### CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TRANSLATION OF PAREMIAS

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Abstract: The unique nature of paremias or short, sententious sentences, presents several translation problems. This article shows how the use of ICTs to the study and preservation of paremias contributes to the existence of different types of consultation sources (journals, monographs, repertoires, didactic proposals), which facilitates both the search for correspondences as well as their teaching / learning in the translation classroom. After explaining the concept of the word 'paremia' and the typology of the different types of paremias, we explain the translation techniques that have been disseminated thanks to ICTs, to afterwards present different publications on paremias freely available on the Internet: a selection of multilingual databases, articles in journals, activities and didactic units for the translation class. Particular emphasis will be placed on reference sources concerning paremias in Spanish, such as multilingual databases: the Gotzon Garate collection (Fundación Bilbao Bizkaia Kutxa), the Refranero multilingüe (Centro Virtual Cervantes, Cervantes Institute) and ParemioRom (University of Barcelona).

Keywords: paremiology, paremias in Spanish, proverbs, translation classroom

#### 1. Introduction

The advent of technology has led to great advances in the research on paremias, as evidenced by the large number of contributions made in recent decades. This has contributed significantly to the consolidation of paremiology, a relatively young linguistic discipline. In the present article we will analyse a selection of works on the translation of paremias published digitally in the 21st century, with the aim of easing the translation work and the teaching / learning of the translation of paremias in Castilian Spanish, since the nature of these linguistic units represents a translatological problem. By 'paremias' we understand short, sententious and on many occasions idiomatic statements (Sevilla & Crida 2013). The paremias that pose the greatest translation problems are the popular ones (generally of anonymous origin and popular

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use), such as proverbs<sup>1</sup> ('Perro ladrador, poco mordedor' / 'A barking dog never bites<sup>2</sup>'), proverbial phrases ('El hábito no hace al monje' / 'The cowl does not make the monk'), dialogisms ('Dijo la sartén al cazo: ¡Quítate de ahí, que me tiznas, ojinegra!' / 'The pot calls the kettle black') and proverbial locutions ('Ir por lana y volver trasquilado' / 'Many go out for wool and come home shorn').

# 2. The Concept of 'Correspondence'

The peculiar lexical and semantic nature of many popular paremias poses many hurdles for their translation (Sevilla 2004). In the case of Spanish proverbs in order to facilitate their memorisation we observe the suppression of lexical elements (such as the verb: 'Cada oveja con su pareja' / 'Birds of a feather flock together'), the repetition of words (which can be added to the suppression of the verb; 'De tal palo, tal astilla' / 'Like carpenter, like chips'), the alteration of the syntactic order: ('A caballo regalado, no le mires el diente' / 'Never look a gift horse in the mouth')<sup>3</sup>, the presence of archaisms ('Donde fueres haz lo que vieres' / 'When in Rome do as Romans do')<sup>4</sup>, the existence of rhetorical figures and/or rhyme ('Más vale pájaro en mano que ciento volando' / 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush')<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, the idiomatic sense makes it difficult to understand them more than once, as in the case of the proverb 'En casa del herrero, cuchillo de palo' ('The shoemaker's son always goes barefoot,' literal meaning of which is 'In the blacksmith's house, wooden knife'), used to indicate the lack of something where it should be easy to find. However, not all users have understood this idea and, being surprised that there is a wooden knife, they have created the form 'En casa del herrero, cuchara de palo,' which means 'In the blacksmith's house, a wooden spoon,' which distorts the meaning of the proverb.

All these peculiarities lead to the idea that translating paremias does not only consist in looking for formal equivalences in another language, but also in trying to locate paremias that have the greatest degree of similarity, not only formally, but also semantically and pragmatically (Sevilla 2004: 4). By doing so, literal and conceptual correspondences are found. So, the proverb 'Muchos pocos hacen un mucho' ('Many a little makes a mickle'), has on the one hand the following literal equivalents: 'Plusieurs peu font un beaucoup' in French; 'Many a little makes a mickle' in English;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The term proverb presents a problem in the Spanish language, since there are two terms to differentiate popular proverbs (refrán) and cultured proverbs (proverbios). In this case we refer to the first meaning.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> All English correspondences throughout the article are taken from the *Refranero multilingüe* (the multilingual proverb collection) (J. Sevilla, and Zurdo 2009). These correspondences are included only for the purpose of comprehension. The Spanish examples are the ones that present the problems described in the article.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The emphatic modality is most commonly used, which consists of starting the sentence with a prepositional syntagm that belongs at the end of the sentence.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Because of the tendency to simplify, the future imperfect subjunctive has fallen into disuse replaced by the present subjunctive.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Both consonant and assonant rhymes are used.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> All Spanish examples are also taken from the *Refranero multilingüe* (J. Sevilla and Zurdo 2009).

