparent, and L2 only opaque. L2 only means that the idiom in question exists only in the L2, and it has no idiomatic L1 equivalent. In order to select the idioms, a number of idiom dictionaries and reference books were consulted. These sources relied on corpora, which was an important criteria for me to ensure the idioms would be as familiar to the respondents as possible. The English idioms and their explanations were taken from the electronical version of the *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary* (2nd edition) and the *Collins COBUILD Idioms Dictionary* (4th edition). The Hungarian idiomatic equivalents of the English idioms were searched in *Angol és amerikai kifejezések szótára* and *Angol-magyar idiómaszótár*. Also, the online version of *Angol-Magyar* szótár was consulted. The English

idioms and their idiomatic Hungarian equivalents, if any, as used in the testing, and the glossed forms are seen in Appendix A. I followed Szabolcsi (2021) regarding the method of glossing, and the abbreviations used are included in Appendix B.

3.4   Method and procedure

The method used included a cued-completion task with short context taken from the dictionary where the English idiom was found (production task). The instructions of the completion test were as follows:

Using an English idiom in your answer, please complete the following 50 sentences in a way that your answer includes **the bold word in brackets**. Write only the missing English idiom on the line. Your answer should be the English equivalent of the Hungarian expression seen in square brackets. For example: *This exercise is usually good fun and can help … for a new, and perhaps rather anxious, group.* **(ice)** [megtöri a jeget]. The answer is: break the ice.

An example from the pilot study:
He was also somewhat of … , never marrying. **(wolf)** [magányos farkas]

It was essential that the respondents would provide me with idiomatic answers. To this end, the students were provided with clues in the tasks: an English word between brackets from the English idiom, and the entire Hungarian idiomatic equivalent between square brackets. Production was rated by three raters. If the respondent's answer was unacceptable in terms of idiomaticity, the rater judged it as a 0-point answer. E.g. literal answers, paraphrases were scored as 0. If the answer was grammatically and/or formally incorrect, but it was judged that the respondent had intended it to be idiomatic, the student achieved .5 point. If the answer was correct both idiomatically and grammatically/formally 1 point was granted. The three raters' aggregate scores were taken into consideration, i.e. an answer could be rated anywhere between points 0 and 3. Theoretically, a maximum production score of 4,500 points could have been reached (50 idioms x 30 respondents x 3 maximum points per idiom = 4,500).

The next phase was the rating of the extent to which the idioms were familiar to the students. The familiarity test was intended to fulfil two purposes: first, it served as a filter to exclude the unknown idioms. Idioms averaging above 4 were regarded as familiar. Only the idiom itself and a 7-point Likert scale were provided. The instructions of the intuitive familiarity task were the following:

How familiar are the following 50 idioms to you? Please, indicate it on this scale. If you do not know an idiom at all, select 1. If you know an idiom and can understand it well, select 7.

An example from the pilot study:

a lone wolf

1 = Not familiar at all
[…]
7 = Completely familiar

Similarly to familiarity, a 7-point Likert scale was applied for measuring motivation and predictability. Motivation and predictability tasks had no context, only the dictionary explanations of the idioms were present in their measuring. Motivation means to what extent one sees the connection between the literal and non-literal meanings. The text of the task was the following:

The connection between the figurative meaning and the literal meaning of the idiom may or may not be clear to see. For example, such connection is easy to see in *to skate on thin ice* ('do something risky') based on the literal meaning of *to skate on thin ice*, because a thin layer of ice may break under you as you skate on it. However, it is probably difficult to see the relation in *to kick the bucket* ('die'). Please rate to what extent you can see the connection between the figurative and literal meanings of the following 50 idioms.

An example from the pilot study:

a lone wolf
Figurative meaning: A lone wolf is an independent person who likes doing things on their own, rather than doing them with other people.

1 = The connection between the figurative and literal meanings cannot be seen at all.
[…]
7 =. The connection between the figurative and literal meanings can be clearly seen.

