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## Strategies for translating Turkish, English and French animal proverbs: Comparative study

### Abstract

Each language contains distinctive properties that are a part of its culture. Throughout history there has been a constant interest in designing and collecting proverbs, as far as they are reflective of both cultural resemblances and dissimilarities. Culture- and language-specific proverbs frequently cannot be translated into the target language literally, although, it can be assumed that their messages can be transferred to be adequately comprehended in the target language. The current study examines the proverbs that are equivalent in context in Turkish, English and French where at least one of them is animal-related. It looks into the techniques used in translating these proverbs among the three languages. Two of the five Mona Baker's strategies were applied to the analyzed material: (i) similarity both in meaning and form, (ii) similarity in meaning and dissimilarity in form. As a result, among 18 groups of proverbs selected for analysis (each including Turkish, English and French equivalents and 2 literal translation – Turkish-to-English and French-to-English), 5 demonstrated equivalence of form, context and meaning with the same animal nominations. Among the 13 groups, 9 showed higher equivalence between English and French proverbs, 3 – between Turkish and French proverbs and only 1 – between Turkish and English proverbs. The reason why one or two languages of the three have an animal nomination in a proverb while the other(s) does/do not have any may be traditional, religious, geographical or historical differences.

**Keywords:** concept, proverb, translation strategy, equivalent, literal translation, similarity of meaning, similarity of form

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## Стратегии перевода турецких, английских и французских пословиц о животных: сравнительный анализ

### Аннотация

Каждый язык отражает уникальные характеристики культуры соответствующего этноса. На протяжении истории развития и изучения языков отмечался постоянный интерес к созданию и накоплению пословиц, поскольку они отражают как культурные сходства этносов, так и их различия. Зачастую специфические в конкретном языке пословицы не могут быть переведены на целевой язык буквально, однако их значения можно передать так, чтобы они были адекватно поняты носителями целевого языка. В настоящей статье рассматриваются эквивалентные по значению пословицы в турецком, английском и французском языках, как минимум одна из которых содержит зооним. Особое внимание уделяется приёмам их перевода с одно-

го языка на два других. К анализируемому материалу были применены две из пяти стратегий Моны Бейкер: 1) поиск пословицы, схожей и по значению, и по форме; 2) поиск пословицы, схожей по значению, но не схожей по форме. В результате было сформировано 18 групп (в каждую вошли турецкая, английская и французская пословицы, а также два буквальных перевода – с турецкого на английский и с французского на английский), из которых 5 групп демонстрировали эквивалентность значения и формы, при этом все три пословицы содержали зооним. Из оставшихся 13 групп в 9 группах отмечалась более высокая эквивалентность английской и французской пословиц, в 3 группах – французской и турецкой пословиц и только в одной – турецкой и английской пословиц. Причины, по которым в одном-двух языках зооним присутствовал, а в другом/других – отсутствовал, кроются в разнице традиций, религий, географического положения и исторического развития.

**Ключевые слова:** концепт, пословица, стратегия перевода, эквивалент, буквальный перевод, схожесть значения, схожесть формы

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## 1. Introduction

Effective communication has been very important for people to live harmoniously since the beginning of time. The essential element of this communication is language, and with the help of language people have been able to transfer their cultures and traditions. Language is closely related to thinking because language and thinking are two inseparable elements [Vendryes, 2001, p. 21]. Language is a bridge between communication and thinking, and speaking, learning and communication – all happen by using language. This effective communication provides for people's efficient functioning in society. The cultural background of a society forms here, and it consists of elements, such as proverbs.

Each society in the world speaks a different language, but nevertheless, the proverbs of one society may be contextually similar to the other. Proverbs are quoted short sentences that state common experiences or give advice reflecting ideas, culture, traditions and experiences of a society. In other words, a proverb is a brief, well-known folk saying that is passed down from generation to generation and incorporates morality, wisdom, and traditional beliefs in a definite, metaphorical form that is easy to remember [Gibbs, 2001 ; Mieder, 2019]. It seems reasonable to assert that the bulk of proverbs are well-known to a significant number of those who belong to the same sociocultural group.

