The process of phraseological translation

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Abstract

The translation of texts using PUs represents a challenge that has been studied over the years from different points of view. This is a review of the research carried out over the last two decades in relation to the different stages of the phraseological translation process, taking as a starting point the general framework for this type of translation proposed by Gloria Corpas in 2003. This framework is divided in three stages: identification of the PUs in the source text, interpretation of the identified PUs and the establishment of equivalents in the target language, first at the lexical level and then at the textual level. Then, there will be an overall analysis of the contributions of numerous Spanish authors on specific aspects of each of the process stages and on the necessary phraseographic and paremiographic works to reach the correspondences in the target language of the PUs inserted in the original text.

Keywords:
Paremiology.
Proverb.
Phraseology.
Translation.
Spanish.

Resumen

Título: «El proceso de la traducción fraseológica».
La traducción de textos en los que se utilizan UF representa un desafío que ha sido estudiado desde distintos puntos de vista a lo largo de los años. En este artículo se lleva a cabo una revisión de las investigaciones realizadas durante las últimas dos décadas en relación con las distintas etapas del proceso de la traducción fraseológica, tomando como punto de partida el marco general para este tipo de traducción planteado por Gloria Corpas en 2003, el cual se estructura en tres etapas: identificación de las UF en el texto original, interpretación de las UF identificadas y establecimiento de equivalentes en la lengua meta, primero en el nivel léxico y luego en el nivel textual. A partir de ahí se desgranan las aportaciones de numerosos autores españoles sobre aspectos concretos de cada una de las etapas del proceso y sobre las obras fraseográficas y paremiográficas necesarias para llegar a las correspondencias en la lengua meta de las UF insertas en el texto original.

Palabras clave:
Paremiología.
Refrán.
Fraseología.
Traducción.
Español.

Résumé

Titre: « Le processus de la traduction phraséologique ».
La traduction de textes contenant des UP constitue un défi étudié selon différents points de vue au fils des années. Dans cet article, nous procédons à un examen des recherches réalisées, ces deux dernières décennies, sur les différentes étapes du processus de la traduction phraséologique, en nous fondant sur le cadre général proposé par Gloria Corpas en 2003 pour ce type de traduction. Ce dernier se décompose en trois phases : l'identification des UP dans le texte original, l'interprétation des UP identifiées et la proposition d'équivalents dans la langue d'arrivée, d'abord au niveau lexical et ensuite au niveau textuel. Ce schéma ternaire permet de connaître les apports de nombre d'auteurs espagnols sur des aspects concrets de chacune de ces phases, ainsi que les ouvrages phaséographiques et parémiographiques nécessaires pour trouver les UP équivalentes, présentes dans le texte original.

Mots-clés :
Parémiologie.
Proverbe.
Phraséologie.
Traduction.
Espagnol.

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INTRODUCTION

Translation involves putting into practice a series of skills and knowledges to interpret the source text in order to reformulate it in the target language while maintaining, as far as possible, the essence and form of the original discourse. It is therefore a complex task, which becomes even more difficult when the author makes use of PUs, especially if these units are used as linguistic elements that contribute to achieving a certain communicative purpose. This situation has motivated the development of numerous investigations in the last two decades by different authors in relation to specific aspects of some stage of the phraseological translation process, such as the establishment of the functions that the PUs can perform in the source text, the development of strategies for the recognition of the PUs in the source text, the techniques for proposing lexical correspondences in the target language, the recognition of the influence of the text for the choice of the most appropriate correspondence, etc.

Attention has also been given to the much-needed documentation work, which is present at the various stages of this translation type. In this paper, we will take as a starting point the proposed translation process presented by Corpas (2003) and go through each of the translation stages with the help of various Spanish and non-Spanish authors who nonetheless have conducted their research in Spain over the last twenty years.

1. THE FRAMEWORK OF THE TRANSLATION PROCESS

According to Corpas (2003: 215-222), the phraseological translation process is structured in three sequential stages:

- The identification of the PUs in the original text.
- The interpretation of the identified PUs.
- The establishment of a correspondence in the target language, first at the lexical level and then at the textual level.