The predictability task measured the extent to which one was able to guess the figurative meaning from the literal one. The instructions were as follows:

The figurative meanings of idioms may or may not be clear from the literal meanings of their constituent words. For example, the figurative meaning of *hold your tongue* ('to remain silent') is probably easy to guess based on the literal meaning of *hold your tongue*, while the figurative meaning of *to hit the sack* ('to sleep') is probably difficult to guess based on the literal meaning of *to hit the sack*. Please rate to what extent the figurative meanings of the following 50 idioms can be guessed on the basis of its literal meaning.

An example from the pilot study:

a lone wolf
Figurative meaning: A lone wolf is an independent person who likes doing things on their own, rather than doing them with other people.

1 = The figurative meaning cannot be guessed at all.
[…]
7 = The figurative meaning can be completely guessed.

Production and familiarity was measured including all the respondents, but motivation and predictability only the first and second 50 per cent, respectively. There was no time limitation

for the tasks. The language levels were measured a couple of days after this three-item test was conducted. The measuring of their proficiency is discussed in Section 4.

4   Results and discussion

The first aim of my study was to explore any statistical difference between the production scores of the five idiom categories (seeing the Hungarian influence on idiom production). To calculate the results, I used SPSS v23, a statistics software. The calculations were completed through using Crosstabulation, Levene's test, one-way ANOVA, Dunnett's T3, and two-way ANOVA.

The production scores per idiom category are shown in Table 1:

Idiom category * Production Crosstabulation

Count

		Production							
		incorrect (0-point answer)	partly acceptable (.5-point answer)	partly acceptable (1-point answer)	partly acceptable (1.5-point answer)	partly acceptable (2-point answer)	partly acceptable (2.5-point answer)	correct (3-point answer)	Total
Idiom category	same-same	12	0	11	16	18	60	183	300
	similar-same	67	12	25	13	7	73	103	300
	different-same	134	11	25	0	12	26	92	300
	L2 only transparent	168	5	7	9	4	11	96	300
	L2 only opaque	113	8	11	7	9	33	119	300
Total		494	36	79	45	50	203	593	1500

Table 1

The raw production data display that same-same idioms were the highest-reaching category (the respondents provided 183 3-point answers) and L2 only tranparent the lowest (the respondents' answers scored 0 in 168 cases).

We can see a significant difference ($p \leq .005$) between the idiom types and the production results (see Table 2). Using the Levene's test, I examined the homogeneity of the standard deviations.

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Production

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
179.792	4	1495	.000

Table 2

On the basis of that, the standard deviations of the idiom types cannot be regarded as homogeneous; therefore, I calculated with Dunnett's T3 test in the Post-hoc test. The highest average and the lowest standard deviation were computed in the case of the same-same category, while the L2 only transparent yielded the lowest average and the highest standard devation.

Descriptives

Production

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
same-same	300	2.5667	.74211	.04285	2.4823	2.6510	.00	3.00
similar-same	300	1.8533	1.21039	.06988	1.7158	1.9909	.00	3.00
different-same	300	1.3183	1.34990	.07794	1.1650	1.4717	.00	3.00
L2 only transparent	300	1.1550	1.38921	.08021	.9972	1.3128	.00	3.00
L2 only opaque	300	1.6100	1.37387	.07932	1.4539	1.7661	.00	3.00
Total	1500	1.7007	1.33126	.03437	1.6332	1.7681	.00	3.00

Table 3

We can see that the same-same group clearly emerges from the rest of the categories in terms of mean and standard deviation, and that is why there exists the significant difference mentioned above. As the one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference (see Table 4), conducting a Post-Hoc test was justified.

ANOVA

Production

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	367,624	4	91.906	60.027	.000
Within Groups	2288,975	1495	1.531		
Total	2656,599	1499			

Table 4

Taking the homogeneity of the standard deviations into consideration (sig = .000), I used Dunnett's T3. In the majority of the cases there is a significant difference between the idiom types, as illustrated in Table 5.