A number of proverbs verbalize animal images as a part of culture code. Animal images have been reflected in our minds since childhood: *wolf* associated with evil, *sheep* associated with stupidity, *bull* pointing to either clumsiness or courage, *duck* indicating failure – all used in a number of proverbs displaying common features as well as dissimilarities, e.g. in Russian and English phraseological units examined by [Rozenkova, Shustova, 2018 ; Shustova, Tyapugina, 2020].

Over the years, researchers from a wide range of fields have been much interested in the concept of a proverb [Kindstrand, 1978]. Societies in the world may speak different languages, nevertheless, the proverbs of a society may be similar to others' contextually. In folklore, literature, everyday language and religious scriptures proverbs have a lengthy history.

Nearly all literary works contain proverbs that can occasionally be difficult to translate. Proverbs are interwoven with everyday life and language, and from translation point of view they are difficult to deal with because proverbs generally do not have direct equivalences in any target language. One of the reasons of that include the presence of linguistic

expressions in each language which only belong to that unique culture. Because there is no one-to-one relationship between one culture and another, nor one language and another, proverbs as well as slang, colloquial phrases, and culture words are challenging to translate [Das, 2005]. Therefore, there is no definite approach to translating culturally specific proverbs, but it is clear that the practical meanings of proverbs should prevail over the literal meanings in translation. The aim of the current study is to investigate some contextually and syntactically similar animal proverbs in Turkish, English and French to see how these proverbs are translated among the three languages, and which procedures and strategies are used to translate them.

## 2. Literature Review

Proverbs can be seen as common spiritual values and stereotyped sayings of a nation or civilization. A country's culture, which mostly manifests itself through language, is where identity first takes root. Proverbs, which convey a lot of meaning in a small number of words and are an integral part of every language and culture, are used to enhance and deepen written and spoken expression in all languages and cultures. Proverbs can be defined as common, fixed-sentence statements that convey accepted facts, moral principles, or normative beliefs. A nation's proverbs and its identity are closely related. Additionally, deeply ingrained in a country's culture, proverbs can reveal that country's fundamental values and ideas as well as its character. Experiences, culture, ways of living and thinking of a community can be traced in proverbs. The word 'proverb' is the most common term [Annaberdiyev, 2013, p. 186]. Proverbs are linguistic formations of the culture that are employed in social contexts. Beside the term 'proverb', such terms as 'saying, adage, saw, maxim, axiom, motto, aphorism, epigram, gnome, dictum, precept, words of wisdom, catchphrase, slogan, byword, watchword, truism, platitude' also exist [Simpson, & Speake, 2015, p. 14]. According to [Hamilton, 2013, p. 30], 'old said saw' was common in 16th century. According to [Stanek, 2018, p. 487], proverbs give information and advice about social and natural phenomena, beliefs in society, and they are mostly related to reality but not limited by it. Proverbs belong to paroemias that express various modal meanings including desired things (e.g., see Optative Mood in Russian paroemias [Shustova et al., 2021]). Among the popular concepts verbalized in paroemias one can find "friend – foe" in Chinese, Russian and English [Arekeeva, 2022 ; Zyryanov et al., 2021], "work" in English, German and Russian [Mosina, Mikhaylova, 2022], etc.

Proverbs are oral expressions. They have existed since the beginning of oral communication, but their history has started with written literature. The sources of proverbs, especially in English, are generally literature, holy books and folklore [Zimovets, Matveeva, 2013, p. 27]. Social interaction, material culture, intertextual circumstances, innovative conceptual area and cultural symbols form the bases of proverbs [Dobrovolskij, Piirainen, 2018, p. 6]. Although these rules are for English, they can be accepted as universal and applied to proverbs in general. It should be noted that 7% of the proverbs in English are borrowed from French [Ivanov, Petrushevskaja, 2015, p. 865]. This figure is the highest of 9.5% from European continent. Therefore, it can be suggested that English and French have many similar proverbs despite the fact that they belong to different language subfamilies within the family of Indo-European languages. This suggests that due to long history of cross-cultural communication, proverbs reflect similarities and differences in various cultures and provide information about sociological structure, character, language development, geography, climate, customs and traditions of a society. Through universally acknowledged truths, proverbs can bind together disparate civilizations [Gibbs, 2001].

Numerous proverbs verbalize universal concepts like love, hate, friendship, and hostility. Proverbs that reflect the culture of a society together with universal values are called culture-oriented proverbs. Many proverbs in Turkish revolve around the ideas of dog, sheep,

wolf, horse, weapon, and bravery because agricultural and military duties have historically played significant role in Turkish society.

