

Problematic Areas in the Translation of Proverbs

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Passing through the world of translation opens new windows towards getting familiar with the literature, language, and culture of a specific country or countries. Proverbs express the wisdom of a nation and they are closely related to its culture. During the translation process, we might encounter a lot of difficulties with the non-linguistic features. These non-linguistic features, in this paper, are going to be analysed the proverbs. Understanding this unique group of proverbs has been a topic of great importance for many scholars and language educators. The translation of proverbs includes feelings, history, religion, and the ways of living and thinking, all of which are part of a specific culture. Therefore, when we analyse proverbs, we are also analyzing the culture of a specific country, the period when these proverbs were first used, the manner how these proverbs were understood years ago, how people understand them now, etc. This paper is focused generally on some strategies that are suggested by various theorists that should be used while translating these kinds of proverbs. Later, there are presented some Albanian and English proverbs and they are compared to each other in order to clarify the language differences and/or similarities and the translation strategies that are used during the translating process. This is a wide topic and the author has tried to give a glimpse in the wonderful world of wisdom sayings that are passed orally from one generation to another and are considered a cultural and folkloric heritage of every country.

Keywords: Proverb, translation strategies, culture, culture gap, linguistic gap, TT- target text, ST-source text, TL- target language, SL-source language

Translation Techniques

How to Translate Proverbs?

A lot of scholars, linguistics, and various translators have always tried to give an answer to this question. What can we do in order to preserve the equivalent function and the exact meaning while translating proverbs? What about the loss due to the cultural or linguistic gap? What should we do in these cases? To properly translate a proverb requires several steps and it often requires a translator to “dive” deeper into the culture of the source and target languages, in order to determine the idiomatic translation.

Proverbs are embedded in the culture of a language. Their roots are in culture, customs, history, religion, local conditions, cultural background, and even geography of a nation. Sometimes, native speakers of a language get across their messages through using idioms and proverbs in their sayings. Like this, the speaker may utter idioms and proverbs as short sentences which have a profound meaning. Thus, you cannot understand idioms and proverbs correctly without the help of the cultural knowledge of the language. Generally speaking, proverbs have an equivalent in the target language. However, even if a linguistic equivalent exists, there may be

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cultural differences to consider.

Below are listed some simple methods that you can use in order to translate the proverbs in the most adequate manner possible:

1. Try to find an idiom in the target language (just to remind that target language [TL] is the language you are translating into) which uses the same words, the same structure, and has the same exact meaning. Even though there are some proverbs that are almost the same in most of the languages, however, it will be very difficult to find these kinds of proverbs into your own language. This is the top notch solution, but you often will not find it. One example of this group is the proverb: “The fish stinks from its head”, which in the Albanian version is: “Peshku qelbet nga koka”.

2. Try to find an idiom in your language which uses different words, but has the same structure and the same exact meaning. Considering the fact that the meaning is the same, it does not matter that the words are different. We should always keep in mind that in order to translate a proverb in the most appropriate manner, we should not make a word for word translation, because there are some cultural or linguistic elements that will not make sense in the target language, if we translate them word for word, just like a machine, without any specific meaning.

3. Another thing that we can try is to find an idiom in our language that has different words, different structure but the same exact meaning. Another example of this group is the proverb: “When in Rome, do as Romans do”, while in the Albanian version is translated as: “Sipas vendit dhe kuvendi”. Even though the structure and the words differ a lot, the meaning is still the same, so in this case, we have preserved the most adequate equivalence.

4. Try to find an idiom in your language that has different words, different structure, and a slightly different meaning, and complete it with a short explanation. For instance, the Albanian proverb: “E humbi si Xhaferri simiten” would be translated in the English language as: “To be totally at sea”, which means to be totally confused. In this way, we come closer to the meaning of the original proverb in the Albanian language.

Below the author would like to list some of the different translation procedures that are proposed by Newmark (1988):

- Transference: It is the process of transferring an SL word to a TL text. It includes transliteration and is the same as what Harvey named “transcription”.
- Naturalization: It adapts the SL word first to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal morphology of the TL.
- Cultural equivalent: It means replacing a cultural word in the SL with a TL one. However, “they are not accurate”.
- Functional equivalent: It requires the use of a culture-neutral word.
- Descriptive equivalent: In this procedure, the meaning of the CBT is explained in several words.
- Componential analysis: It means “comparing an SL word with a TL word which has a similar meaning but is not an obvious one-to-one equivalent, by demonstrating first their common and then their differing sense components”.
- Synonymy: It is a “near TL equivalent”. Here economy trumps accuracy.
- Through-translation: It is the literal translation of common collocations, names of organizations, and components of compounds. It can also be called calque or loan translation.

- Shifts or transpositions: It involves a change in the grammar from SL to TL, for instance: (i) change from singular to plural; (ii) the change required when a specific SL structure does not exist in the TL; (iii) change of an SL verb to a TL word; and (iv) change of an SL noun group to a TL noun and so forth.
- Modulation: It occurs when the translator reproduces the message of the original text in the TL text in conformity with the current norms of the TL, since the SL and the TL may appear dissimilar in terms of perspective.
- Recognized translation: It occurs when the translator “normally uses the official or the generally accepted translation of any institutional term”.
- Compensation: It occurs when loss of meaning in one part of a sentence is compensated in another part.
- Paraphrase: In this procedure, the meaning of the CBT is explained. Here the explanation is much more detailed than that of descriptive equivalent.
- Couplets: It occurs when the translator combines two different procedures.
- Notes: Notes are additional information in a translation.

