

THE CONCEPT OF EQUIVALENCE IN RENDERING PROVERBS

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Effective translation of proverbs has always been a problem to certain extent, due to its close and permanent relation to cultural aspects since it belongs to the folklore genre. Proverbs are special and fixed phrases which have unchanged meanings. They represent the history and culture. The traditional function of proverbs is didactic because they contain wisdom, morals, truth and traditional views.

Proverbs in one language may have equivalents in other languages. However, even if a linguistic equivalent exists and occurs, there may be still a cultural difference. Such a difference is most likely to be translated by given a cultural equivalent. It is best to focus on equivalence between the proverb standing within the context of the source culture and the target culture. Also proverbs with some social customs and peculiarities should not be translated directly. It might help to find an approximate to maintain the intended message of the proverb.

Eugene A. Nida notes that 'proverbs are special metaphoric expressions and the translator should know the proverbial concepts in both source language SL/target language TL' which means to bear in mind their similarities and differences. Durbin Rowland, on the other hand, states that proverbs 'stick in the mind, build up vocabulary and illustrate admirably the phraseology and idiomatic expressions of the foreign tongue'. So they are a teaching device of encouragement, enlightenment and noble thoughts. Universal proverbs have analogous proverbs in both working languages [1]. Features like culture and tradition are very difficult to deal with in translating from one language to another especially if we want to preserve the original proverb's form and taste. Actually, culture will always be more productive than a focus on abstract linguistic structures or cultural conventions.

Moreover, because of the habits, religious beliefs, myth and culture, customs, proverbs from different countries will carry different connotations. Knowing the cultural background of a language can help to make us understand and perceive the cultural connotations in order to

render them accurately: Eng. *East or West, home is best.* – Ro. *Fie pâinea cât de bună, nu-i bună-n țară străină. Ca acasă la tine nu-i niciăieri bine* [2, p.91].

Such proverbs cannot be rendered literally because they will lose their semantic content and essence. We have to find and bring a similar proverb in the other language that serves the same proverb idea.

Here, the Romanian proverbs given above preserve the equivalent content, as the bread (pâinea) is associated with home, and foreign country (țară străină) with East or West. Equivalence implies maintenance in the TL of the SL situation by using utterly different structural and stylistic means. Proverbs are good examples for illustrating the way in which the whole message is affected.

Every nation has its own cultural and historical unique literary works. For example, in Britain, people are greatly influenced by some literary works such as Shakespeare's and many proverbs are originated from his work [1]. Next to the Bible, Shakespeare is undoubtedly the greatest literary source of the modern proverb. No one can be sure, however, which of those attributed to him are the product of Shakespeare's own thought and how many were taken over more or less in the form in which they existed in the oral tradition around him. Scholars are still bringing to light proverbs, long since defunct, embedded in Shakespearian lines that have been supposed pure Shakespeare [3, p.12]. E.g. *All that glitters is not gold.* – *Nu tot ce lucește e aur* [1].

The translator must be aware of such historical tradition of linguistics. That is to go beyond the connotative meaning of the proverb and deal with the proverbial concepts as pragmatic meanings based on socio-cultural similarities and differences of the two languages [1].

According to Douglas Robinson, the study of translation is an integral and important part of intercultural relations. And from all the illustrated examples, we can say that a translator needs to know Source Language and Target Language cultures and its relations to their customs, religion, languages, historical and geographical places, and all aspects of cultural background of both languages in order to achieve a good translation. So, all these components should be taken into consideration in rendering proverbs from the SL into the TL.

Equivalence can be considered a subdivision of the free translation method. It is frequently adopted when the content of the proverb is related to a SL cultural or lexical reference and has no equivalent in another language yet can be substituted with a cultural or lexical items that have, as close as possible, the same meaning as that found in the source proverb [1]. According to Douglas Robinson, 'culture will always be more productive and effective than a focus on abstract linguistic structures or cultural conventions'.

C. Nord, on the other hand, believes in 'cultural-bound linguistic signs' and notes that 'both the source and target texts are determined by the communicative situation in which they serve to convey a message.

There is a gap between the two languages regarding the cultural aspect of the proverb [1].

E: He changes a *fly* into an *elephant*. Making *mountains of molehills* [4].

R: *Mincinosul cu de-a sila face musca cât cămila*.

What is really interesting in the above pair of proverbs (conveying the same message – the fact that a 'liar' can transform and change almost everything through the words he uttered – the contrast between a *fly* and an *elephant* is very well placed, being similar and accepted in the two languages, even if Romanian favours the *camel* and English uses the *elephant*. The English pattern has even another solution – the structure using an - *ing* form: Making *mountains* and *molehills* [4].

Proverbs are the transmission of people's linguistic phrases and cultural manners from one generation into another. That is why the treatment of rendering proverbs must be careful, precise, and not to be expected literally. Not to forget to take into account the proverb cultural, religious, historical background to use the appropriate translation method, hence, achieving a balance between form and content, and also rendering the information the proverb wants to give successfully into the other language without losing the essence of the its meaning.

The direct message is not always the solution [1].

The comparison of proverbial texts in different languages needs to be based on a theory of equivalence. Eugene Nida and Charles Taber propose dynamic equivalence which relies on "the principle of equiva-

lent effect”. In their work, Eugene Nida and Charles Taber defined dynamic equivalence as a translation method according to which a translator seeks the meaning of the original in such a way that the TL wording brings about the same effect on the TL reader as the original text did upon the SL reader. Eugene Nida and Charles Taber say, “The message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors”. Mona Baker has presented “Equivalence above word level” which refers to translating multi-word fixed expressions of proverbs and idioms, among others.

The role of the translator is to deal with the whole chunk of language as one meaning unit and recreate the meaning in another culture in such a way that it enables the TL reader to understand it as equally as that understood by the readers of the original [5].

Above information proves that proverb, which is found in the SL culture, can be translated into another proverb found in the TL culture. Both manifest the same wisdom and execute similar function, but their lexical items are different.

References:

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