Interpreter's primary objective is to transfer information, knowledge, or wisdom from the source text (ST) to the target text (TT). The method of such transfer is crucially important. Considering how firmly ingrained proverbs are in a country's culture, translating proverbs is one of the most challenging aspects of literary translation [Njui, 2019]. For the samples of scientific or educational literature, the equivalence of the content appears to be the most significant requirement for a successful translation, however, in literary texts, both the content and the form are vital. Therefore, on the one hand, compromising form and pattern for the sake of content might damage the source's aesthetic value; on the other hand, preserving the pattern at the cost of content frequently leads to the failure in effective conveying of the original message.

The literal translation of a proverb into another language might render the statement unintelligible because a single word can have multiple connotations when used in a proverb [Anderson, & Nagy, 1989]. For example, the Turkish equivalent of the English proverb 'blood is thicker than water' is 'et tırnaktan ayrılmaz'; however, when it is translated word for word ('kan sudan daha kalındır'), it does not make any sense. Clearly, in such cases formal requirements should be abandoned in favor of content [Nida, 1964]. However, there is an opinion, e.g. [Ricoeur, 2007], that there can be no translation without any loss in meaning. Another challenge is the openness of proverbs to various interpretations [Millar, 2020]. The choice of equivalents among the options depends on the approach adopted by an interpreter. Despite minor losses (or more rarely gains), the chosen approach has to enable to effectively convey the intended message and guarantee that the target language equivalents of the original proverbs make sense [Unseth, 2006].

According to [Baker, 2018, p. 63], fixed expressions and proverbs are "frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and, in the case of idioms, they often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components. Unlike idioms, however, fixed expressions and proverbs often have fairly transparent meanings. The meaning of a proverb can easily be deduced from the meanings of the words which constitute it. This means that proverbs are culture-specific items embedded in a source language culture, therefore, one should be careful in their translations.

In order to understand a proverb, the history of that culture should be known as well. If an interpreter is not familiar with the source language (SL) culture, s/he might translate proverbs literally, and the chances for such translation to appear unnatural or completely wrong could be very high. An interpreter might recognize a proverb in SL, but without appropriate strategies, the translation could result in failure. Appropriate strategy will help an interpreter identify figurative meanings of proverbs and reinterpret them into target language (TL) successfully. This strategy is reaching equivalence at the above word level. As far as English, French and Turkish are abundant in proverbs, they provide certain opportunities for equivalent translation by choosing a proverb or substituting a proverb with a non-paroemiatic unit.

Proverb translation requires both linguistic and extra linguistic features of languages. These features include culture as well. Cultural variations can cause language utterances to differ even when the language structures are the same. Therefore, a proverb should not be translated according just to its meanings in a dictionary – cultural conventions should be taken into consideration as well. There are many strategies that can be applied to proverb translations. As in [Baker, 2018, p. 64], the same meaning can be transferred differently in various languages; as a result, the proverbial expressions in SL might not have any equivalent expressions in TL. She also suggested five translation strategies to eliminate these probable difficulties [Baker, 2018, pp. 71–78]: (i) using a proverb similar in meaning and form, (ii) using a proverb similar in meaning although dissimilar in form, (iii) paraphrasing (finding non-idiomatic match), (iv) omission and (v) explanation.

### 3. Turkish, English, and French common proverbs about animals

#### 3.1. Material and methods

The current study is a descriptive study investigating the proverbs contextually. The data were collected through scanning the related samples with animals included at least in one of the three proverbs being in equivalence relations. Then, the reasons for practical differences of the proverbs were discussed in the three languages with the focus on (i) why one animal is used in one language and another animal is used in the other, and (ii) why an animal is replaced with an object, or an object is replaced with an animal. In the current study, two of the five translation strategies for proverb translation were applied: (i) using a proverb similar in meaning and form, (ii) using a proverb similar in meaning although dissimilar in form [Baker, 2018, p. 64]. Turkish, English, and French common proverbs about animals were selected from various articles, journals and books with same or similar contexts for examination. Descriptive method was chosen as far as it typically gives comprehensive and detailed information of an issue [Siedlecki, 2020], gathers an organized, rich profile of a phenomenon [Polit, Beck, 2020]. Therefore, qualitative and quantitative techniques of analysis were combined in this study.