Analysis Based on the Survey

Let us have a look at the picture in Figure 1.

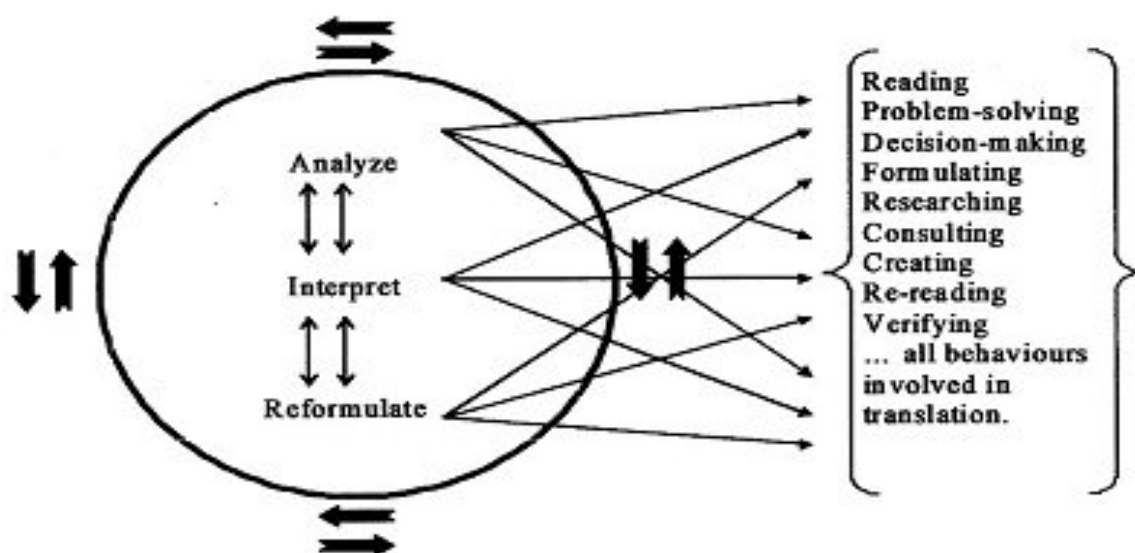


Figure 1. The importance of Analysis, Interpretation and Reformulation.

In order to translate in the most professional and adequate manner, it is recommended to take into consideration three important things: analysis, interpreting, and the reformulation of a specific proverb, or saying. First of all, when we are first presented with an unknown proverb, we should analyse its meaning. By analyzing its meaning, it is implied that we should read some information about its origin and the meaning that it implies. We cannot opt to make an adequate translation, if we do not fully understand the meaning of the proverb in the source language. After that, we need to consult a dictionary or a professional person who will be able to give us a glimpse in solving the matter.

It is very important that during our analysis, we should verify all behaviours involved in translation, because they can provide us with the necessary information that we are looking for, in order to translate the

proverb. After the analysis, we focus on interpreting that specific saying or proverb from the target language into the source language.

First of all, we should make a decision of what techniques or strategies are we going to use in order to translate it adequately. Later on, we pass onto reformulating, which is somehow a “recreation” of that proverb, but in another language.

This is why, sometimes, the translator is considered as the “second writer”, because somehow the translator recreates, but what is more important is the fact that in this “recreation” the translator should not be noticed, it should sound like the original text from the original author.

Only in those cases, the translator has done a great job. As a matter of fact, the author has always wondered if we, as translators, can follow a specific strategy or procedure in order to translate the proverbs in the most adequate manner. Of course, if this would have been possible, it would have been easier for all the translators all over the world.

Would it be easier if we translate the proverbs word for word, if we try to paraphrase them, or would it be better if we preserve the meaning, but we do not preserve the form? What about if we would use a lot of footnotes in order to be more specific to the reader?

Therefore, in order to give an answer to all this questions that the author raised in this paper, the author also conducted a survey in which 100 professional translators were asked about the strategies that they would use to translate a proverb.

The author tried to choose four strategies, which according to me are the most important ones. Taking into consideration the fact that translating proverbs is a difficult process, the author knew that would find surprising conclusions in the survey and actually was quite surprised by the results that gathered in the end which the author would like to share with you.