This scheme is an image of the classic general translation process, with two fundamental phases, the comprehension of the text in the source language and its re-expression in the target language (García Yebra 1982: 30-33). However, some authors contemplate an intermediate phase of non-verbal character named by Hurtado Albir (1999: 31) de-verbalization or semantic representation, where the original text is conceptualized before being verbalized in the target language. Comparing the phraseological translation process of Corpas and the general translation process, we can draw the following parallels:

- The identification of the PUs in the original text fully corresponds to the comprehension phase.
- The interpretation of the identified PUs implies a task of understanding the PUs and the function they fulfil in the original text, directly related to the comprehension phase. At the same time, however, the conceptual level is worked on, so that this stage is also related to the de-verbalisation phase.
- The establishment of equivalents in the lexical and textual planes coincides exactly with the re-expression phase.

Bearing in mind these similarities between both translation processes (the general and the phraseological), one can think that the entire theory of general translation is perfectly applicable

to phraseological translation; nevertheless, PUs have some peculiarities that require additional techniques and strategies, which we will comment on in the following sections of this paper.

Another interesting aspect of the framework established by Corpas is that she considers the translation of PUs right in the core of the translation of the text containing them. The identification of the existing PUs in a text is already established in the first stage of the translation process. This process concludes with the establishment of equivalences in the textual plane, so that the text and its translation are present throughout the entire process of the phraseological translation. This is the reason why phraseological translation is presented as a translation of texts and not as the establishment of lexical correspondences of a set of isolated PUs. Hence, the search for PUs and the establishment of their equivalents inserted in a text constitutes part of the translation work of the text as a whole (M. Sevilla 2013: 180-181).

2. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PUs

The identification of PUs is not an easy task for a native, as it is not so clear that a word combination, especially with a literal or transparent meaning, acts as a fixed lexical unit. For a non-native, this identification becomes a very tough task.

PUs that breach the norm from a formal and semantic point of view are more easily detectable, and in this sense, idiomaticity (Corpas 2003: 215-222) and opacity (M. Sevilla 2013: 180) are very useful instruments for their detection.

In general, for all types of PUs, active (Corpas 2003: 215-222) and passive (M. Sevilla 2012: 288) phraseological competence are also tools that help identify these fixed units. Gálvez (2018) applies phraseological competence to carry out the extraction of a total of 10,686 PUs from three novels of Spanish neorealism through several exhaustive readings of the works (2018: 152) and the support of different phraseographic, paremiographic and lexicographic sources in order to verify and demonstrate that the selected word combinations were really PUs: "Dado que la localización de las UF se lleva a cabo poniendo en práctica la competencia fraseológica, se hace necesaria una documentación de las UF recogidas para demostrar que, efectivamente, todas ellas son UF inventariables" (Gálvez 2018: 152)[2].

3. INTERPRETATION OF THE PUs

As we have commented before, in the phraseological translation, the used PUs are considered components of a text and not isolated lexical elements, so that the characterization of the PUs cannot be limited to the lexical level. It is also important to recognize the function performed by the PUs in the text, that is, a characterization of the PUs must be performed at two levels, the lexical and the textual, in the same way that the establishment of equivalents is carried out sequentially at these two levels.

The meaning of a PU, for instance, is determined by the text, "ya sea el único sentido de una UF, uno de varios posibles significados de una UF polisémica o un contenido semántico modificado o diferente al de la propia UF que el autor del texto le asigna en función de sus intereses comunicativos o estilísticos" (M. Sevilla 2013: 180-181)[3]. For this reason, the interpretation of a PU is inevitably associated with the understanding and characterisation of the text in which it is inserted.

[2] TN: Given that the location of PUs is carried out by putting phraseological competence into practice, documentation of the PUs collected is necessary to demonstrate that, indeed, all of them are inventorable PUs.

[3] TN: whether it is the sole meaning of a PU, one of several possible meanings of a polysemic PU, or a modified or different semantic content to that of the PU itself that the author of the text assigns to it according to its communicative or stylistic interests.