The total of 90 units were obtained for further data processing: 18 Turkish proverbs, 18 English proverbs, 18 French proverbs and 36 literal translations (18 Turkish-to-English and 18 French-to-English). The translations were classified into groups in accordance with [Baker, 2018, p. 64] translation strategies. Also, the proverbs were categorized depending on what they are related to and according to their contexts. Therefore, the proverbs in the three languages could have different literal meanings or words except animals in the same group, but they were all used in the same context.

Generally, the animal proverbs verbalize many concepts. In the current study, the most common concepts were chosen: greed, stability, determination, perseverance, threatening, mutual interest, criticism, success, determination, resilience, dissatisfaction, unity, solidarity, disorder, temperament, honesty, falsity, kindness, luck, predestination, warning, ambition and high hopes. Not every proverb had an animal expression in the three languages. For that reason, Turkish, English and French animal proverbs were categorized and investigated according to their contexts under the proper translation strategy.

#### 3.2. Using a proverb of similar meaning and form

“This strategy involves using a proverb in the target language which conveys roughly the same meaning as that of the source language proverb and, in addition, consists of equivalent lexical items. This kind of match can only occasionally be achieved” [Baker, 2018, p. 72]. By using this strategy, an interpreter tries to find a proverb in the TL which is equivalent to the SL both in terms of meaning and lexical constituents. This strategy is hardly achieved as far as the majority of proverbs are language-and-culture-specific because here languages expose drastic differences in the way they verbalize a certain concept. Despite being rare, it is regarded as an ideal strategy for translating proverbs. Five examples below demonstrate the use of the strategy.

(1)

*Turkish: Altın yumurtlayan tavuk kesilmez.*

(Literal English translation: The chicken that lays the golden egg should not be slaughtered).

*English: Kill not the goose that lays the golden eggs.*

*French: Il ne faut pas tuer la poule aux œufs d'or.*

(Literal English translation: Do not kill the goose that lays the golden eggs).

The proverbs in (1) verbalize the concept of greed. The translations are literally the same in all three languages with the lexemes *gold* and *egg*, except the lexemes *kill*, *chicken*

and *goose*. In English and French, *kill* and *tuer* have the same meaning. Literally English and French translations are almost the same. It is not surprising if one thinks about the history of both nations and countries, and how their languages were interwoven. However, in Turkish, *kesmek* ‘cut’ is used instead of *kill*. The reasons are cultural. If you *öldürmek* ‘kill’ a chicken, it is considered uneatable for religious reasons. If you *kesmek* ‘cut’ a chicken, it dies as well but remains eatable. Here ‘cut’ means that it is killed in accordance with Muslim tradition. These three proverbs are also contextually the same – ‘losing a beneficent thing because of haste, greed or thoughtlessness’.

(2)

*Turkish: Dereyi geçerken at değiştirilmez.*

(Literal English translation: Horses should not be changed while crossing a stream).

*English: Don't change horses in mid-stream.*

*French: Il ne faut pas changer de cheval au milieu du gué.*

(Literal English translation: Do not change horses in the middle of the ford).

The proverbs in (2) verbalize the concepts of stability, determination and perseverance. The proverbs in the three languages have the same domestic animal ‘horse’ and the same context ‘crossing over a stream’. From this point of view the same proverb seems to be translated with the same context and with the same meaning ‘while performing a task, the method should not be changed in the middle of the task performance’. In all the three cultures, horses were valued as a vital (and the only) kind of transport during peace times and war times. It might have been borrowed from French into English in old times because of the closeness of the cultures and countries. Most probably, the Turkish equivalent came from French because at the beginning of the 20th century, French was very popular in Turkey, and it donated a significant number of words into Turkish. With the implementation of the Tanzimat reforms, French became the Ottoman Empire's semi-official language, although it did not belong to the Ottoman Empire's ethnic languages. However, it was the only Western language that educated people across all linguistic communities were speaking; French was practically universal on the territory of the Empire, somewhat like English is in the modern world [Strauss, 2010, 2016].

(3)

*Turkish: Havlayan köpek ısırılmaz.*

(Literal English translation: Barking dog does not bite).