The answers were as shown in Table 1 and Figure 2:

Table 1

Translation Strategies Based on the Survey

Items	Number	Percentage (%)
Using an idiom of similar meaning and form	59	59
Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form	29	29
Translation by paraphrasing	12	12
Translation by omission	0	0

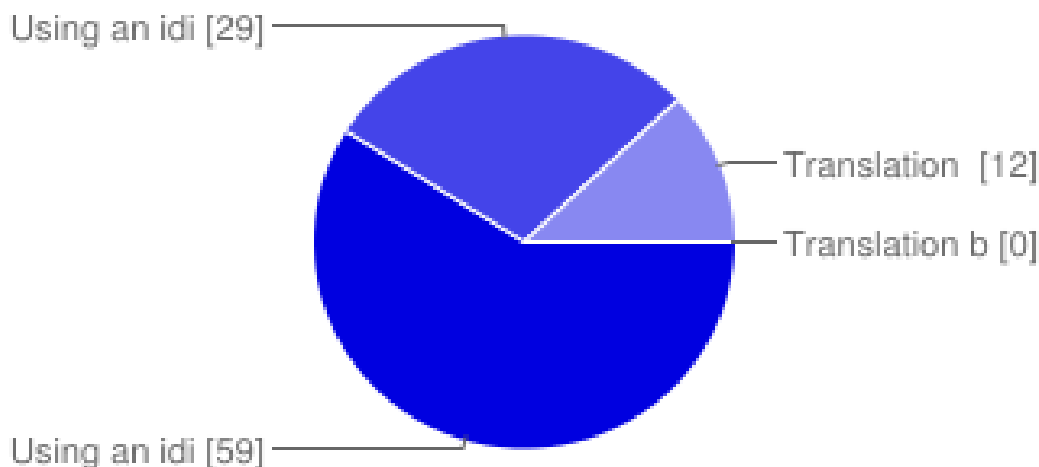


Figure 2. Translation strategies based on the Survey.

Apparently, as we can notice from the survey that most of the answers were in favour of the first strategy; 59% of the translators would choose using an idiom of similar meaning and similar form. The question that comes to mind right now is: “Is this possible?” The author means can we really use this strategy for almost all the proverbs? Obviously not.

If we take as an example the Albanian proverb: “U mbors mali e polli nje mi”, we will notice that in the English language, there are two versions of this saying. The first version is: “The mountain labored to bring forth a mouse”.

In this case, we notice a word for word translation, where the meaning and the form are very similar. But unfortunately, we cannot choose the same strategy for every proverb, because in this case, we would lead to misunderstandings.

This would happen because of the cultural and linguistic gap that occurs among two different languages. The second version of this proverb in the English language is: “It is a storm in a teacup”. The meaning of this proverb in both languages has to do with a situation where people get very angry or worried about something that is not important. Another similar equivalent of this proverb in the Albanian language would be: “Shume zhurmë për asgjë”.

Now, let us take into consideration the second strategy. Personally speaking, the author thinks that this is a strategy that can be applied while translating most of the proverbs. What is important is the meaning and not the form.

We can change the form as long as we remain faithful to the meaning. This is why the author thinks that in this case, we should use the dynamic or functional equivalence. We can look up in the dictionary about the meaning of that specific proverb and we can try to find expressions in the target language that means the similar thing.

With this approach, the translation will sound more natural and may be easier to read. If we use a literal translation than the proverb will be harder to read, sometimes even nonsense even though it will be closer to what is written in the source text.

Let us take for example this proverb: “Birds of a feather, flock together”. If we translate it word for word in the Albanian language, it would be like: “Zogjtë me pendë të njëjta grumbullohen së bashku”.

If we say this saying to an Albanian speaker, undoubtedly he or she may ask “What do you mean by that?” This is totally normal, because we are not familiar with this saying. But if we say to them the Albanian proverb: “Si tenxherja-kapakun”, then we would preserve the meaning and there would not be misunderstandings at all.

Personally speaking, the author is also in favour of the third strategy and 12% of the translators that answered to this survey were in favour of translating a proverb by paraphrasing. A paraphrase is a restatement of the meaning of a text or passage using other words. The term itself is derived via Latin, meaning “additional manner of expression”. A paraphrase typically explains or clarifies the text or saying that is being paraphrased.

For instance, “When in Rome, do as Romans do”. When English people use this proverb, they mean that is polite and possibly also advantageous to abide by the customs of a society when one is a visitor.

However, why should an English proverb single out Rome and Roman values as especially to be emulated? Apparently, it has all to do with the travel arrangements of a couple of early Christian saints.

Unlike a metaphrase, which represents a “formal equivalent” of the source, a paraphrase represents a “dynamic equivalent” which means, while a metaphrase attempts to translate a text literally, a paraphrase conveys the essential thought expressed in the source text.

As far as the fourth strategy is concerned, firstly the author would like to point out the fact that omission means dropping a word or words from the SLT while translating. This procedure can be the outcome of the cultural clashes that exist between the SL and the TL.

In fact, it is in subtitling translation where omission attains its peak in use. The translator omits words that do not have equivalents in the TT, or that may raise the hostility of the receptor.

Actually, the author was a little surprised that no one of the translators voted for this strategy and would like to take an example in order to be more specific. In the Albanian language, we use this proverb: “E humbi si Xhaferri simiten”, when we want to indicate someone who completely lost the control of a specific situation. In the English language, a word for word translation of this would be: “He lost it like Xhaferri lost his bun”.

If we translate it in this way, so if we preserve the same form we would not preserve the same meaning. This proverb to an English speaker does not make any sense. Therefore in this case, the author thinks that we should do some kind of omission in order to preserve the function of equivalence. A close equivalence of this saying would be: “To be utterly at sea”, because in this way, we are being faithful to the meaning of the target language. Being at sea about something means to be confused, to be lost, and to be bewildered, therefore in this case, it is almost impossible to translate by using the first strategy.