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: Production

Dunnett T3

(I) Idiom category	(J) Idiom category	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
same-same	similar-same	.71333*	.08197	.000	.4829	.9438
	different-same	1.24833*	.08894	.000	.9982	1.4985
	L2 only transparent	1.41167*	.09093	.000	1.1559	1.6674
	L2 only opaque	.95667*	.09015	.000	.7031	1.2102
similar-same	same-same	-.71333*	.08197	.000	-.9438	-.4829
	different-same	.53500*	.10468	.000	.2409	.8291
	L2 only transparent	.69833*	.10638	.000	.3994	.9972
	L2 only opaque	.24333	.10571	.196	-.0537	.5404
different-same	same-same	-1.24833*	.08894	.000	-1.4985	-.9982
	similar-same	-.53500*	.10468	.000	-.8291	-.2409
	L2 only transparent	.16333	.11184	.789	-.1509	.4775
	L2 only opaque	-.29167	.11120	.086	-.6041	.0208
L2 only transparent	same-same	-1.41167*	.09093	.000	-1.6674	-1.1559
	similar-same	-.69833*	.10638	.000	-.9972	-.3994
	different-same	-.16333	.11184	.789	-.4775	.1509
	L2 only opaque	-.45500*	.11280	.001	-.7719	-.1381
L2 only opaque	same-same	-.95667*	.09015	.000	-1.2102	-.7031
	similar-same	-.24333	.10571	.196	-.5404	.0537
	different-same	.29167	.11120	.086	-.0208	.6041
	L2 only transparent	.45500*	.11280	.001	.1381	.7719

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 5

There is no significant difference between the categories in these cases only: similar-same and L2 only opaque (.196), different-same and L2 only transparent (.789), and different-same and L2 only opaque (.086).

To establish whether there is any significant difference between the language levels, I used the two-way ANOVA. All lanuage levels were included in one variable during the calculation. The Levene's test resulted in heterogeneous standard deviations (sig = .000, see Table 6).

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable: Production

F	df1	df2	Sig.
49.656	14	1485	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + Idiom category + Level + Idiom category* Level

Table 6

The five idiom categories exhibit significant differences, but the language level does not (Table 7). As mentioned, the number of the respondents was 30, and their language levels were A (beginner, n = 12), B (intermediate, n = 3 and C (advanced, n =.15). I used English Radar, an online tool, to measure their proficiency. The online English proficiency test offered by English Radar assesses language levels, and conforms to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) standards. As the test classifies the results into one of its 12 levels (A1.1, A1.2, A2.1, A2.2, B1.1, B1.2, B2.1, B2.2, C1.1, C1.2, C2.1, and C2.2), I decided to contract the language levels so as to have sufficient data per language level, e.g. levels A1.1-A2.2 were regarded as level A. On the basis of the Partial Eta Squared (.001), there is only a marginal correlation between the language level and the production results.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Production

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	386.327[a]	14	27.595	18.050	.000	.145
Intercept	2705.306	1	2705.306	1769.559	.000	.544
Idiom category	233.098	4	58.275	38.118	.000	.093
Level	2.573	2	1.286	.841	.431	.001
Idiom category * Level	16.130	8	2.016	1.319	.229	.007
Error	2270.272	1485	1.529			
Total	6995.000	1500				
Corrected Total	2656.599	1499				

a. R Squared = .145 (Adjusted R Squared = .137)