*English: Barking dogs seldom bite.*

*French: Chien qui aboie ne mord pas.*

(Literal English translation: A dog that barks does not bite).

The proverbs in (3) mean that threatening seldom works. The proverbs in the three languages include the same nomination of the domestic animal – ‘dog’ – and the same context – ‘to bite while barking’. The three equivalents consist of almost the same words that verbalize the same concept. The meaning is ‘Noisy threats remain threats and generally are not real dangers’. Dogs are important domestic animals in all three cultures, generally known for their loyalty to the owners and readiness to protect them by barking or biting. Here, the meaning of the proverb might be based on the common experience that a dog cannot bark and bite at the same time.

(4)

*Turkish: Köpek köpeği ısırılmaz.*

(Literal English translation: The dog does not bite the dog).

*English: Dog does not eat dog.*

*French: Les loups ne se mangent pas entre eux.*

(Literal English translation: Wolves don't eat each other).

The proverbs in (4) verbalize the concept of mutual interest. The literal translation of Turkish proverb is ‘The dog does not bite the dog’ and the literal translation of French proverb

is ‘Wolves don't eat each other’. In Turkish and English, the proverb has the same domestic animal nomination – *köpek* ‘dog’ and *dog*, but in French it is *loup* ‘wolf’ while other words are the same. The context ‘to bite or eat each other’ is also alike. All the three have the same meaning of ‘disreputable people know each other very well, and a vile person does not harm any other vile person’. The choice of *loup* ‘wolf’ instead of *chien* ‘dog’ in French can be explained by the negative connotation the word ‘dog’ has (usually for a man meaning dirty, unfaithful, a womanizer, a vile person). Wolf lives in the forest, it is savage and scary, and there are a lot of expressions inspired by wolves in French language such as ‘when you speak of the wolf you see its tail’, ‘(Walking) à pas de loup (tiptoeing around)’, ‘wolf-cold’, ‘known as the white wolf’. Therefore, ‘wolf’ replaces ‘dog’ in French to inspire disreputability.

(5)

*Turkish: İt ürür, kervan yürür.*

(Literal English translation: The dog barks, but the caravan walks).

*English: The dogs bark, but the caravan rolls on.*

*French: Les chiens aboient, la caravane passe.*

(Literal English translation: Dogs bark but the caravan moves).

The proverbs in (5) convey the message of moving ahead despite criticism. Here, the proverbs in the three languages have the nominations of the same domestic animal: *İt* ‘dog’, *chien* in the same context ‘to bark while caravan moves’. The proverb has Turkish origin according to [Antoine, 1823, p. 152], and it may have been borrowed into Turkish from Arabic as many other lexical and phraseological units (before becoming a republic, Turkish used Arabic writing system). From Turkish, this proverb must have been translated into French and English with the meaning ‘a person should not pay attention to what others say about her/him, but s/he should do as s/he sees proper’. The domesticity of the dog is emphasized again because in old times the trade was made through caravans and the dogs were watching them.

### 3.3. Using a proverb of similar meaning but dissimilar form

Some proverbs in various languages may have different lexical components, but the meanings of the proverbs could still be identical. In other words, translation of a proverb in the TL means the same as in the SL, but its lexical components are different. In this case, the meaning of the target proverb is the same as that of the original proverb, although the lexical items are different [Baker, 2018, p. 79].

(6)

*Turkish: Erken kalkan (çıkan) yol alır, er evlenen döl alır.*

(Literal English translation: The one who gets up early gets the way, the one who gets married sooner gets offspring).

*English: Early bird catches the worm.*

*French: L'avenir appartient à ceux qui se lèvent tôt.*

(Literal English translation: The future belongs to those who get up early).

The proverbs in (6) verbalize the concept of success. Starting to do something early can maximize the benefit. Only English proverb contains the word *bird*. The Turkish proverb has a “hidden subject” referring to the 3rd person singular pronoun she / he in English and ‘O’ in Turkish. The French one has the word *ceux* which means ‘those / those people’ referring to the 3rd person plural pronoun. Therefore, in Turkish and French equivalents, instead of ‘bird’ the 3rd person singular pronoun as a ‘hidden subject’ in Turkish and 3rd person plural pronoun in French are used respectively. The three translations have different words and mean different things literally. However, they are contextually the same, and the meaning of each proverb is ‘an individual who starts a work or a project early will succeed soon’.