On the whole, based on this survey, we can sum up that the use of different strategies in translation of idioms and proverbs in literary translation illustrates the diverse ways of treatment of this interesting, peculiar and difficult part of language.

This means that applying the best strategies for the translation of idioms and proverbs needs careful consideration. Moreover, idioms express the uniqueness of the language and culture in which they are originated.

Therefore, translators need deep knowledge of the source and target languages and cultures. However, the author would also like to point out the fact that considering the fact that translation is a complicated process, it should be recommendable that in different situations, we should use all those strategies, because it depends on the language, culture, and the period in which that specific proverb was used.

Examples of Proverbs According to Translation Procedures

Generally speaking, translators can choose from two methods of translating direct or literal translation and oblique translation. In some translation tasks, it is possible to transpose the source language message element by element into the target language, due to the parallel structure or parallel concepts that it may contain.

However, there are also cases where certain stylistic effects cannot be transposed, therefore in this case, it is needed to use more complex methods, which at first may look unusual, but they definitely allow the translators to have a strict control over the reliability of their work. This method is called oblique translation methods.

Below the first three procedures are direct and the others are oblique.

1st Procedure: Borrowing

In order to overcome an unknown concept, we can use borrowing which is the simplest of all translation methods. In this procedure, we use foreign words, without trying to translate them. Generally speaking, this happens with the names of different kinds of food, clothing, etc. Sometimes, the translator may use borrowing on purpose, just to make the reader “feel” the specific culture of the country, where the proverb derives. An example would like to be shared in order to be more specified:

“No se puede hacer tortilla, sin romper los huevos”.

This is a Spanish proverb and it alludes to the efforts that are necessary in order to achieve a goal and the damage that may be done in the course of creating something new.

The author tried to find how this Spanish proverb was translated into the English language and it turned out that actually they did not use borrowing in this case.

The English version of this proverb is: “One cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs”.

Instead of “tortillas”, we encounter the word omelette in the English version. First of all, let us define what a tortilla and an omelette is: A tortilla is a type of soft, thin flatbread made from finely ground wheat flour, while an omelette is a dish made from beaten eggs quickly cooked with butter or oil in a frying pan.

In the Albanian version, a “tortilla” is similar to a Johnny-cake, or what we call in the Albanian language as “Pite”.

If we would try to translate this proverb in the Albanian language, we would prefer to use borrowing. Therefore, instead of the word “pite”, we would use tortilla and maybe we would try to explain in a footnote what a tortilla is. By doing so, we preserve that specific element of Spanish culture and will also be clear enough to the audience.

“Nuk mund te besh *tortillas (tortijas) pa thyer vezet”.

“*Tortillas eshte nje ushqim tipik spanjoll, I ngjashem me pitet me brume dhe veze”.

2nd Procedure: Calque

A calque is a special kind of borrowing whereby a language borrows an expression from of another, but then translates literally each of its elements. An example of this procedure is the proverb below:

“Neither fish, nor flesh”.

In the English version, this proverb is used to indicate a deliberate misleading and diverting of attention from the real issue. In the Albanian version, this proverb is used to indicate a situation where you have almost no choice and you do not know what to do. The Albanian version of this proverb is:

“As mish, as peshk”.

Therefore, it can be noted that, in this case, we have used a calque, which means we have borrowed the expression, but we have translated each of its elements. Here is another example:

“Fish and guest stink after three days” → “Peshku dhe mysafiri bien ere pas 3 ditesh”.

Even in this example, we notice a lexical calque, which is a calque that respects the syntactic structure of the TL. Now, let us pass onto the third procedure.

3rd Procedure: Literal Translation

A literal translation, or a word for word translation, is the direct transfer of a SL text into a grammatically and idiomatically appropriate TL text, in which the translator's task is limited to observing the adherence to the linguistic servitudes of the TL. Even though we are referring to a literal translation, the translator should keep in mind one thing:

The sense and content can be translated, while the form or the style cannot. And the point where form begins to contribute to sense is where we approach untranslatability. This is most like to happen in poetry, songs, advertising, punning, and so on.

Another important thing to keep in mind is the fact that we should use a literal translation, only in those cases where we render not just word for word but sense for sense (Jerome, 395/1997, p. 25).

Let us take some examples:

“Silence is gold” → “Heshtja eshte flori”.

“Not all that glitters is gold” → “Jo gjithcka qe shkelqen eshte flori”.

“The greater the truth, the greater the libel” → “Sa me e madhe te jete e verteta, aq me e madhe eshte shpifja”.

“Honesty is the best policy” → “Ndershmeria eshte politika me e mire”.

“Why do you keep a dog when you can bark yourself?” → “Perse tem bash nje qen. Kur ti mund te leshesh vete”?

In this group, we can find a lot of examples and as long as they preserve the same function and meaning in both languages, then their translation is done perfectly well. If after trying these first three procedures, translators regard a literal translation unacceptable, they must turn to the methods of oblique translation.

By unacceptable the author means that the message may not be clear enough, when translated literally because:

- Gives another meaning;
- Has no meaning at all;
- Is structurally impossible;
- Does not have a corresponding expression within the metalinguistic experience of the TL;
- Has a corresponding expression, but not within the same register.

