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## ISSUES OF TRANSLATION OF ENGLISH PROVERBS AND SAYINGS INTO ARMENIAN AND RUSSIAN

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**Abstract:** *Language embodies the culture and individuality of its speakers, influencing their worldview. In the context of translation between languages, the cultural aspects of both the source and target languages are paramount. It is crucial to assess the degree to which culture is present in the text and how language is interwoven with cultural elements. The objective of translation is to enhance mutual understanding among various countries and peoples. Therefore, the role of the translator or interpreter extends beyond linguistic skills to include a comprehensive understanding of the associated cultures. In this regard, translation involves more than simply converting words, phrases, or documents from one language to another; it also facilitates cultural interchange. The importance of cultural distinctions is especially pronounced in the translation of proverbs and sayings. Thus, the aim of the article is to analyze how cultural elements are reflected in language and how they influence the translation process. In particular, the study focuses on identifying effective translation strategies that preserve both the meaning and cultural specificity of proverbs and sayings when translating them from one language to another.*

**Keywords:** *proverbs and sayings, cultural aspects, facilitate cultural interchange, translation strategies, relevance and brevity*

### Introduction

Proverbs and sayings function as a link between language and cultural identity, encapsulating the values, wisdom, and experiences of a community. They reflect national traditions, norms, and shared histories, influencing the worldview of their

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speakers; these culture-bound phrases often mirror existing social realities, acting as a means of either challenging or upholding traditional values. These expressions are characterized by a general attitude towards life, they can be found in contexts as reminders and warnings, for example, “*Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.*” Proverbs and sayings can promote positive qualities while criticizing negative ones, and maintain moral principles by distinguishing between right and wrong, leaving a lasting impact as knowledge, discernment, and sound judgment are far more valuable than material wealth or superficial pleasures. They enhance people’s understanding of different cultures, encourage empathy and connection among people, and are a vital part of linguistic and cultural identity. Moreover, the study of oral traditions demonstrates how proverbs endure as cultural identifiers, guiding human behaviour and reinforcing community bonds. These culture-specific language units not only enrich linguistic expression but also play a crucial role in cultural heritage and social cohesion. Therefore, proverbs and sayings act as significant cultural markers that reflect the values and beliefs inherent in a society, demonstrating the connection between language and social norms. In *English* culture, for example, proverbs emphasize themes of individualism and self-sufficiency, reinforcing the notion that diligence and effort yield success. In contrast, *Russian* proverbs tend to emphasize the importance of community and resilience, mirroring collectivism and the ability to endure hardships (Kaznina, 2016). *Armenian* proverbs are deeply intertwined with traditional customs and emotional narratives, connecting them to cultural rituals and storytelling. Therefore, it can be stated that proverbs not only enhance communication but also encapsulate the philosophical and ethical dimensions of their cultures, weaving a complex fabric that shapes identity and fosters unity within a community.

Additionally, proverbs and sayings function as a bridge between the past and present, linking individuals to their cultural roots while also offering timeless advice applicable in various contexts. The use of proverbs and sayings requires careful consideration of context and cultural relevance, as their meanings can shift and sometimes even lose significance when translated or used out of context. Thus, their translation presents certain challenges due to the intricate relationship between culture and language as these expressions often reflect deeply ingrained cultural values, societal norms, and shared experiences that may not have direct equivalents in other languages. Proverbs and sayings often condense intricate concepts, allowing speakers to express profound ideas succinctly and effectively. To successfully navigate various cultural environments, it is crucial to comprehend not only the direct translations of proverbs and sayings, but also what they mean

within their original cultural setting. Otherwise, this cultural specificity can result in misinterpretations or a complete loss of meaning during the translation process. Misunderstandings may also occur in case they are interpreted solely through the perspective of one's own culture, potentially resulting in confusion and conflict as a proverb that resonates with an English-speaking audience may not evoke the same emotions in Russian or Armenian contexts. Cultural proficiency is vitally important for the effective interpretation of proverbs and sayings since acknowledging the nuances inherent in them enhances empathy and respect for diverse viewpoints. Furthermore, the intricacies associated with metaphorical language in proverbs frequently resist straightforward translation, compromising their overall impact, and a well-informed appreciation of proverbs provides individuals with essential tools for engaging in nuanced interactions, thereby enhancing clarity and effectiveness in communication across cultural boundaries. Hence, it is essential for translators to approach their work with cultural sensitivity as misapplication of a proverb or a saying and their use in an inappropriate context can lead to significant misunderstandings. In our contemporary globalized world interaction with other, sometimes new cultures, has become unavoidable, and the cultural variety within one community is an opportunity to flourish. Language, being a reflection of culture and individual or collective identity, shapes the worldview. When translating from one language to another, the cultural nuances of both languages come into play. It is also essential to consider the delicate balance between language and culture within a text. Therefore, when translating from one language into another it is crucial to consult with native speakers to determine the specific contexts in which a particular proverb is considered appropriate or inappropriate. Moreover, not all the proverbs and sayings have direct equivalents or convey the same significance across various cultures. Some may reflect biases or outdated perspectives. A thorough understanding of the historical and cultural contexts behind proverbs and sayings allows translators to interpret and use them correctly.