'Molti pochi fanno un assai' in Italian; 'Muitos poucos fazem muito' in Portuguese; 'Viel wenig machen ein Viel' in German; 'Sok kicsi sokra megy' in Hungarian; 積少成多 (traditional writing) and 积少成多 (simplified writing) in Chinese. On the other hand, there are conceptual correspondences in other languages: 'Ziarnko do ziarnka uzbiera się miarka' [Grain by grain will give one measure] in Polish; 'Τα μικρά ποταμάκια κάνουν τους μεγάλους ποταμούς' [Small rivers make great rivers] in modern Greek.

# 3. Paremiological Techniques

Therefore, the concept of 'correspondence' understood in this manner allows the design of a series of techniques to help in the search of the correct paremia (in the case of popular paremias) in another language or languages that are as similar as possible in form, meaning and usage<sup>7</sup>. Thus, several translation techniques can be applied: the actancial, thematic, synonymic and hyperonymic, which are disseminated thanks to the digital journal *El trujamán* (Centro Virtual Cervantes, Cervantes Institute)<sup>8</sup>.

The actancial technique (J. Sevilla and M. Sevilla 2004a) is based on the protagonist or actant. The possible correspondences may present a similar actant<sup>9</sup>, as we can see in the following examples:

A *caballo*<sup>10</sup> regalado, no le mires el diente (ES) Never look a gift *horse* in the mouth (EN) À *cheval* donné on ne regarde pas la bride (FR) A *caval* donato non si guarda in boca (IT) A *cavalo* dado, não se olha o dente (PT)

Therefore, in addition to literal correspondences, we can also find conceptual correspondences, such as the English one.

The thematic technique (J. Sevilla and M. Sevilla 2004b) focuses on the search for correspondences based on the key idea that synthesises the meaning of the paremia. Although the actancial technique makes it possible to locate correspondences in languages such as Spanish ('La gallina de mi vecina más huevos pone que la mía'), Portuguese ('A galinha da minha vizinha é sempre melhor (do) que a mina'), Romanian ('Găina vecinului face ouă mai mari'), German ('(Des) Nachbars Henne legt immer die größeren Eier'), Greek ('Της γειτόνισσας τ' αυγά πάντα πιο μεγάλα είναι'), Polish ('Kura sąsiada jest zawsze tłustsza niźli własna gęś'), the thematic technique will lead to correspondences the key idea of which corresponds to envy, such as

(J. Sevilla 1987-1988).

10 The italics were added by the authors.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> In the case of the English language, usage is difficult to find, since many of the paremias are no longer in use and, moreover, nowadays idioms are preferred.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> See https://cvc.cervantes.es/trujaman/sobre\_trujaman.htm. See as well the videos on the subject made by members of the Innfras Group (University of Murcia):https://tv.um.es/canal?serie=22241

<sup>9</sup> Due to the existence of a common paremiological corpus, the so-called "paremiological universals"

English ('The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence'), Italian ('L'erba del vicino è sempre più verde'), Croatian ('Susjedova trava uvijek je zelenija') or Russian ('В чужих руках ломоть велик').

The synonymic technique (J. Sevilla and M. Sevilla 2005a; Gálvez 2014) is based on the existence of synonymous paremias in the source language, with the aim of using them in the case of not finding a correspondence for a specific paremia. In Spanish there are for example many paremias with the idea of 'appearances,' to refer to false appearances, such as the following: 'Aunque la mona se vista de seda, mona se queda,' 'Aunque vestido de lana, no soy borrego,' 'Freno dorado no mejora el caballo,' 'El hábito no hace al monje,' 'Seda y raso no dan estado.' There are also paremias with the same idea in English ('An ape is an ape, a varlet is a varlet, though they be clad in silk and scarlet,' 'Clothes don't make the man,' 'The habit does not make the monk,' 'You can't tell a book by its cover,' 'You can't judge of the horse by the harness,' 'You can't judge a book by its cover,' 'It is not the beard that makes the philosopher'). Thus, both literal and conceptual correspondences can be established:

Aunque la mona se vista de seda, mona se queda -- An ape is an ape, a varlet is a varlet, though they be clad in silk and scarlet

El hábito no hace al monje -- The habit does not make the monk

The use of the synonymic technique to find correspondences for the paremias 'Aunque vestido de lana, no soy borrego,' 'Freno dorado no mejora el caballo,' 'Seda y raso no dan estado' implies considering one of the forms mentioned for the synonyms as a correspondence: 'Aunque la mona se vista de seda, mona se queda' and 'El hábito no hace al monje,' in addition to following conceptual correspondences: 'Clothes don't make the man,' 'You can't tell a book by its cover,' 'You can't judge of the horse by the harness,' 'It is not the beard that makes the philosopher.' Depending on the context, the translator will select the most adequate form. If it is a question of looking for Spanish correspondences to these last English paremias, the translator could also resort to the Spanish correspondence of the synonymous paremias 'An ape is an ape, a varlet is a varlet, though they be clad in silk and scarlet' and 'The habit does not make the monk.'