In these cases it is recommended to use one of the following procedures:

4th Procedure: Transposition

The method called transposition involves replacing one word class with other without changing the meaning of the message. Besides being a special translation procedure, transposition can also be applied within a language, for instance, “I give him a kiss” is semantically no difference from “I kiss him” though the word “kiss” is changed from a noun into a verb.

According to Vinay and Darbelnet (2004), the first expression can be called the base expression, while the converted form of “kiss” as a verb is called the transposed expression. As a result of the divergence of language systems between SL and TT, this strategy to altering words without semantic change is undertaken probably most common and even sometime necessarily by translators.

From a stylistic point of view, these words are of different value in TL, and translators will face the possibility of changing the genre of the translation text.

Baker (1992, p. 167) compared nominalization and verbal forms in his “thematic and information structures”.

An inherent problem is that thematic structures meet different genre conventions in different language. For example:

“Come live with me and you’ll know me” → “Njeriu njihet duke jetuar”.

“It’s worthy of the mark” → “Eshte mire ta kesh parasysh”.

“Great minds think alike” → “Kokat e medha kane nje mendje”.

“Safe bind, safe find” → Lidhe qe ta gjesh te sigurt”.

“Like father, like son” → “Beme baba te te ngjaj”.

5th Procedure: Modulation

Modulation (Vinay & Darbelnet, 2004, p. 133) refers to “a variation of the form of the message, obtained by a change in the point of view”. Modulation can be adopted when, though literal or transposition translation results grammatically correct utterance, the patterns of TL in the TT are considered as abnormal or awkward.

The application of this skill demands very much the translator’s capacity to mastering bilingual languages. We also have the type of modulation which turns a negative SL expression into a positive TL expression for example:

“It is not difficult to show...” → “It is easy to show...” “Eshte e lehte te tregojme se...”.

Below some other examples of modulation will be provided:

“God knows” → “Nuk I dihet”.

“A Leopard cannot change its spots” → “Ujku qimen e nderron po zakonin se harron”.

“So many men, so many opinions” → “Sa njerez ka, aq opinione jane”.

“Money is poker” → “Paraja eshte pushtet”.

“The nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat” → “Afer detit, afer mbretit”, etc.

6th Procedure: Equivalence

Equivalence is that procedure where the same situation can be rendered by two texts using completely different stylistic and structural methods. In such cases, we are dealing with the method which produced equivalent texts.

Most equivalence is fixed and belongs to a phraseological repertoire of idioms, clichés, proverbs, and nominal or adjectival phrases. Generally speaking, proverbs are perfect examples of equivalences and this method is also frequently applied to idioms. Equivalence is not only useful but also necessary in translating idioms and proverbs.

This strategy is viewed as a type of modulation and ‘a linguistic sub-discipline of pragmatics’ (Armstrong, 2005, p. 152), which is concerned with the use of language in different cultures.

Here are some examples of equivalence:

“You cannot light a candle at both ends” → “Dy kunguj nen nje sqetull nuk mbahen”.

“No news is a good news” → “E keqja merret vesh shpejt”.

“Time is my own” → “E perdor kohen si dua”.

“No rose without a thorn” → “Ska mish pa kocka”, etc.

7th Procedure: Adaptation

This procedure is used in those cases where the type of situation being referred to by the SL message is unknown in the TL culture.

In such cases, translators have to create a new situation that can be considered as being equivalent. Adaptation can, therefore, be described as a special kind of equivalence, a situational equivalence.

This method is particularly used while translating books and film titles, but it is also used while translating proverbs. For example, in the Albanian language, we use this proverb a lot: “E humbi si Xhaferri simiten” which means not being able to control or manage a specific situation.

In order to render it in the English language we have to do some kind of adaptation, because if we translate it word for word than it will not make any sense.

A close enough translation of this proverb would be: “To be utterly at sea”, which has almost the same meaning as in the original version.

Below some other examples of adaptaztion would like to be shared while translating proverbs from English into the Albanian language:

“Every Jack has his Jill”.

This saying is used in English when you want to show that every man will eventually find a woman to be his romantic partner. In the Albanian language, we have the idiom: “Ka gjetur tenxherja- kapakun”. So in order to render the same meaning, it is used a situational equivalence, an adaptation.

“Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves” → “Pike pike, behet rrekeja” or “Gure gure, behet kalaja”.

“Carry with your own recommendation” → Te te flasi puna vete (te mos kesh nevojë per levdata), etc.

Analysis of Some Specific English and Albanian Proverbs

According to Nida’s model, it can be designed a new strategy which includes cultural elements as well, in order to help the translation of idiomatic language into Albanian. According to Eco (2001), a translator must take into account rules that are not strictly linguistic, but broadly speaking cultural. This strategy includes:

1. Analyze historical, social circumstances in source culture.
2. Analyze source message.
3. Transfer the message in the target language.
4. Reconstruct the expression in the target language.
5. Consider the target language.
6. Give a final version.

Below the author would like to preserve some examples in order to be more specific. There is an English proverb which says: “The gray mare is the better horse”. Actually, this proverb has its equivalent in the Albanian language if we translate it word for word: “Pela gri eshte kali me I mire”. The problem lies in the fact

that the Albanian reader will be confused and will try to figure out why is the gray mare and not the white one for example.