While proverbs and sayings share similarities, there are subtle differences that distinguish English proverbs from English sayings. A proverb dates back to medieval times and has a long-standing presence in the language, and the person who said or wrote is not known. Sayings, on the other hand, are broader and may include phrases, idiomatic expressions, or colloquial remarks. They are generally lighthearted and situational, serve casual communication purposes, and adapt to contemporary language trends. Unlike proverbs, sayings do not always encompass a moral or universal truth. So, both proverbs and sayings enrich the English language, providing insight into its history, culture, and values. Understanding the

difference between them can enhance one's appreciation of their use and context in communication.

### Translation Issues

Translation of proverbs and sayings presents unique challenges. Nida indicates that unique metaphoric expressions require a comprehensive understanding of concepts in both the source language (SL) and the target language (TL), taking into consideration their similarities and differences (Nida, 1964). Similarly, House explains that, "Translating is not only a linguistic act; it is also a cultural one" (House, 2014, p. 11). In this view, House stresses the importance of culture in translation since proverbs contain not only linguistic but also cultural features. The translation of cultural and traditional customs presents significant challenges, particularly in maintaining the original essence and character of proverbs. Falk argues that issues in translation might emerge due to the excessive focus on lexical equivalence (Falk, 1978, p. 44).

Translation of English proverbs and sayings into Armenian and Russian involves navigating various linguistic, cultural, and contextual challenges. These issues might arise due to the differences in *idiomatic meaning*, cultural references, and syntactical structures between the languages. For instance, expressions like '*break a leg*', used to wish someone '*good luck*', could be misinterpreted if translated literally, as the figurative sense might not resonate in the target cultures. Translators should seek culturally appropriate substitutions that convey the intended meaning. *Cultural nuances*, which are one of the essential aspects of any language, shape the ways of conveying thoughts and ideas. Many sayings are deeply rooted in the cultural context of the source language reflecting everyday experience of the speaker. For example, an English saying like '*A leopard never changes its spots*' is based on a metaphor familiar to English speakers. Such metaphors may require adaptation for Armenian and Russian audiences, where the cultural association with the metaphor might differ.

*Semantic ambiguity* is another issue worth tackling. English sayings sometimes carry multiple layers of meaning depending on the context, making them challenging to interpret accurately. Translators need to consider both the literal and implied meanings while ensuring the translated expression fits the specific situation. For example, the literal translation of the expression '*to kick the bucket*' into Armenian and Russian will cause confusion and complete misunderstanding.

The next issue to discuss here is the *grammatical* and *syntactical* differences between English, Armenian, and Russian, which can significantly complicate the translation process. English sayings may rely on succinct phrasing, while Armenian

or Russian translations may require longer, more detailed explanations to maintain clarity and meaning. Preserving emotional tone – such as humor, irony, or sentimentality – constitutes essential nuances that are crucial in conveying the intended message. For instance, the English saying ‘*When pigs fly*’ implies impossibility, and may lose its humorous imagery when rendered into Armenian or Russian if not carefully adapted.

Last, but not of least importance is the issue of lack of equivalent expressions. Armenian and Russian languages may lack direct counterparts for some English sayings, and require creative approaches to convey the same intent. Translators often have to invent new expressions or use descriptive phrases to bridge this gap. To effectively address these issues, the techniques of localization, paraphrasing, and contextual analysis are commonly applied. The technique of Localization helps the translator adapt the saying to reflect culturally relevant imagery or context. Paraphrasing is a method that allows one to describe the essence of the saying rather than translating it word-for-word. *Contextual analysis* supposes choosing translations based on the specific context and audience. On the whole, by prioritizing cultural sensitivity and linguistic accuracy, translators can ensure that the essence and impact of English sayings are effectively conveyed in Armenian and Russian. However, maintaining the balance between authenticity and accessibility remains a delicate art.