Table 7

Unlike the language level, idiom types did influence the production scores (sig = .000). This is what Figure 1 also implies. Same-same idioms were by far the easiest for the respondents. The least-scoring expressions belonged to L2 only transparent category. An explanation may be that the literal meanings of the idiom were misleading for the subjects due to which their production results remained low.
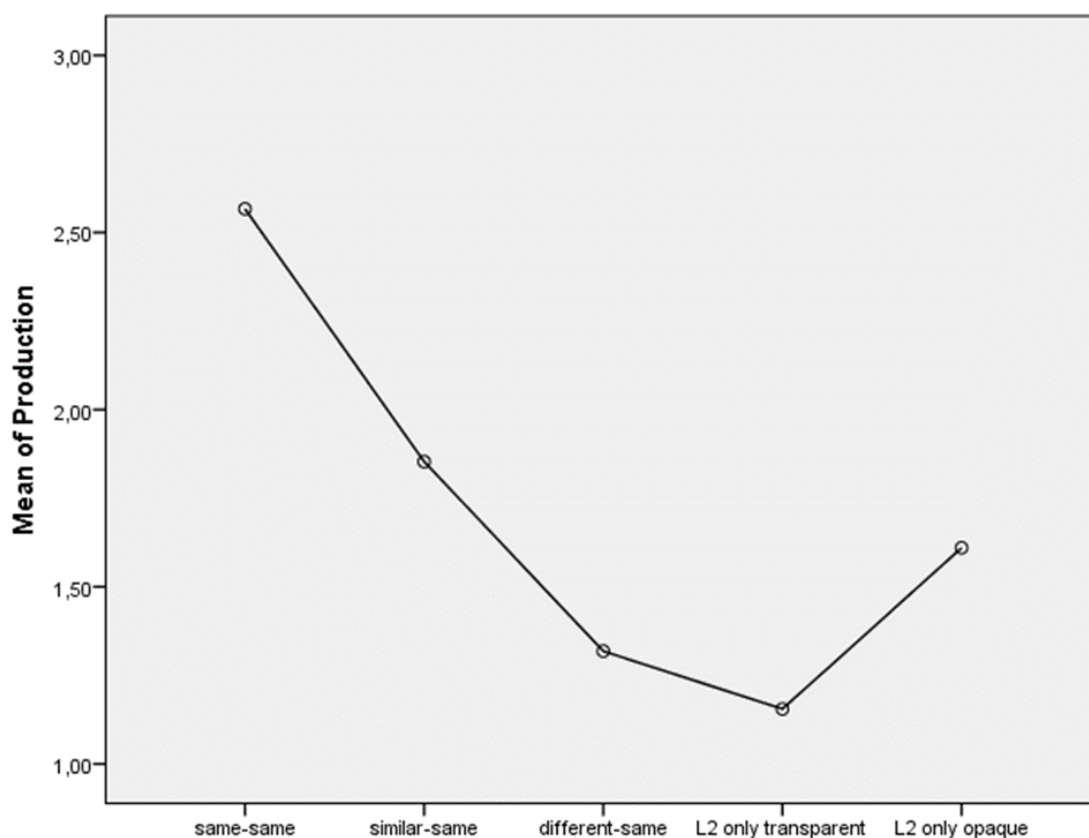
Figure 1

5   Summary and conclusion

On grounds of the tables above, we can see that both research questions were answered with results displaying significant differences and correlations. Idiom types differ from one another in terms of production scores. As a conclusion, the wider the cross-linguistic distance is the fewer points were scored, and as such, Hungarian L1 is more likely to make its influence felt in English idiom production. This is supported by e.g. Irujo's (1993: 215) and Laufer's (2000: 195) results, i.e. respondents with lower language levels rely more on L1 in idiom production.

In contrast, the figures of the present empirical study imply that proficiency plays only a non-significant role in idiom production in the L2. The fact that the language level contributes to idiom production to no significant level is not as counter-intuitive as it might seem. For instance, there may be non-native speakers of English who have a comparatively good command of English, but such communicative skills do not necessarily require the speakers to know English idioms. Tran's (2013: 26) respondents were pre-intermediate and intermediate students of English, and the results of the idiom test, a gap-filling task similar to mine in the pilot study, show that the pre-intermediate students performed better than the intermediate subjects (Tran 2013:28). As an explanation, which may be the case in my study as well, Tran (2013: 28) states that the students' unsatisfactory idiom production may be due to their unfamiliarity with the idioms.