If we translate it word for word, then we will not provide the main function of communicating the message in the target language and therefore the translation will not be successful.

If we focus on Nida's model, a professional translator should try focusing on the cultural aspect as well, by analysing its origin and if possible the historical or social circumstances related to it.

If we look up for the meaning of this saying in the *Online Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, we will see that it is defined as: "The wife rules, or is more competent than, the husband".

In order to translate it adequately in the Albanian language, the translator should take into account some other cultural elements. The Albanian culture still hesitates to accept openly the idea of a strong and powerful wife.

What is more, an Albanian proverb, which originates from the south of Albania says: "Kaun po e vuri lopa para, coje ne thertore" (If the ox is pushed by the cow, take it to the slaughterhouse). This proverb in the Albanian language considers a weak man useless and does not appreciate the dominant role of a woman. Beside the aforementioned, we have a proverb which implies the force of women indirectly. It is the proverb: "Burri eshte koka, ndersa gruaja qafa" (The man is the head and the woman is the neck).

The meaning of this proverb is that even though the man is the head, the woman is the one that can spin him around, whenever she wants to. Therefore, in order to preserve the original meaning of the proverb in the source language, the author thinks that this Albanian version would be the most appropriate one, because while translating, it is important to keep one thing in mind: We do not translate just languages; we translate elements of the culture as well.

Let us take another example. "The leopard cannot change its spots". This proverb originates from the bible and it is used to express a person's character, especially if it is bad and will not change even if they pretend it does. In the Albanian language, the equivalence of this proverb is: "Ujku qimen e nderron, po zakonin s'e harron".

The meaning is the same in both languages, but because of the fact that the leopard is not part of the Albanian fauna, therefore the Albanian culture uses the wolf to express the same meaning and this is the reason why we should not translate it literally, because it would not have the same effect in our culture.

The proverb: "If you pay peanuts, you will get a monkey" is used in those situations when you want to express that only stupid people will work for you if you do not pay very much. A close version to the Albanian language would be: "C'te mbjellesh do korresh".

Both adages mean that people should be responsible of their behaviour. Monkey is an animal which is not part of the Albanian fauna; therefore you do not find proverbs in Albanian using this animal. However, by using this kind of adaptation, the message of the proverb is conveyed properly in the target language.

Here is another example: "If you call one wolf, you invite the pack". The meaning of this proverb is that when you invite one sin into your life, no matter how small, it opens the door for far worse or one bad will lead to many.

In the Albanian language, we use the proverb: "E thirre te keqen, hapi deren". The meaning is almost the same in both languages, because it indicates how vulnerable is the human being, when it comes to control the negative consequences of his/her own actions.

The adage: “To put the cat among the pigeons” is defined in the *Online Dictionary of Cambridge* as: to say or do something that causes trouble or makes a lot of people very angry. Some people argue that the closest translation to this adage is: “Te lesh ujku te ruaje delet”. As a matter of fact, the author does not fully agree with this version.

In the Albanian language, this proverb means to allow someone to do something which he or she cannot be trusted about. It is mainly used to refer to people who are dishonest and who will obviously cause a lot of trouble.

Based on the definition found on the Cambridge dictionary, the author thinks that the closest version to this adage would be: “T’i hedhesh benzine, zjarrit”. This proverb is used when we want to emphasize the fact that the situation will get worse and will make people very angry”.

The proverb: “Better an empty purse than an empty head” has its equivalent in the Albanian language: “Me mire te dish sesa te kesh”. In both proverbs, the meaning refers to the fact that having the knowledge is more useful than having the money, because even though you may have the money, if you lack the ideas, then they will be useless. But if you have the ideas, the knowledge and the spirit, you will for sure find the right answer and solution, even though you may lack the money.

Beside the proverbs mentioned below, there are some cases when a mistranslation occurs if the translator does not have a good knowledge of both source and target language culture.

Some adages or idioms may seem to have an exact equivalent, but their meaning differs according to the connotation of the same word in different cultures. Here are some examples, in order to be more specific.

The idiom: “He/she is a rabbit” in English means: “He/she is stupid”, therefore the translation would be: “Ai është gomar”, because in the Albanian culture, the rabbit is not the personification of a stupid person but of a fast runner, whereas the donkey represents a stupid person. “He is a rabbit” in Albanian also means that this person is coward since rabbits are considered coward animals. Therefore, the literal translation in this case may lead to mistranslation.

The idiom: “He/She is an owl” in English means, “he is wise”. In the Albanian culture, owls are considered the opposite of it. If you say: “Ai është buf”, it means he is not very clever or sociable. This idiom may be translated: “ I mençur si plaku”.

The adage: “Be ye therefore as wise as serpent, as harmless as doves” may be translated as: “Të jesh i mençur si gjarpri dhe i butë si pëllumbi”. Të jesh si gjarpri (to be like a serpent) in Albanian culture is not considered to be wise, instead it is considered as slippery, sly boots because the word serpent has a strong negative connotation.

On the other hand, the dove in Albanian is the symbol of peace and freedom. Instead of dove, in our culture the fly is considered harmless. In the Albanian culture, there is the proverb: “Nuk ngacmon as mizën”. Maybe this would be the closest proverb, in order to convey the same meaning in the target language.