### **Translation Strategies and Techniques**

The translation of proverbs and sayings, as it has been mentioned above, is generally a challenging task. The method of comparative analysis and the contrasting method have been applied to reveal the strategies that are most effective for translating English proverbs and sayings into Armenian and Russian. The findings of the survey are based on the analysis of around one hundred proverbs across the three languages. It should be noted that in the translation of proverbs cultural elements are consistently more influential and significant than linguistic structures or grammar norms. For instance, proverbs and sayings in English, Armenian, and Russian may possess different implications due to variations in religious beliefs, customs, myths, and cultural backgrounds. A deep understanding of the cultural context is crucial for accurately conveying these implications, as it can be illustrated by the example of the English proverb “*A leopard never changes its spots*”, which means that an individual’s nature or character traits cannot be altered. Just as a leopard’s spots are a permanent part of its appearance, certain qualities or habits in a person are believed to be unchangeable, no matter how much they might try to alter them. In Armenian, the

proverb “*Շարձիր կովը կաշին չի փոխի*” expresses the same meaning as the English proverb. In Russian, we have found two most frequently used dynamic equivalences: “*Волк каждый год линяет, а все сер бывает*”, “*Зареклась лиса кур не воровать*”. All these proverbs express the idea of the persistence of certain traits. Due to their national and cultural backgrounds each proverb represents a different animal to convey the meaning of the saying in the respective language.

Some of the proverbs analyzed are of historical and religious origin, e.g. “*Health is better than wealth*”. This proverb in English is borrowed from the Roman poet Virgil, who said that the best wealth is health. It is translated into Armenian as “*Առողջությունը թանկ է ունուց*”, its Russian equivalent sounds like “*Здоровье дороже золота*”.

The English proverb “*Better a small fish than an empty dish*” was recorded in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it comes from hunting traditions in the Middle Ages. Its origin is a Biblical allusion “*Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith*”. It corresponds to “*Զեռքի մեջ մի թռչունը թիփի մեջ երկուսն արժե*” in Armenian, and “*Лучше синица в руке, чем журавль в небе*” in Russian. As for the proverbs and sayings with religious background, they generally refer to divine principles and spiritual teachings, preaching morality, work, and trust in God’s wisdom. The following proverb in English, Armenian and Russian conveys the same underlying message: “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding*”, «*Ամբողջ արտոյլ աստվծին՝ Տիրոջը և մի՛ փաստիրքք քն ըմբռնմանը*», “*Надейся на Господа всем сердцем твоим, и не полагайся на разум твой*”.

The examples analyzed above show that proverbs and sayings cannot be translated literally, as it would result in a loss of their intended meaning. It is essential to find a proverb in the target language that conveys the same message as illustrated above. This technique is called *substitution*, and it replaces the English expression with one in the target language that has a similar meaning but uses more culturally appropriate or familiar imagery for the target audience. This technique is often used when a direct translation would sound unnatural or nonsensical in the target language. Below are additional examples illustrating the application of the *substitution* technique in the translation of proverbs and sayings:

*Give him an inch and he'll take an ell.* – Երեւ տուր, աստանն էլ հետը կուզի: – Дай палец – откусит всю руку.

*Talk of the devil and he will appear.* – Անունը տուր՝ սփռոց գցիր: – Легко на помине.

*To see which way the cat jumps. – Մպասել, թե որ կողմ քամին կփչի: –*  
*Посмотрим, как карта ляжет.*

*One body is nobody. – Մի ծաղկով զարուկ չի գա: – Один в поле не*  
*воин.*

*Dumb dogs are dangerous. – Մարմանդ գետից վախեցիր: – В тихом*  
*омуте черти водятся.*

*He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. – Նա շապիկով է ծնվել: –*  
*Родился в рубашке.*

*Every cloud has a silver lining. – Չկա չարիք առանց բարիք: – Нет худа*  
*без добра.*

Another widely applied technique to translate proverbs and sayings is the *equivalent* translation technique. It involves finding an expression in the target language that has the same meaning, linguistic components and cultural significance as the source one. This technique is ideal when both languages have similar proverbs and sayings. For example:

***The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.*** – *Խնձորը ծառից հեռու չի*  
*ընկնում: – Яблоко от яблони недалеко падает.*

***Actions speak louder than words.*** – *Գործերն ավելի խոսում են, քան*  
*խոսքերը: – Дела говорят громче слов.*

***Don't put all your eggs in one basket.*** – *Մի՛ դիր բոլոր ձվերը մեկ*  
*գաճրյուղի մեջ: – Не клади все яйца в одну корзину.*

