

## The Problem of Equivalence in the Translation of Proverbs from Albanian to English Language and vice versa

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### Abstract

The differences that exist in two foreign languages make the process of translation complicated as well as hard to be realized in a target language. Firstly, this paper presents some theoretical review on translation in general and continues on elaboration of equivalence term and its types according to major works done by three different writers, who have given different views on equivalence. This research paper is realized based on the analysis of some selected proverbs and their translation from Albanian to English and vice versa. Each translated proverb consists on its analysis as well as elaboration due to equivalence or non-equivalence translation.

**Keywords:** translation, equivalence, non-equivalence, translation of proverbs.

### Introduction

Translation as a transforming process is considered as a very complicated one which requires an art or a talent of doing it. As a complicated process, translation should be meaningful as well as coherent in the target language. While dealing with it, translators have to be aware of the intention of a source language as well as its message in order to be transmitted in the best way possible to a target text.

The translation in English term, firstly, has been "attested in around 1340, derives either from Old French translation or more directly from the Latin translation ('transporting'), itself coming from the participle of the verb transferre ('to carry over') (Munday, 2016:8).

Munday (2016) considers translation nowadays to these meanings:

- "the general subject field of phenomenon ('I studied translation at university');
- "the product-that is, the text that has been translated ('they published the Arabic translation of the report');
- "the process of producing the translation, otherwise known as translating ('translation service') (ibid).

Generally, the process of translation includes a transformation of one language, which in this case is named as the source language, to another one, which is named as target language. Translation as a process is done via different changes in word and sentence level because each foreign language shares its specifics in grammar as well as in culture.

Among different elements of translation, equivalence, is considered a crucial one to be found in a target language. But to what extent and in what kind of cases might be found out, is always skeptical as well as doubtful.

Equivalence as a translation element has been discussed and studied by several major works, such as: Roman Jakobson, Peter Newmark and Werner Koller.

According to Jakobson (1959) there are three kinds of translation such as: intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic (Munday, 2016).

Intralingual translation means “rewording –an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language” (found on Munday, 2016:9).

Interlingual translation means “translation proper-an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language” (ibid).

Intersemiotic translation is “transmutation- an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems’ (ibid).

From him, the concept of equivalence came up based on “cross linguistic differences” including obligatory grammatical and lexical forms, in stating that “Languages differ essentially in what they must convey and not in what they may convey” (found on Munday, 2016).

Whereas, on the other hand, Nida (1964) identifies two types of equivalence such as: Formal and Dynamic equivalence (ibid).

Formal equivalence it is focused “on the message itself, in both form and content” (1964:159, found on Munday 2016:68).

Dynamic equivalence is “based on what Nida calls “the principle of equivalent effect where the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message” (Nida 1964:159, found on Munday 2016:68).

Beside Nida’s formal and dynamic equivalence, Newmark differs two types of translation such as: semantic and communicative translation.

The communicative translation it “resembles Nida’s dynamic equivalence in the effect it is trying to create on the TT reader while semantic translation has similarities to Nida’s formal equivalence” (Munday, 2016:71).

And, lastly, Koller studied equivalence term closely related to the term “correspondence” (Koller, 1979a:176-91, found on Munday 2016:74).

According to him, correspondence “falls within the field of contrastive linguistics, which compares two language systems and describes differences and similarities contrastively” (Munday, 2016:74), whereas equivalence “relates to be equivalent items in specifics ST-TT pairs and contexts” (ibid).

## Research Methodology

This research paper aims on analysis of Albanian’s proverbs translation to English language. The selection of Albanian proverbs has been done based on their equivalence and non-equivalence translation to English language. Each shown Albanian proverb and its translation have its own analysis and elaboration.

## Discussion

It is generally known that proverbs (fjalë të urta) are short wise words saying which each language has in their system of language use which can be found in different books, articles, films, songs, etc. Proverbs are words which are written or used to give advices to people about certain things or situations, especially taken from religious

books (Bible, Qur'an). Proverbs of a language somehow represent the culture of a language in different areas such as: moral, ethics, everyday life, friendship, wars, people's suffering, money, etc. Reading and learning proverbs of another language means we can get deeply inside into many things of that country such as: culture, its history, habits, behaviour, etc. Albanian language has a lot of proverbs which are classified depending on the purpose of them, which are written or said from experience of Albanian people, their origin come from the oldest Albanian people based from their life experiences, wars, poverty, and other things which nowadays some of them have been replaced with new meaning or are said or used for different purposes.