While discussing the results of the study one must bear in mind its limitations. Only English was regarded as L2, and no other languages potentially learnt by the respondents were taken into consideration. Therefore, the results may or may not have been influenced by some L3s or, rarely, L4s. Since any interaction between L2 and L3, or L3 and L2 is out of the scope of my study, such interaction is not investigated. This may be a vista for further research.

Also, no distinction was made between the English expressions in terms of the language variety they originated from, e.g. both U.S. and British idioms were presented to the respondents. In addition to cross-linguistic similarity criteria, familiarity was the basis of idiom selection, i.e. only idioms deemed to be familiar enough to the subjects were chosen for the pilot study.

Future research will include discovering whether there is some statistical correlation between the production scores and 1) the predictability within the L2 only group (transparent and opaque), 2) motivation withing the L2 only group (transparent and opaque), 3) predictability of all idioms (transparent and opaque), 4) predictability of all idioms (transparency scale), 5) motivation of all idioms (transparent and opaque), 6) motivation of all idioms (transparent and opaque).

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7   Appendices

Appendix A: The English idioms and their idiomatic Hungarian equivalents, if any, as used in the testing, and the glossed forms

Idiom category	English idiom	Hungarian idiomatic equivalent. if any. and its glossed form
same-same	*a lone wolf*	*magányos farkas*
		lone wolf
	the black sheep of the family	*a család fekete báránya*
		the family black sheep-Px3SG-NOM
	take something to heart	*szívére vesz valamit*
		heart-Px3SG-ASEM take-SBJ-3SG something-ACC
	drink someone under the table	*az asztal alá iszik valakit*
		the table under drink-SBJ-3SG someone-ACC
	read between the lines	*olvas a sorok között*
		read-SBJ-3SG the lines between
	below the belt	*övön aluli*
		belt-SUPE below-ADJZ
	burn the candle at both ends	*két végén égeti a gyertyát*
		two end-px3sg-INE burn-sbj-3sg the candle-acc
	try your wings	*a szárnyait próbálgatja*
		the wings-Px3SG-ACC-PL try-SBJ-3SG
	the tip of the iceberg	*a jéghegy csúcsa*
		the iceberg tip-Px3SG
	on the same wavelength	*egy hullámhosszon van valakivel*
		a wavelength-SUPE be-SBJ-3SG someone-COM
similar-same	*the blind leading the blind*	*vak vezet világtalant*
		blind lead-SBJ-3SG sightless-ACC
	a drop in the ocean/bucket	*csepp a tengerben*
		drop the sea-INE
	a bull in a china shop	*elefánt a porcelánboltban*
		elephant the china shop-INE
	back the wrong horse	*rossz lóra tesz*
		wrong horse-ASEM put-SBJ-3SG
	bury the hatchet	*elássa a csatabárdot*
		PFX-dig-SBJ-3SG the battleaxe-ACC

