

EXAMINING ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN EQUIVALENCE OF PROVERBS

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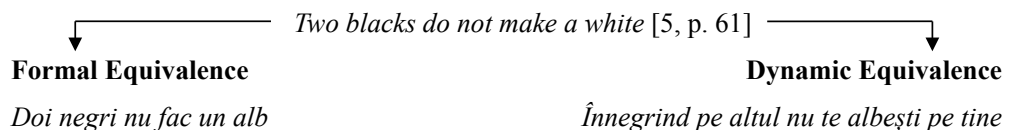
Proverbs are time capsules that preserve the age-old wisdom and customs of the people. In the context of globalisation, they serve as tools for intercultural communication. The study of proverbs in English and Romanian helps to understand how to preserve cultural identity in translation. The aim of this study is to identify types of equivalents and methods for effective translation of proverbs with cultural sensitivity.

Paremiology, the study of proverbs, intersects with linguistics, folklore, sociology, pedagogy, semantics, and pragmatics. [1, p. 72] In the late 20th century, Russian scholar Grigory Permyakov established paremiology as an independent discipline, differentiating it from other scientific fields. [2, p. 143]

Proverb collections often include not just proverbs but also sayings, quotes, and idiomatic expressions, leading to confusion. Differentiating between proverbs and sayings is of significant importance. Therefore, this research aims to address this distinction. Proverbs are short, standardised expressions conveying life lessons or moral advice, intended to transmit folk wisdom. In contrast, sayings describe recurring situations without moral implications and are used in specific contexts.

Different scientific fields offer unique perspectives on proverbs, enriching their understanding. Linguistics focuses on language features, cultural studies on social and cultural context, and literature on artistic expression. Wolfgang Mieder's comprehensive definition describes proverbs as "*short, well-known sentences of the people containing wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed, and memorable form, passed from generation to generation.*" [3, p. 119] This definition emphasises the form, content and cultural significance of proverbs. Mieder takes into account both linguistic and socio-cultural aspects, making his approach comprehensive.

The main purpose of our research is to determine the level of equivalence in translating proverbs. Achieving equivalence in translation involves balancing the original and target texts. Eugene Nida distinguishes between **formal equivalence** (precise textual matching) and **dynamic equivalence** (reader-oriented adaptation). [4, p. 159]



When translating proverbs, employing the method of dynamic equivalence is preferable, as it more effectively conveys cultural and emotional nuances. This approach results in translations that are both more natural and comprehensible. In contrast, formal equivalence can lead to misunderstanding and distortion of meaning, which can be seen in the example above, where difficulties with interpretation and cultural perception arise.

Hence, the primary focus is on determining the degree of equivalence and analysing the methods of translating proverbs, which requires a careful approach to the selection of data collection and analysis. A total corpus of 329 proverbs from the compilations of Theodor Flonta were extracted and examined for the type of equivalence that they bear. Therefore, we have determined that 240 proverbs accounted for zero equivalence, 76 for partial equivalence and 13 for total equivalence. Proverbs have been subjected to semantic analysis in order to elucidate their primary meanings and cultural connotations.

Total equivalence preserves the meaning, syntax, cultural context, emotion, and function of the original. For example: *Children and fools tell the truth* (SL) – *Copiii și nebunii spun adevărul* (TL). Both proverbs share structural identity and convey the same meaning, showing high lexical and semantic equivalence.

Partial equivalence occurs when the translation only partially matches the original proverb in meaning or form. As we can notice in the following example: *Pot goes so long to the water that it is broken at last* (SL) – *Ulciurul nu merge de multe ori la apă* (TL). The Romanian translation (TL) omits parts and uses antonymic translation, capturing the essence but not the exact structure.

Zero equivalence occurs when there is no direct match in the TL for a word or expression from the SL due to cultural or conceptual differences; i.e.: *A leopard can't change its spots* (SL) – *Lupul își schimbă părul, dar năravul ba* (TL). Antonymic translation and modulation were used to change the metaphorical image in order to preserve the original meaning.

Despite having good knowledge of translation theory, translators often face various difficulties in practice. This conclusion stems from the fact that this impossibility is typically confined to proverbs that encapsulate the cultural specificity of a particular community, rendering them unique [6]. Proverbs frequently encapsulate the distinctive cultural, historical, and social characteristics of a society. This makes it difficult to translate them into another language, as such proverbs may contain references to national symbols or traditions that are not understood by people from other cultures. Many proverbs have a stable structure that may not conform to the grammatical and syntactic norms of another language. Adequate translation may require changing the word order or using a different grammatical construction. Some proverbs are based on sound effects such as alliteration and rhyme. These are difficult to reproduce in another language while retaining the original meaning and emphasis.

The translator must have both theoretical and practical knowledge of translation strategies in order to be able to cope with this task. According to Wolfgang Lörcher,

a translation strategy is “a potentially conscious procedure for solving a problem faced in translating a text, or any segment of it.” [7, p. 8] Strategies used in translating proverbs include adaptation, paraphrasing, omission, equivalence, foreignization, domestication, and addition. These help navigate cultural-specific elements and achieve semantic and functional equivalence.

Translating proverbs is a complex process that reflects unique aspects of culture and mentality. The translator must have a good understanding of the source-language culture and the target-language culture. Key challenges include preserving the emotional and communicative effect, adapting the proverb to the cultural context of the target audience, and taking into account all details, from cultural differences to the context of use. The concept of equivalence is important in proverb translation. It involves finding a translation that accurately conveys the meaning and functions of the original, even if the structure and imagery change. Linguists such as Lawrence Venuti, Eugene Nida, Jacob Retzker discussed this concept in their works. Equivalence is sometimes referred to as adequacy, aiming for the translation to sound natural and retain all key aspects of the source text. In translating proverbs, zero equivalence is often used: the structure and imagery may differ, but the idea and essence are accurately conveyed. Based on these data, further research can be conducted to create accurate collections of proverbs and to study their semantic and formal aspects.

References:

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