According to the Jorgo & Agron (ibid.1987:12,13) some Albanian proverbs have lost their earlier meaning and the same one nowadays is used for different meanings, however the property of Albanian proverbs is huge and diverse, and relying on proverbs a person can solve the problems that has in his or her life. According to them an Albanian proverb which has lost its early meaning is for example: "Dardha bie nën Dardhë" ("Pear drops below pear") which was used in the sense that "bad parents cannot gave a birth to a good child" which means that genes and the culture are followed from parents to children, and children cannot be different (polite or cultured) from their parents, whereas nowadays this proverbs is used to give the idea of continuity of good traditions of Albanian people, especially of traditional bravery. Also in English language, it can be found a lot of proverbs which have the same role as in every language and describe the culture of their original language. Beginning from this perspective that both languages through proverbs somehow show their culture and habits (or other things) we have to deal with some differences and problems that we might find during the translation of the English or Albanian proverbs among them.

Despite the differences that two languages have, these differences influence on misleading of coherence as well as non-equivalence. On the other hand, they have a limit number of equivalent proverbs, which have the same structure, and meaning or message. To base this statement into practice, below are presented the analysis of translation of English proverbs into Albanian language and vice versa, which were collected from books and online pages.

### **Translation of Albanian proverbs into English language and vice versa**

As was elaborated above Albanian language has different proverbs which majority of them has interesting meaning since they cannot be found in other language as a matter of Albanian culture and mentality. One interesting Albanian proverb is "Mos qit fall" (ibid. 1987:387), this proverb it is formed or came from "... the art of reading coffee grounds, Turkish coffee and fortune telling are an inseparable part of pleasure and conversation associated with coffee...after the coffee is drunk the cup is placed upside down on its saucer" (Mehmet Efendi, "Turkish Coffee" (n.d)". The future of the person it is seen from the patterns formed by grounds of coffee, and this ritual started to be practiced also in other places. But the meaning of this proverb it is used by Albanian people in premises of lies or things that do not make sense, since this

kind of ritual is considered by many people as not important which does make sense in telling the future of a person. The translation of this Albanian proverb cannot be equivalent in any English proverb and does not have coherence if we try to translate it. Otherwise it can be translated as examples shown below, based on the implications that this proverbs implies in Albanian language.

“Mos qit fall” means

“I do not believe what you are saying to me”

“You are telling things that do not make sense”

“Do not bother me with these pointless things”

“Do not lie to me”

Based on implications that the Albanian proverb implies a native speaker of English can easily understand its meaning and the use of this proverb, but its original translation cannot be found in English language as a matter of habits or these kinds of conventions (seeing the future based on a cup of coffee) are not used from English people as a result of not finding an equivalent word.

1. As was mentioned above proverbs can be found in different books especially in school books which advice students about experiences of life, the culture of a country, life challenges etc. English proverbs which are usually found on English books of primary and high school are hard to be understood by Albanian students, since some of them cannot be translated coherently in Albanian language.

As was discussed so far the origin and the use of such proverbs come from particular country or culture which cannot be understood or cannot have an equivalent translation in another language or be understood by foreign people.

According to below example, which is found on English book of high school is “When in Rome, do as Romans do” (New Headway, 2000:40, 41,) its translation into Albanian language would be like: *Kur je në Romë bëj si Romakët*” by this translation Albanian readers will not comprehend what is beyond this proverb, since its meaning advice people who go to live in another foreign country and they have to live according the behaviors, habits, and life style of that country.

“A world Guide to Good Manners”

How not to behave badly abroad”

“When in Rome, do as the Romans do”

...In France you shouldn't sit down in a coffee until you have shaken hands with everyone...In Afghanistan you should spends at least five minutes saying hello...In the Middle East you must never use the left hand for greeting, eating... In Russia you must match your hosts drink for drink or they ...In Thailand you should clasps your hands together...In America you should eat your hamburger with both hands and as quickly as possible...”