	the icing on the cake	*hab a tortán*
		foam the cake-SUPE
	cost an arm and a leg	*egy vagyonba kerül valami*
		a fortune-ASEM cost-SBJ-3SG something-nom
	break someone's heart	*megszakad a szíve valamitől*
		PFX-break-SBJ-3SG the heart-Px3SG something-ASEM
	draw the line at	*meghúzza a határt*
		PFX-draw-SBJ-3SG the border-ACC
	add fuel to the fire	*olajat önt a tűzre*
		oil-ACC pour-SBJ-3SG the fire-subl
different-same	*from the horse's mouth*	*első kézből*
		first hand-ELA
	by the skin of your teeth	*hajszálon múlik*
		hair-ASEM depend-SBJ-3SG
	bite off more than you can chew	*túl nagy fába vágja a fejszéjét*
		too big tree-ILL cut-SBJ-3SG the axe-Px3SG-ACC
	break your back	*agyondolgozza magát*
		brain-ALL work-SBJ-3SG him/herself-ACC
	be walking on air	*repülni tudna a boldogságtól*
		fly-INF can-SBJ-3SG-cond the happiness-ess
	go round/around in circles	*mindig ugyanoda lyukad ki*
		always the same place-ALL punch-SBJ-3SG out
	cut things fine	*hajszálra kiszámít(va tesz) valamit*
		hair-ASEM calculate-SBJ-3SG/calculate-advptcp do-SBJ-3SG something-ACC
	let the cat out of the bag	*eljár a szája*
		PFX-walk-SBJ-3SG the mouth-Px3SG-NOM
	sell like hot cakes	*viszik. mint a cukrot*
		take-DEF-3PL PUNCT like the sugar-ACC
	cross your mind	*megfordul a fejében valami*
		PFX-turn-SBJ-3SG the head-Px3SG-INE something-nom
	food for thought	*elgondolkodtató téma*
		thought-provoking topic
	meet your Waterloo	*kudarcot vall*
		failure-ACC admit-SBJ-3SG
	the dos and don'ts	*utasítások*
		instructions

L2 only transparent	*pull strings*	*protekciót vesz igénybe*
		protection-ACC take-SBJ-3SG need-ILL
	have an axe to grind	*csak a maga hasznát nézi*
		only the his/her profit-Px3SG-ACC look-SBJ-3SG
	put/set the cat among the pigeons	*nagy riadalmat kelt*
		big panic-ACC raise-SBJ-3SG
	be the best/greatest thing since sliced bread	*a legjobb dolog a világon*
		the best thing the world-SUPE
	come up in the world	*meggazdagodik*
		PFX-become-SBJ-3SG rich
	have a bone to pick with someone	*elszámolnivalója van valakivel*
		something to settle-ACC have-SBJ-3SG someone-COM
	somebody's heart sinks	*elcsügged*
		PFX-get-SBJ-3SG discouraged
L2 only opaque	*a hot potato*	*kényes téma*
		sensitive topic
	rub shoulders with someone	*összejár valakivel*
		PFX-go-SBJ-3SG someone-COM
	touch and go	*bizonytalan*
		uncertain
	with flying colours	*kitűnő eredménnyel*
		excellent result-COM
	keep something under your hat	*titokban tart valamit*
		secret-INE keep-SBJ-3SG something-ACC
	mean business	*komolyan beszél*
		earnestly talk-SBJ-3SG
	have a soft spot for someone/something	*szeret valakit*
		like-SBJ-3SG someone-ACC
	bring the house down	*felállva tapsol a közönség*
		stand-ADVPTCP applaude-SBJ-3SG the audience-NOM
	move the goalposts	*menet közben változtat a szabályokon*
		on the way change-SBJ-3SG the rules-ASEM
	pull someone's leg	*ugrat valakit*
		jump-SBJ-3SG someone-ACC

Appendix B: The abbreviations[2] applied in glossing

3	third person
ACC	accusative case
ADJZ	adjective suffix
ADVPTCP	present participle
ALL	allative case
ASEM	asemantic ending
COM	comitative case
DEF	definite inflection
ELA	elative case
ILL	illative case
INE	inessive case
INF	infinitive
NOM	nominative case
PFX	verb prefix
PL	plural
PUNCT	punctuation
Px	possessive suffix
SBJ	subject
SG	third person singular
SUBL	sublative case
SUPE	superessive case

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[2] I used the Leipzig Glossing abbreviations except for a number of cases. The exceptions (ADJZ, ADVPTCP, ALL, DEF, ELA, ILL, INE, SUBL, and SUPE) were taken from here: https://e-magyar.hu/hu/textmodules/emmorph_codelist . The abbreviation ASEM was formed on the basis of this website: https://gepeskonyv.btk.elte.hu/adatok/Magyar/31Lakatos/Digi_TK_v2/Linkek/130-159.htm .