Another possibility would be to apply the hyperonymic technique (Sevilla 2013), i.e. to resort to the hyperonymic paremia in order to use it as a correspondence: 'Las apariencias engañan' and 'Appearances are deceptive.'

These techniques can complement each other. A good example is looking for correspondences for the following Spanish paremias with the key idea 'benefit':

Antes son mis dientes que mis parientes Cada santo pide por su ermita La caridad bien entendida empieza por uno mismo Más cerca está la camisa que el jubón

We can find following French correspondences:

Chaque saint prêche pour sa paroisse

Charité bien ordonnée commence par soi-même Ma chemise m'est plus proche que ma robe

English correspondences:

Mind other men, but most yourself Near is my shirt, but nearer is my skin

And Italian correspondences:

Più vicino è il dente, che alcun parente Ciascuno pensa anzitutto al propio interesse La prima carità comincia da sè

The use of the actantial technique makes it possible to find the following literal correspondences:

Cada santo pide por su ermita - Chaque saint prêche pour sa paroisse

La caridad bien entendida empieza por uno mismo – Charité bien ordonnée commence par soi-même – La prima carità cominci da sè

Más cerca está la camisa que el jubón – Ma chemise m'est plus proche que ma robe - Near is my shirt, but nearer is my skin

Antes son mis dientes que mis parientes — Più vicino è il dente, cha alcun parente Mind other men, but most yourself -- Ciascuno pensa anzitutto al propio interesse

The last pair of paremias (English and Italian) constitute hyperonymic forms, which, depending on the context, can serve as correspondences to the previous paremias in other languages<sup>11</sup>.

#### 4. Online Multilingual Repertoires of Paremias in Spanish

The use of these techniques is at the basis of the creation of paremia collections. Thanks to the digital medium, they offer not only a wide range of content to the general public, but also provide easy access to them, as they include a search engine.

At the end of the 20th century, in 1998, Gotzon Garate published a collection of 14,458 proverbs in Basque with a large number of correspondences in Spanish (5,208 forms), English (4,045 forms) and Latin (3,462 forms). Shortly afterwards, the same publisher that printed it on paper made it available for consultation on the Internet<sup>12</sup>.

One of the merits of this work lies in the fact that the Basque proverbs come from oral sources, the result of fieldwork carried out over thirty years in twenty-three "caseríos" (Basque farmhouses) in the seven Basque provinces; moreover, many

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> See the use of translation techniques in Spanish paremias related to the word "fish" (pez) carried out by Julia Sevilla Muñoz and Manuel Sevilla Muñoz (2005b). See online: https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/refranero/presentacion.htm

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Fundación Bilbao Bizkaia Kutxa: http://www.ametza.com/bbk/htdocs/hasiera.htm

Basque proverbs appeared in print for the first time. For the search of correspondences in Spanish, English and Latin, he consulted a large number of written sources. Although the main research language is Basque, the website's search engine provides possible correspondences between the four languages.

As the 21st century draws on, technologies favoured the creation of more multilingual repertoires, such as the *Refranero multilingüe* (Sevilla 2012), a database that has been disseminating since 2009 many of the results of several state-funded research projects on the paremiological minimum initiated in 2005 on the website of the Centro Virtual Cervantes (Cervantes Institute)<sup>13</sup>.

Coordinated by Julia Sevilla and M.<sup>a</sup> Teresa Zurdo<sup>14</sup>, a group of some forty researchers from universities in different countries (Spain, Italy, United States, Romania, Greece, Egypt, Croatia, Slovakia, Armenia, etc.), consult oral and written sources, with the aim of providing correspondences in twenty-three languages to more than 1,600 paremias in Spanish, the source language. In addition to the correspondences, there is content of translatological interest, such as the key idea, the meaning, lexical clarifications, variants, synonyms, antonyms, hyperonyms, contexts, etc. At the recommendation of the Cervantes Institute, a literal translation of the Spanish meaning has been included. This makes it easier to locate the literal and conceptual correspondences for those who do not have any knowledge of the language. A further point of interest is the gradual inclusion of variants of American Spanish.

If the Spanish form of the proverb is known, its index card can be accessed through the alphabetical proverb list; in addition, the search engine allows either typing one or several words of the chosen proverb in one of the languages included, or locating the proverbs of the same key idea or type.