(“New Headway”, intermediate level, 2000:40, 41, Oxford university press)

As it can be seen from the taken text above the whole text would give some broad idea to EFL students in comprehending and making coherence on their mind about this English proverb, which this proverb it does not have to deal just with Rome or Romans but includes the different behaviors of different countries. In such cases, the comprehension of text and also the titles of texts (Theme) help Albanian people to translate in more coherent way the English text or idioms and proverbs of English

language basing on the context.

Despite the fact that in finding ways how to realize the coherence of translated text the structure of the text or any expression might change as a result of differences found on both languages (Albanian and English languages).

2. Another example of Albanian proverb which cannot have a coherent translation as well as equivalence into English language is “E humbe besën, e humbe gjithcka” this proverb refers to people’s promises toward a person expressing the moral values which a person should have. According to this proverb it can be understood also the importance of kept promises which Albanian people give a great attention and somehow appreciate or value people who keep their promises toward something. Related to the faith or beliefs there can be found a lot of Albanian proverbs such as: “Besa e shqipëtarit është shqiptaria” which reflect the values or ethics which Albanian people used to give great attention and used them in Albanian songs, film, books especially during the war times. When we have to deal with behaviors or culture of Albanian or English language it is very hard to make their transformation equivalently because making the direct translation of such proverbs into any of these languages the meaning or the coherence would be absent.

For example: \**“You lost the faith, you lost everything”* for English people this translation is meaningless and does not interpret the same message in English language. If we try to translate it in more adequate way the structure of this proverb would have some changes in which the cohesion is implied during the translation into English language. In order to have coherent translation this proverb would have conditional clause which makes translation coherent and meaningful: *“If you lose the faith you will lose everything”* which means with a person loses that sense of not maintain his or her promises cannot have anything good into his or her life. So from a single proverb its translation into English language consists of many explanations in order to have a coherent transformation and to be comprehensible toward readers or hearers.

3. Despite the fact that English and Albanian proverbs differ relying on the differences in culture, behaviors, and habits there can be found also similar proverbs which are equivalent in two languages. An example of this it is the proverb: *“Man is the head of the family and woman is the neck that turns the head”* (Burri është koka e familjes ndërsa gruaja është qafa që drejton kokën) which is used in the same meaning and has the same translation in many languages such as: Chinese, Albanian, German, etc. The proverb refers to the importance of woman in a family, since the man is considered basically a person (as a head of the family) which should take care for his family also the woman influences in his decisions (as neck of the head) and the balance of them is a result of a good family. According to this theme of this proverb also it can be found out in Albanian proverbs (Fjalë të urta shqipe, 1987) which give attention to women and which consist of the same meaning as this English proverb such as:

*“Burrë e Grua-mish e thua”* (1987:769) - (Husband and Wife- meat and nail)

*“Burri pa grua- si shkopi në furrë”* (1987: 769) (A husband without wife-like a stick in stove)

“Gruja e mirë bën burrin të mirë” (1987:771) (A good woman makes a good husband)  
“Burri me gruan- si barku me shpinen” (1987:769) (A husband with wife-like stomach with back)

As it can be seen below the translation of Albanian proverbs into English language seems meaningless and does not have coherence as proverbs since for English people would seem ridiculous and not comprehensible, since the message of proverbs cannot be transmitted into English language as a matter of comparisons which Albanian people used to make in order to describe the importance of women in life of men.

In the beginning of this elaboration of English and Albanian proverbs was elaborated that both languages share the same proverbs which are equivalent and have the same meaning and message that enables EFL students to use them without any problem such as: writing an English essay, translation, enriching their vocabulary and so on. These similar proverbs which unfortunately are limited in number express the same meaning and their direct translation is coherent and comprehensible by Albanian readers and English people too.