***A penny saved is a penny earned.*** – *Խնայված դրամն՝ վաստակած*  
*դրամ է: – Конейка рубль бережет.*

***Better late than never.*** – *Լավ է ուշ, քան երբեք: – Лучше поздно, чем*  
*никогда.*

***All is well that ends well.*** – *Ամեն ինչ լավ է, որ լավ է վերջանում: – Все*  
*хорошо, что хорошо кончается.*

***Out of sight, out of mind.*** – *Աչքից հեռու, մտքից հեռու: – С глаз долой,*  
*из сердца вон.*

***To sow the wind and to reap the whirlwind.*** – *Քամի ցանողը փոթորիկ*  
*կհնձի: – Посеешь ветер – пожнешь бурю.*

***There is no smoke without fire.*** – *Առանց կրակ ծուխ չի լինում: – Нет*  
*дыма без огня.*

In cases when *substitution* or *direct* equivalent translations are not possible, translators create a new saying in the target language that conveys the same underlying message. This technique ensures the expression sounds natural and culturally relevant in the target language, and it is called *Adaptation*. This technique involves creating a new proverb or a saying in the target language with some cultural shift which conveys the same underlying message as the English proverb. For example:

*Every bean has its black.* – Անթերի մարդ չկա: – И на солнце есть пятна.

*All his geese are swans.* – Նա ասէն ինչ չափազանցնուի է: – Делать из мухи слона.

*It will all be plain sailing.* – Ասէն ինչ հաջող կընթանա: – Все пойдёт как по маслу.

*Separate the husk from the green.* – Լավը վատից ջնկել: – Отделить зёрна от плевел.

*It doesn't matter a sixpence.* – Դա ոչինչ չարժէ: – Грош цена.

The technique of adaptation often reveals how translators manage to convey the core idea of the original phrase trying to align it with the cultural context of the target language. Below are some examples of English sayings along with their translations and *cultural adaptations* into Armenian and Russian:

***Out of the frying pan and into the fire.*** – Փախչել բոցից, ընկնել կրակի մէջ: – Из огня да в полымя.

***The early bird catches the worm.*** – Ով շուտ է զարթնում, հաջողութիւն է հասնում: – Кто рано встаёт, тому Бог подаёт.

***When in Rome, do as the Romans do.*** – Այլ երկրում այլ օրէնքի հաւաձայն: – В чужой монастырь со своим уставом не ходят.

As demonstrated in the analyzed translations, a balance is maintained between preserved meaning and adapting to cultural and linguistic contexts. Russian translations often preserve the essence of the English saying but may incorporate their own culturally rooted expressions, as with “*The early bird catches the worm*”, where the Russian version – “*Кто рано встает, тому Бог подает*” – ties success to divine favour. The interpretation of “*Don't put all your eggs in one*



*basket*” (Armenian «Բղերը ձեռքը մի գամբուղի մեջ մի դիր» and Russian “*He кладу все яйца в одну корзину*”) have literal, yet linguistically smooth rendering. In the case of “*When in Rome, do as the Romans do*” the cultural adaptation in Russian “*В чужой монастырь со своим уставом не ходят*” provides a richer historical and cultural resonance with the period when the role of monasteries in people’s lives was indeed crucial, while Armenian translation «Այլ երկրում այլ օրենքի համաձայն» is more neutral and focuses on the principle of adapting to local norms. In Armenian, “*A penny saved is a penny earned*” is translated as «Իսկայված դրամը՝ վաստակված դրամ է», and it conveys the idea that saved money is the earned money since the word *դրամ* (dram) in Armenian means ‘money’, and it is the name of the national currency at the same time. In Russian, “*Копейка рубль бережет*” includes the name of the currency, ruble, which has been used since the 13th century. This reference highlights the cultural context and emphasizes its stylistic meaning.

Thus, we can state that proverbs and sayings serve as effective tools for showcasing a nation’s cultural heritage in communication, and while translating, it is essential to apply a relevant translation technique and carefully consider cultural gaps or conflicts in order to prevent misunderstandings arising from cultural differences.