Unlike Gotzon Garate's proverb collection, the *Refranero Multilingüe* is not a closed database. It is constantly being updated, which means that researchers have been enriching the collection with paremia index cards for 18 years, a certainly commendable achievement in the field of translation.

The *Refranero multilingüe* records mainly moral proverbs and proverbial phrases, as there is another database focusing on meteorological and temporal proverbs named BADARE. This database contains calendar and meteorological proverbs in Romania (*Base de datos sobre refranes del calendario y meteorológicos en la Romania*) (*Gargallo 2012*).

This database holds more than 11,000 proverb cards extracted from written sources published since the mid-19th century (linguistic atlases, dialect monographs, paremia collections, etc.). The material can be consulted in four ways: textual, by language, conceptual and by bibliographical source.

BADARE was created to collect the results of a state-funded research project. The successive granting of several projects allowed the increase of cards and contents in BADARE from 2005 to 2011, as well as transforming it into another research project (from 2011 to 2015), which led to a renaming: ParemioRom (Paremiología romance: refranes meteorológicos y territorio – Romance paremiology: meteorological and

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<sup>13</sup> https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/refranero/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> In the case of M.<sup>a</sup> Teresa Zurdo, until October 2021.

territorial proverbs). This new database, in addition to containing the information from BADARE, allows the geolocation of proverbs and is enriched with more content.

Although it is intended more for researchers specialising in disciplines such as philology, paremiology, onomasiology, geography and ethnolinguistics, it can be useful for translators, if they need to find information on a meteorological or temporal proverb or to search for possible correspondences in one of the Romanian languages.

## 5. Teaching / Learning of Paremias in Castilian Spanish

The implementation of technologies is providing many tools for the teaching / learning of Spanish paremias in the translation classroom. In addition to articles on the translation of paremias, which can be consulted in online journals such as *El trujamán*, Paremia, Proverbium, Phrasis, etc., there are didactic proposals, both for classroom and for self-training. In addition, the Refranero multilingüe provides activities and didactic units on the subject<sup>15</sup>, developed by academics, teachers or by students under the guidance of a teacher. Moreover, the Phraseological and Paremiological Library (Biblioteca fraseológica y paremiológica), also published by the Centro Virtual Cervantes, devotes one of its series to didactics. Three monographs have been published to date: Provectos de fraseología integrada para la enseñanza de ELE, by M. Angeles Solano Rodríguez and by Karolina Bielawska (2018); Repertorio bilingüe de paremias en español y en chino para su aplicación en la didáctica, by Li Mei Liu Liu (2021) and Allende y aquende, refranes en canciones de siempre, by M.<sup>a</sup> Teresa Barbadillo de la Fuente (2022). These works provide valuable ideas for teaching paremias in the translation classroom, focusing on the two phases of the translation process: the comprehension and the expression of paremias. In addition, other sources provide materials for the Spanish language classroom, which may be useful for the translation class, such as those created by the Spanish Embassy in Bulgaria 16 for selfstudy. They include following activities on proverbs in current use:

- link the first part of the proverb to the second part (there are thirteen proverbs in total and both parts are arranged in two columns);
  - discover the misprints in the related proverbs;
  - link the proverbs to their respective meanings;
  - complete fragments of conversations with the most appropriate proverb;

Keys to these are included at the end. This type of exercise usually appears in activities carried out mainly by language teachers<sup>17</sup>. It would be advisable to complement them with a previous explanation of the characteristics of popular paremias. For this purpose, the series of videos prepared by members of the didactic innovation group of the University of Murcia called InnFras are highly recommended. They briefly explain theoretical aspects of the paremias<sup>18</sup> (Alessandro 2017).

16 https://www.orientacionandujar.es/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ejercicios-refranes.pdf

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/refranero/actividades/default.htm

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> See following activities proposed by Belén López Baquero, in https://unmardepala-brasblog.worpress.com

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> See http://tv.um.es/canal?cod=a1b1c2d12&serie=19041&page=0

The popularity of social media has led the journal *Paremia* to turn its Instagram account into a highly original tool for language or translation classes. Most of the content is produced by university students, most of whom are preparing to become translators or interpreters. The activity consists in asking the students to select a Spanish or non-Spanish paremia, explain its meaning and look for the correspondence in another language or in Spanish, in the case of a non-Spanish paremia. The content is illustrated by an original image or video. This activity is carried out individually, in pairs or in groups, either in class or by having an explanation in class and then finishing it outside class.

#### 6. Conclusion

The use of ICTs has changed the storage and dissemination of research results on paremias in a very positive way, as it allows the inclusion of a large amount of data, while facilitating their updating and access. All this constitutes a rich array of tools that help the translator to find matches on the one hand, and the translation teachers to have materials for their students in order to be able to locate the paremias in discourse, understand their meaning and find the most appropriate match on the other hand.

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