For example:

- “Walls have ears” – (“Muret kanë veshë”)
- The proverb is being used to tell that people should take care while they talk to anyone because there is a risk that their conversation would be heard.
- For e.g.: “Can we go in another place to talk, because walls have ears, you know?”
- “A mund të shkojmë në një vend tjetër për të diskutuar, sepse edhe muret kanë veshë, e di?”
- “When poverty comes in the door, love goes out the window.” (“Kur varfëria troket në derë, dashuria ikën nga dritarja”)
- The importance of money is always considered important in our life and many proverbs are due to this, also the second proverb it refers that the lack of money influences also in love, when there is no money there is no love.
- “Wisdom is better than strength.”- (“Menquria është më e mirë se fuqia trupore”)
- The third proverb it refers that people weigh from the wisdom that they possess rather than their physical appearance or physical strength. According to this meaning, another proverb which is found in article is “Wisdom is better than Weapons of War” (Tanakh or Hebrew Bible, 9:18a) (Menquria është më e mirë se Armet e luftës”) as an English proverb, which is not found in Albanian proverbs although its direct translation is coherent and is meaningful, despite the fact that is not used by Albanian speakers.
- “To err is human, to forgive divine.” (Alexander Pope, Essay on Criticis- (“Të gabosh është njerëzore, të falësh është hynjore”)
- The fourth English proverb explain that no human being can live without making mistakes, because relying on them a person can have a better life in future. Also forgiving someone to what has done toward a person is considered by Alexander Pope as “divine” which not everybody can do it. Its translation to Albanian language is equivalent and coherent and is meaningful as well as coherent one.
- “Ignorance is bliss.”- (“Injoranca është lumturi”)
- It is said that “Devil is found in details” the same thing explains the fifth proverb which tells that people are happier if they ignore situations, rumors, details that

push them to think deeply and make them sad. Despite the fact that life is not lived just in surface way ignorance in many cases is considered as key of happiness.

- “Don't judge a book by its cover.”- “Mos gjyko librin nga kopertina”
- The sixth proverb advice people not to judge books from the cover, since reading them and analyzing make reader to like it even the “cover” for e.g. is not colored in any favorite color. The proverb is not written just in premises or books but is used also to advice people not to judge people from their appearance, clothes, economic status, etc.
- “Money doesn't grow on trees.” (“Paratë nuk rriten në pemë”)

The proverb expresses the ideas that if a person wants to have money he or she has to work hard in order to achieve his or her ambitious in life. Albanian language consists of a lot of proverbs which implies the same meaning as this English proverb but their translation into English language might be not coherent, for example:

- (1). “Bukë prej qielli s’vjen” (1987:118)
- (2) “Bëje punën vet, se nuk bëhet vet” (1987:118)
- (3) “ Dhelpra qe fle, nuk zë pula” (1987:121)
- (4) “Edhe buka nuk hahet pa zahmet” (1987:122)
- (5) “Kush derdh djersë, do fitojë” (1987:122)
- (6) “Kush punon, edhe ka” (1987:127)
- (7) “Kush punon vreshtën në gusht, mbush vozat plotë me rrush” (1987:130)
- (8) “Pa mund, ska askund” (1987:138)
- (9) “Përtimi-Mjerimi” (1987:139)

Proverbs considered as short saying words consist of their artistic organization of language which are close to spoken language but they are not identical. Proverbs also consist of rhyme, rhythm, and other stylistic elements that make proverbs more artistic in any language. As it can be seen from the Albanian proverbs represented above, many of them have rhyme and rhythm which make them more artistic in language use. Their translation into English language would not be coherent because the disorganization of structure of the words, and their non-equivalence in English dictionary as well as misleading of rhyme are some of the issues which cannot be realized in English language.

For example, the fourth Albanian proverb how can have a coherent translation whereas the word “Zahmet” which means suffering in this case, cannot be found in English language, since the word “zahmet” is Albanian old folk word and it has its artistic premises, which these kinds of cultural words represent or reflect the Albanian language.

Another example is the second proverb which it has rhyme and rhythm too which make it more artistic in its use, and also its translation into English language has rhyme and rhythm by pronouns “yourself and itself”. But its coherent translation in English language is followed by cohesion elements in which the adjective pronoun “Your”.

“Do your work by yourselves, because it cannot be done by itself”

- “A young idler, an old beggar.” (“Një dembel i ri, një lypës i vjetër.”)

The eighth proverb is used to tell that if a person does not give efforts in his work when is young he will not have money when he is old. In generally all the proverbs related to this meaning advice people to work hard when they are young and to have

secured life when they get old. Below are presented six Albanian proverbs which share the same meaning as the eighth proverb related to the work and age.