The proverb: “Ashes to ashes and dust to dust” is translated in the Albanian version as: “Sy per sy e dhembe per dhembe”. Actually, the proverb in the source language is part of a funeral prayer and it goes like this: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art and unto dust shall thou return”.

It is used about death and it comes from the belief that God made man from dust and on death man will ultimately be buried or returned to the dust.

The same analysis stands even for “ashes to ashes”, while the Albanian version “Sy per sy e dhembe per dhembe” is used to indicate vengeance, and is for the idea of doing to someone the same things that he/she has done to you.

Therefore, in this case that is definitely not the appropriate version. According to the author’s opinion instead of that saying, we can use the Albanian adage: “Te gjithe vijne nga pluhuri, e ne pluhur do te kthehen”.

Here is another interesting proverb in the English language: “You cannot tell a book by its cover”. This proverb is mainly used to show that you cannot know what something or someone is like by looking only at that person or thing’s appearance. It is also used to indicate that the first appearance can be treacherous.

In the Albanian language, we use a proverb which has the exact same meaning as the one in the source language: “Mos I shiko gunen, por shikoji punen”. The word “gune” in the Albanian proverb refers to the flaws that someone or something may have.

This is why they tell to not focus on the flaws but to focus on the things that that person or thing has done successfully. In this case, if we would have translated the English proverb literally, the meaning would not have been complete. This is why it is very important to adapt while translating proverbs, in order to preserve the naturalness of it.

The third strategy, literal translation, as a weak version of translation may be used in a target text, in which the translator aims at preserving the flavour of the source culture but it may be introduced by a clause to clarify that the translator is quoting an existing proverb of the source language.

Generally speaking, if the text is target reader oriented and the source proverb does not have a ready equivalent in the target language, the translator may omit the proverb in the target text but should introduce another proverb from the target culture during his/her translation, being aware of the forms of compensation during the translation process. In this way, the translator preserves the tone of the author in the text.

Proverbs That Have Lost Their Original Meaning

Another important element that the translator should keep in mind is the fact that sometimes even native speakers of a language may use a proverb incorrectly. This is why it is necessary to consult the dictionary, in order to be 100% sure of the meaning of that saying.

The problem is that many of these phrases “do not” mean what we think, and the meaning has gotten lost precisely because they are so confusingly worded. Below the author will preserve the four most frequently misused proverbs.

#4 “Carpe Diem” (Seize the Day)

How we use it. “Carpe diem” has long been the rallying cry for college students who need a Latin proverb to defend their live-for-the-now attitude. The popular interpretation is that you should make the most out of today, because there is no point worrying about tomorrow when, for all you know, you could get hit by a bus. In recent years, it is been overtaken on the Internet by a different phrase that means basically the same thing—YOLO, or “You only live once”, which is kind of “carpe diem” for the acronym generation.

What it originally meant. The original, extended form of the phrase is “Carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero”, which roughly translates to “Seize the day, trusting as little as possible in the future”. Note that it is not about *ignoring* the future, but rather not trusting that everything is going to fall into place for you someday. It was compared to picking the fruit as it grows on the tree, taking life as it comes and doing the work that's before you.

#3 “Curiosity Killed the Cat”

How we use it. This bizarre phrase (why a cat?) has for centuries been the grown-ups’ way of reminding you that sticking your nose into other people’s business is not the best thing that you can do, so you should mind your own business and let the rest live their lives just the way they want to.

What it originally meant. “Worrying too much will give you a heart attack”. The real saying goes back to the 17th century English playwright Ben Jonson, who wrote a play containing the phrase “care kills a cat”. Not “care” as in somebody took too much care of it, but “care” as in “worry”. But it was popularized by Shakespeare who, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, referenced Jonson’s phrase in the line “Though care killed the cat, thou hast mettle enough in thee to kill care”.

It turns out that the originators of the phrase did not really blame “curiosity” for this unidentified cat’s untimely demise. Which is good, because if you think about it, actually is not a splendid advice, because after all it was the curiosity that pushed humanity to go to the moon! Of course, that almost reverses the meaning—curiosity is about taking risks and gaining knowledge; worry is about stressful inaction.

#2 “Blood Is Thicker Than Water”

How we use it. We use this proverb as a reminder that family bonds are more important than temporary relationships with friends. When we say that “blood is thicker than water”, we are using the term “blood” in the same sense as “blood relations”, or people in our immediate family. Typically, it is used as a means to shame family members who side with friends over their parents or siblings, and you will hear it used by Mafia members who want to remind each other that their allegiance to the Family is all that matters.

What it originally meant. If “blood” is referring to blood relations, then what is the “water” supposed to refer to? Well, we can trace this back to an earlier proverb, which was: “The blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb”. Which means we have actually got it backward—the “water of the womb” or our family relationships is not as strong as the “blood of the covenant”.

Rather than “blood” shared by family, the original interpretation of the term was *literal blood*. In other words, the blood that is shed by soldiers on the battlefield makes for stronger bonds than those of the family you happened by chance to be born into.

It was also used in reference to “blood covenants” that people used to make, which involved cutting each other and mixing their blood together in a more hardcore version of the modern pinkie swear.