## Conclusion

The process of translation of proverbs and sayings requires a thorough understanding of both languages with their respective cultural contexts. These expressions carry linguistic patterns and cultural norms from one generation to another. Therefore, rendering proverbs and sayings demands careful and accurate handling so as to avoid literal interpretations. Effective communication across cultures is fundamentally dependent on the ability to understand and utilize proverbs, which encapsulate the values, beliefs, and social norms inherent in a culture. As with proverbs, the translation of sayings requires consideration of both linguistic and cultural differences between the source language and target language. *Cultural adaptation* is the basic technique for a successful translation of sayings. Besides, to successfully navigate a variety of cultural contexts, it is essential to grasp not only their literal translations but also their contextual significance. Misinterpretations may arise when proverbs and sayings are viewed solely through the lens of one’s own cultural framework, potentially leading to confusion and conflict.

So, whether through *equivalent translation*, *substitution* or *cultural adaptation* when translating sayings and proverbs, the goal of the translator should be to

preserve the wisdom and cultural significance of the SL to ensure the translation is accessible and meaningful. It is also important to mention that translation of proverbs and sayings enriches both languages, fosters a deeper appreciation of cultural nuances, values and traditions, and ultimately encourages cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of diverse worldviews.

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**Ն. Թովմասյան, Ա. Պապոյան – Անգլերեն ասացվածքների ու առածների հայերեն և ռուսերեն թարգմանության խնդիրները.** – Լեզուն մարմնավորում է տվյալ լեզվով հաղորդակցվողների՝ լեզվակիրների մշակույթն ու անհատականությունը՝ միաժամանակ նպաստում է նրանց աշխարհայացքի ձևավորմանը: Թարգմանության համատեքստում առաջնային են ինչպես սկզբնաղբյուր, այնպես էլ թիրախային լեզուների մշակութային ասպեկտները: Շատ կարևոր է գնահատել, թե որքանով է մշակույթը առկա տեքստում, և ինչպես է լեզուն միա-հյուսված մշակութային տարրերի հետ: Թարգմանության հիմնարար նպատակն է բարձրացնել փոխըմբռնումը տարբեր երկրների և ժողովուրդների միջև: Հետևաբար, թարգմանչի դերը ավելին է, քան զուտ լեզվական հմտությունների և տիրապետելը, այն պետք է ներառի հարակից մշակույթների համապարփակ ըմբռնումը: Այս առումով թարգմանությունը ներառում է ավելին, քան պարզապես բառերի, արտահայտությունների կամ նախադասությունների փոխակերպումը մի լեզվից մյուսը: Մշակութային տարրերի ճիշտ ըմբռնումը առաջնային է հատկապես ասացվածքների և առածների թարգմանության գործընթացում: Այսպիսով, հոդվածի նպատակն է ուսումնասիրել, թե ինչպես են մշակութային տարրերը ներառված լեզվում և ինչ ազդեցություն ունեն դրանք թարգմանության գործընթացի վրա: Մասնավորապես, հետազոտությունը ուղղված է այն արդյունավետ թարգմանչական ռազմավարությունների բացահայտմանը, որոնք նպաստում են ասացվածքների և առածների իմաստի և մշակութային յուրահատկությունների պահպանմանը դրանք մեկ լեզվից մյուսը փոխանցելիս:

**Բանալի բառեր.** ասացվածքներ և առածներ, մշակութային ասպեկտներ, օժանդակել մշակութային փոխանակմանը, թարգմանության ռազմավարություններ, համապատասխանություն և հակիրճություն

**Н. Товмасян, А. Папоян – Проблемы перевода английских пословиц и поговорок на армянский и русский языки.** – Язык воплощает культуру и индивидуальность его носителей и влияет на их мировоззрение. Культурные аспекты как исходного, так и целевого языков играют ключевую роль в контексте перевода. Крайне важно оценить степень присутствия культуры в тексте и то, как язык переплетается с

культурными элементами. Одной из основных целей перевода является улучшение взаимопонимания между различными странами и народами. Таким образом, роль переводчика выходит за рамки простого применения лингвистических навыков и, безусловно, включает в себя всестороннее понимание взаимосвязанных культур. В этом смысле перевод включает не только интерпретацию слов, фраз или документов, но и способствует культурному обмену. Значение культурных различий особенно ярко проявляется при переводе пословиц и поговорок. Таким образом, целью статьи является анализ того, как культурные элементы проявляются в языке и как они воздействуют на процесс перевода. В частности, исследование направлено на выявление эффективных стратегий перевода, позволяющих сохранить как смысл, так и культурную специфику пословиц и поговорок при их переводе с одного языка на другой.

**Ключевые слова:** пословицы и поговорки, культурные аспекты, содействие культурному обмену, стратегии перевода, релевантность и краткость