At the lexical level, the interpretation work leads to specify for each PU of the text a set of characteristics that Corpas (2003: 127) and Mellado (2015: 157-159) pose as equivalence factors at the lexical level:

Equivalence factors at the lexical level		
Factors	Corpas	Mellado
Semantic	• Denotative and communicative meaning • Metaphorical base	• Meaning • Referential image • Lexical components of a PU
Morpho-syntactic		• Syntactic valency • Syntactic function • Possibilities of morphosyntactic transformations
Pragmatic	• Distribution and frequency of use • Conventional implicatures • Pragmatic load • Diastratic, diaphasic and diatopic restrictions	• Cultural Components • Diastratic, diaphasic and diatopic restrictions • Frequency of use • Textual gender preferences • Modifications • Implicatures

The documentation with phraseographic works is essential to establish these characteristics, but the compilation and study of the PUs is very disparate in the different languages. It is true that in Spanish and English we find good repertoires of locutions, collocations and paremias. However, there are entire groups of PUs without inventories, such as syntactic schemes and phraseological statements. In other languages, for example Vietnamese, it is difficult to find phraseographic works to carry out the interpretation stage of the PUs, as Nguyen (2019) states in her research on the translation of locutions from Spanish into Vietnamese.

Interpretation at the textual level involves analysing the function of the PUs in the text in which they are included. Thus, Manero and Prieto (2011) show that the PUs present in the novel *Las ratas*, by Miguel Delibes, are used to define the characters and the narrator. Gálvez and Sevilla (2015), studying the translation of proverbs in *Cinco horas con Mario* and *Las ratas*, by Delibes, show that these units constitute linguistic tools to contextualize the environment in which the action of both novels takes place; Gálvez (2014), as well as Gálvez and Navarro (2015), demonstrate that the author makes use of PUs as a literary resource related to the poietic principle in *Cinco horas con Mario*; M. Sevilla (2015b) and Álvarez García (2018) show the PUs as carriers of specialised information in scientific-technical texts, and similarly, Macias Otón (2015) also states this same function of the PUs in legal texts; Soto and Navarro (2014), in turn, observe the use of the PUs to attract the reader's attention in advertising texts; finally, Alessandro (2015) analyses the role played by the PUs in the construction of prefabricated orality in the filmic text.

4. SETTING OF EQUIVALENTS AT THE LEXICAL LEVEL

In the lexical level, we work on the equivalence considering the PUs in an isolated way and not as elements of a text. Thus, the most appropriate equivalent for a PU of the original text will be a PU of the same type and with the same meaning in the target language, which shares as many equivalence factors as possible with the original original: "Encontrar un equivalente satisfactorio pasa por la coincidencia funcional en términos de significado, geolecto, cronolecto y de variación

diafásica. Idealmente, también se incluyen entre estos requisitos de adecuación la equivalencia formal, aunque los casos en que todo esto se cumple son mínimos" (Permuy 2015: 84)[4].

J. Sevilla (2004) proposes studying the coincidence degree between the possible equivalent and the original PU in three levels: formal, semantic and pragmatic. Corpas (2003: 127) and Mellado (2015: 157-159), however, specify the equivalence factors for each of these levels that are observed in the table shown in the previous point.

In order to establish an equivalent PU, all the techniques and strategies taken from the general translation can be applied, as the phraseological translation is no more than a type of translation, as we have commented in the first part of this paper. However, given the complexity of these linguistic units, several specific translation techniques have been developed in order to establish equivalents of PUs at a lexical level: actantial technique, synonymic technique, thematic technique (J. Sevilla and M. Sevilla 2000, 2004a, 2004b, 2005), hyperonymic technique (J. Sevilla 2013), synonymic technique in source language and hyperonymic technique in source language (Gálvez 2014: 50).