- "Kur përton në të ri, vuan ne pleqëri" (1987:127)

The first Albanian proverb cannot have an equivalent translation the way how the proverb is being written in Albanian language because it consists as meaningless in English language: \* "When lazy in youth, suffer in old age". As it can be seen neither the structure of this translation is organized nor the coherence. Since for English readers will be meaningless and not comprehensible as a proverb.

- "Kush përtojti sot, do pendohet mot" (1987:129) ("Who does not work today, will be regret in a year")

The second Albanian proverb is written in the same way as people used to use before, the verb "përtojti" it means being lazy, but it cannot be used in its translation into English language as a matter of non-equivalence and it could be against the rules of English grammar, since translation should involve also the standardization of language use. In this case the verb "përtojti" in English language take the form as "does not work" which implies the same meaning as the verb. These kinds of changes are found in the majority of Albanian transition into English language, logically the vocabularies of both languages are enriched with words that sometime cannot find an equivalent word translation. In order to have a coherent translation and to transmit the idea of the information of Albanian proverbs or idioms also texts translators have to carry these changes.

- "Mbill sot, që të korrësh mot." (1987:133) ("Sow today, in order to harvest next year")

In the third Albanian proverb the verb "te korrësh" consists in Albanian verb mood (Menyra Lidhore-Subjunctive mood) which English language does not have and its form is realized as infinitive (non-finite verb form) during the translation into English language in which also the conjunction "in order to" is added in order to make the proverb coherent, meaningful and informative.

- "Mbill sa je i ri, të hash në pleqëri" (1987:133) "Sow when you are young, in order to eat in old ages"

The same transformation and the addition of the elements of cohesion in English language is added from its translation from Albanian language. In the majority of translations from English language into Albanian language or vice versa that were analyzed so far show that the translations can be realized in the equivalent way only when there is the addition of elements of cohesion, since the presence of coherence is logically indisputable.

- "Nuk punove në të ri, rri e qaj ne pleqëri" (1987:136) ("If you don't work in youth, stay and cry in old ages")

As was mentioned before proverbs in majority of cases have rhyme and rhythm as in the case in fifth Albanian proverb, whereas its translation into English language makes that the rhyme and rhythm are lost as a matter of non-equivalence English words, in order to transmit the same meaning and information. The realization of equivalence in translation of Albanian proverbs is done through the addition of some grammatical elements which are not in Albanian version. If we make a direct translation the proverb it will be meaningless for foreign readers (for e.g. English readers) such as \* "Do not work in the youth, stay and cry in old ages" this form it cannot be used in English as matter of non-coherence and the proverb seems

meaningless and poorly informative.

- "Po shkove më të kërciturit e gishtërinjëve sot, mos u anko nga të kërciturit e zorrëve nesër." (1987:140) "If you just snap the fingers today, do not complain of your intestines snapping tomorrow."

The sixth Albanian proverb expresses the same meaning as the above proverb (5) which means if a person does not do anything in present or when is young later on he or she would not have anything to eat. The proverb is written or said in the sense that people should give efforts while they are young and use the present and to work hard in order to have a secure future, when they get old. The coherence of its translation into English language is enabled in the same way as the fifth proverb. The conditional clause which is not appeared in Albanian version is inserted in English language to fulfill the meaning of the proverb otherwise we cannot have other alternative of equivalent translation. The role of cohesion in these kinds of translation plays an important role which its elements enable an equivalent translation as well as a semantic translation, which is comprehensible for readers or hearers.

### Conclusions

As it can be seen from translation of Albanian proverbs in English language equivalence is partially realized in them. As the meaning of selected Albanian proverbs are based on the Albanian habits, life style, thoughts, view of life, such cultural issues which were hard to be equivalent in English translation. Also words which are used in Albanian proverb as "popular" ones cannot be equivalence in transmitting the same meaning in English language. Same issues stand also for English proverbs which include the culture of English people and their translation is not coherent and meaningful for Albanian readers. These kinds of proverbs, idioms, or any other expressions are hard to be equivalent in another language, since the role of translation as a process is not just to save its syntactic or morphological structure but to transform the same meaning of any of these expressions into another language. Translation of such proverbs from Albanian to English or vice versa causes problems of equivalence because such cultural words or expressions are deeply rooted in their language culture and in the majority of cases end up by being non-equivalent in a target language.

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