#1 A Rolling Stone Gathers No Moss

How we use it. The band the Rolling Stones took their name from this saying, and so did *Rolling Stone Magazine*, after the phrase became popular as a way for bohemians, hippies, and beatniks to explain their philosophy. It is the perfect catchphrase for free spirits who don't want to cramp their style by putting down roots.

What it originally meant. First of all, this saying can go back almost 2,000 years ago, to ancient Roman rhetorician Quintilian. This was an era when the most rock star lifestyle imaginable involved owning a nice plot of land and paying your taxes on time. Nobody was writing about the virtues of being a free-spirited back then.

In fact, Quintilian helpfully avoided the confusing “stones and moss” metaphor and used the clearer”. A plant often removed cannot thrive. Well, that makes more sense: If you keep ripping up a flower and replanting it every week, it is never going to grow. In fact, there were other versions over the centuries, which included “A tree often transplanted is never loaded with fruit” and “...as the rolling stone gathers no moss, so the roving heart gathers no affections”.

How to Translate These Kinds of Proverbs? Analysis Based on the 2nd Survey

When it comes to translating proverbs like the aforementioned, the translator may find himself/herself at a difficult situation. Some of these proverbs may have changed the meaning and considering the fact that they are broadly used with another meaning, and not the original meaning, what should we do?

Shall we preserve their original meaning, or shall we preserve the meaning that is widely used? If we consult the dictionary we may find a different meaning, but if we speak to a native speaker, then we may discover a new meaning.

In order to give a fully professional answer to this question, the author decided to conduct a survey, in which professional translators were asked what they would do in order to translate a proverb. Will they focus on its meaning in the dictionary, or will they take into consideration the way how the native speakers use that specific proverb in their everyday life?

Personally speaking, the author is in favour of consulting the dictionary, because if the meaning of that specific proverb may have changed with the passing of time, this should be reflected even in the dictionary. However, the results of the survey will give me a glimpse in order to provide an answer for this question. In this survey, 170 professional translators participated.

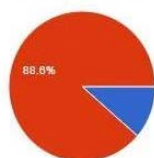
The answers were as shown in Figure 3:

170 responses

Publish analytics

Summary

When translating a proverb you focus more on



Its meaning in the dictionary	19	11.4%
The meaning that the native speakers give to that proverb in their everyday life	148	88.6%

Figure 3. The 170 responses: Results based on the Second Survey.

The question aroused was: “When translating a proverb, will you focus more on its meaning in the dictionary, or on the meaning that the native speakers give to that proverb in their everyday life?”

Eleven point four percent of the translators voted that they would consult its meaning in the dictionary, while 88.6 percent of the others voted that they would be focusing on the meaning that the native speakers gave to that proverb in their everyday life.

To be honest, the author was a little surprised, because according to the opinion there is no better consultant for a translator than the dictionary. But after analyzing the results of this survey, it figured out that considering the fact that we as translator who want to preserve the equivalence and the same meaning in the target language as it was in the source language, then it is recommended to focus on the way how the people use those proverbs in their everyday life.

We all know that the language is always evolving and the words, phrases, proverbs, idioms, etc. are always changing and they are losing or gaining more and more meanings.

Therefore, let us go back to the examples provided above.

Considering the fact that people do not use those proverbs in their original meaning, then we should adapt them during the translating process. For instance, the closest translation to the proverb: “Blood is thicker than water” in the Albanian language, will be “Gjaku uje nuk behet”.

Therefore, we preserve the same meaning in both the source and the target language.

Conclusions

There is no doubt that as translators we face constant challenges while doing our job. An example would be: While translating literary works, we may come across more than one cultural obstacle for which we must have an answer to. Amongst these cultural obstacles, we find proverbs to be quite the challenge.

Through proverbs, cultures can express social, economic, and also political characteristics and while some have been invented long before our time, they may still be considered up to date and we might still apply them in our daily conversations.

However, when it comes to translating such idioms, the task can be more complex than just a literal translation. Finding an equivalent in the languages you are translating into is not always the case, and replacing by something that sounds natural, that flows and additionally conveys the same message will not be an easy task to accomplish.

There are countries that in fact share common cultural similarities and thus have the equivalent from one language to the other. But when this is not the case and translators must find a creative but rather culturally relevant way of conveying the same, this is where the translating skills become handy along with the cultural knowledge of the languages that as translator we believe we know so well.

Proverbs are interesting, important, and complex. That is why so many different views have evolved to analyze them: the personal, formal, religious, literary, practical, cultural, and cognitive views.

These views have different goals that have been persuaded with different techniques, so they provide us with different information.

Proverbs have been and remain most powerful and effective instrument for the transmission of culture, social morality, manners, and ideas of a people from one generation to another.

The reason behind the efficacy of them has been and remains a most powerful and effective instrument for the transmission of culture, social morality, manners, and ideas of a people from one generation to another.

The reason behind the efficacy of the proverb is that it is an aphorism, a wise saying based upon people’s experience, and is a reflection of the social values and sensibility of the people.

Reading the proverbs and sayings of other cultures is an interesting way to gain insight into life that your own culture might not have. Not only that, you can see how much philosophy is shared between cultures, and how common sayings in your culture manifest in others, and vice versa.

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