- According to the actantial technique, an actant or a keyword is chosen from the original PU. That actant or word is translated into the target language and PUs containing the translation of the actant or keyword are searched for. Once we obtain one or more PUs in the target language with the same actant or keyword, the meanings between these PUs and the original ones are compared with the intention of finding a conceptual equivalence. To be able to use this technique it is necessary to consult a phraseographic work that classifies the PUs by actant or keyword.
- The use of the thematic technique is similar to the actancial technique, but in this case, the key idea is used as a means to establish an equivalent. The key idea of the original PU is identified and units with the same key idea are searched in the target language. Once we have a list, we compare the meanings of the PUs in the target language with the meanings of the source unit to find a conceptual equivalence. This technique requires phraseographic works that classify PUs by key ideas.
- The synonymic technique is complementary to the two previous techniques, since if the correspondence found by these means is not the most adequate because it fails in some equivalence factor considered essential or important, a synonymous PU can be sought in the target language to the first localized equivalent with another combination of equivalence factors that is more adequate.
- The hyperonymic technique is similar to the synonymic technique only that instead of looking for a synonym a hyperonym is placed as equivalent. A hyperonym in phraseology is a PU with a more general sense, without all semantic nuances, but with the basic features of hyponymic PU. For instance, "All that glitters is not gold" and "All are not hunters that blow the horn" are synonymous paremias, but they have a different meaning to the proverb "An ape is an ape, a varlet is a varlet, though they be clad in silk and scarlet". However, these three units have a common hyperonym: "Appearances are deceptive".
- When the actantial technique and the thematic technique do not give a positive result, it is possible to restart the search with a PU in the original language that is a synonym or a

[4] TN: Finding a satisfactory equivalent requires functional coincidence in terms of meaning, geolect, chronolect and diaphasic variation. Ideally, the formal equivalent is also included among these adequacy requirements, although the cases in which all these meet are minimal.

hyperonym of the initial unit. This way of acting is known as synonymic technique and hyperonymic technique in the source language.

To apply these techniques, it is essential to use phraseographic works that order the PUs by actant or by key idea or that have the two indexes. Permuy (2012) analyses eleven English-language paremiographic works that she uses to document a corpus of English paremias. As a result of her study, she proposes what should be the characteristics of a good phraseographic work: "[…] uno que incluyera un amplio y completo repertorio de paremias, actuales y en desuso (distinguiendo unas de otras), con variantes y sinónimos, todos ellos documentados a lo largo del tiempo, con explicaciones claras de sus significados y con uno o varios contextos de uso para cada paremia. Un repertorio de paremias de ese tipo sería de gran ayuda, no solo para los traductores, sino para todo aquel que trabajara con las paremias; sin embargo, la elaboración de una obra de dichas características es una ardua labor" (Permuy 2012: 114)[5].

The *Refranero multilingüe* (J. Sevilla and Zurdo 2009) is a paremiographic work that adds to the conditions described by Permuy the fact of being a multilingual dictionary, so it directly offers the translation of a paremia in several languages. Apart from this unique work, it is truly difficult to find a dictionary of paremias or phraseologisms such as the one described by Permuy, even in languages such as Spanish, English or French, which have many paremiographic and phraseographic dictionaries. In other languages, the situation is even worse. Nguyen (2019), who analyses the translation of locutions from Spanish into Vietnamese, cannot apply any of the techniques described here because of the lack of phraseographic works ordered by the actant or by the key idea. This researcher faces the translation of her corpus of locutions using a combination of several dictionaries: a dictionary of Vietnamese locutions in alphabetical order, a bilingual Spanish/Vietnamese dictionary, several dictionaries of Spanish locutions and her phraseological competence. She also develops a methodology adapted to this language combination and to these sources of documentation, taking as a reference for the establishment of equivalents the meanings of the locutions.

Permuy (2015) analyses the application of paremiological translation techniques using English proverb dictionaries classified by the actant and by the key idea. These queries have to be done in a flexible way, as the actants and the key ideas are not always exact images between her two working languages (English and Spanish), so that sometimes she is forced to use synonyms of the actants or similar ideas, but not the same ones. Even so, it is not easy to find correspondences in the target language, and sometimes that correspondence is not found: "No siempre existen los equivalentes buscados en la cultura meta, encontrándonos con obstáculos tan variados como que el equivalente funcional no sea una paremia, que el equivalente cambie el actante de modo que para determinados contextos esa traducción no sea válida, o que la realidad a la que alude la paremia en español sea inexistente en las culturas de la lengua meta y obviamente lo recursos lingüísticos de esta última no la contemplen" (Permuy 2015: 83)[6].

[5] TN: […] one that includes a broad and complete repertoire of paremias, both current and disused (distinguishing between them), with variants and synonyms, all of them documented over time, with clear explanations of their meanings and with one or several contexts of use for each paremia. A repertoire of such paremias would be of great help, not only to translators, but to anyone who works with paremias; however, the elaboration of such a work is an uphill task.

[6] TN: There are not always the equivalents sought in the target culture. We encounter obstacles as varied as the functional equivalent not being a paremia, the equivalent changing the actant so that for certain contexts this translation is not valid, or the reality to which the paremia alludes in Spanish is non-existent in the cultures of the target language and obviously the linguistic resources of the latter do not contemplate it.

Corpas (2003: 217-218) proposes three equivalence grades at the lexical level:

- Total or full equivalence: the PU of the original language and the PU of the target language share semantic, pragmatic and formal factors.
- Partial equivalence: the PU of the original language and the PU of the target language do not share all equivalence factors, but enough to be considered functional equivalents.
- Null equivalence: the PU of the original language refers to non-existent or non-verbalised realities in the target language.

5. SETTING EQUIVALENTS AT THE TEXTUAL LEVEL

After locating one or more equivalent PUs at the lexical level, it is necessary to check whether they are valid at the textual level, for which the equivalence factors are taken up. In this case, however, the unit of the target language is not compared to the unit of the original language, but to the characteristics of the original text in order to establish whether this possible equivalent is compatible with the nature of the text.

In many cases, or perhaps even in most of them, the equivalent established at the lexical level will be valid at the textual level, but M. Sevilla (2015a) provides examples of incompatibilities between a PU and the text for one or more equivalence factors.

In these situations, the best translation of a PU is not always another PU of the same type in the target language, but a different type of PU, a free combination of words or a word. In this sense, Caballero (2018: 57-58) proposes six PU translation techniques:

- Pluri-verbalization: the correspondence of one PU is another PU in the target language.
- Uni-verbalization: the correspondence of a PU is a lexical unit in the target language.
- Discursive restructuring: the correspondence of a PU is a free combination of words in the target language.
- Omission: no correspondence to the original PU is provided in the target text.
- Loanword: the original PU is moved without translating into the target text.
- Literal translation: a literal translation of the original PU is carried out. It only makes sense in the case of literal PUs or transparent PUs.

When the loss of a PU or part of its features occurs in the translation process, Sevilla (2015a: 105) proposes the application of the compensation technique (taken from the general translation theory), that is, to introduce a PU in the translated text somewhere without any PU in the original text. That new PU, however, must meet two conditions:

- It must incorporate an equivalence factor similar to that of the PU lost in the translation process and that factor must be expressed in a similar level to that of the omitted PU.
- It should be included in a place in the target text where it fulfills its function in relation to the communicative purpose in a similar way to the original text.

CONCLUSIONS

In the last twenty years, numerous studies have been carried out in relation to the process of phraseological translation, i.e. the translation of the PUs included in texts, considered, therefore, as textual components and not as isolated lexical units. In this period, the general framework es-

tablished by Corpas in 2003 has been completed, clarified and detailed. At the present time, and as a result of these researches, this general framework has been detailed to a great extent; however, the studies related to phraseological translation constitute a research line that is still open and that can be developed in the following aspects:

- As discussed at the beginning of this paper, the whole theory of general translation is applicable to the phraseological translation. It is still needed to know how that theory can be applied to the translation of PUs.
- The localization of PUs in the original text is a complicated task that is fundamentally based on phraseological competence, whether active or passive. Although idiomaticity and opacity have been proposed as useful tools for the detection of idiomatic PUs, strategies for the detection of literal PUs and transparent idiomatic PUs have yet to be developed.
- Phraseological and paremiological translation techniques have proved useful when good paremiographic and phraseographic works are available, which is not the case in all languages, as proved in the study by Nguyen (2019). Precisely in this study, a methodology has been developed for the translation of PUs when the reference sources are scarce and not very good. This type of studies should be extended and it would also be very interesting to publish new phraseographic and paremiographic works, similar to the *Refranero multilingüe* (J. Sevilla and Zurdo 2009).
- Finally, in this article we have commented on various researches on the role of PUs in literary, specialised and filmic texts. This type of studies should also be extended to include the textual dimension of PUs.

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