(7)

*Turkish: Gülü seven dikenine katlanır.*

(Literal English translation: The one who loves the rose endures its thorns).

*English: He that would have eggs must endure the cackling of hens.**French: Pas de rose sans épine.*

(Literal English translation: No rose without a thorn).

The proverbs in (7) verbalize the concept of determination and resilience. Only English proverb contains the animal nomination (*hen*). Turkish and French equivalents contain the words with the meaning of ‘rose’ (*gül, rose*) and ‘thorn’ (*diken, épine*). Here again, the Turkish proverb has a ‘hidden subject’ referring to 3rd person singular pronoun she / he and ‘O’ in Turkish. In the French one it is actually ‘Il n’y pas de rose sans épine.’ with the meaning ‘There is no rose without a thorn.’ However, again in French language if the sentence with ‘there is / are’ is negative, then ‘il n’y...’ is omitted. It can be suggested that this proverb was translated into Turkish from French. There are literal and semantic similarities between Turkish and French proverbs, and the English proverb is literally and syntactically different from the other two. However, all the three have the same contextual meaning that ‘no problem or obstacle can prevent a resilient and ambitious person from achieving her / his goal’. Rather than employing animal metaphors, like in English, both Turkish and French proverbs appeal to a plant and its part (metonymic usage). The meaning ‘a resilient and ambitious person cannot be prevented from her / his target easily’ has a parallelism with enduring the thorns of roses and chicken’s cackling that are used to render the same meaning.

(8)

*Turkish: Komşunun tavuğu komşuya kaz görünür.*

(Literal English translation: Neighbor's chicken looks like a goose for another neighbor).

*English: The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.**French: L'éloignement augmente le prestige.*

(Literal English translation: Remoteness increases prestige).

The proverbs in (8) verbalize the concept of dissatisfaction. The three proverbs are characterized by different syntactic patterns, but their contexts are similar, and the meanings are the same – ‘the things that do not belong to a person seem more appealing than her / his own possessions’. Only the Turkish proverb contains animal nominations – *tavuk* ‘chicken’ and *kaz* ‘goose’. In Turkey, chicken is a very common domestic animal bred for eggs and meat. Unlike chicken, goose is a rare domestic animal, therefore it is more valuable in terms of eggs and especially meat and, consequently, more expensive than chicken in Turkish agricultural household. In English, the idea of the border between something that does not belong to a person and something that does is verbalized by the expression including a concrete noun ‘*the other side of the fence*’ while in French it is expressed by an abstract noun *l'éloignement* ‘remoteness’.

(9)

*Turkish: Üşüntü köpek mandayı paralar.*

(Literal English translation: A flock of dogs can tear to pieces a water buffalo).

*English: Two heads are better than one.**French: Deux avis valent mieux qu'un.*

(Literal English translation: Two opinions are better than one).

The proverbs in (9) verbalize the concept of unity and solidarity. The three proverbs are characterized by different syntactic patterns, but their contexts are similar, and the meanings are the same – ‘the things a person cannot do are done by a group of people in unity’. Only the Turkish proverb contains an animal nomination – *köpek* ‘dog’. Again, a dog’s guarding skills are exploited – dogs as the guards of the flocks of sheep, goats, etc., especially against wolves in rural areas. It is stressed that not one dog but a few of them together can fight against the wolves and there is a parallelism with ‘water buffalo’ to indicate the power of dogs in unity. Instead of

animal metaphor, English exposes the metonymic use of a concrete noun *head* while French uses an abstract noun *avis* ‘opinion’. Unlike Turkish, both languages appeal to people.

(10)

*Turkish: Horozu çok olan köyün sabahı geç olur.*

(Literal English translation: The village with many roosters is late in the morning).

*English: Too many cooks spoil the broth.*

*French: Trop de marmitons gâtent la sauce.*

(Literal English translation: Too many scullions spoil the sauce).

The proverbs in (10) are contrary in a way to the ones in (9) meaning that a job must be done by one professional rather than by many. Thus, proverbs in (10) verbalize the concept of disorder. The three proverbs are characterized by different syntactic patterns, but they share the same context and meaning – ‘when many people and ideas come to clashes performing one and the same task, the result is rarely good’. Only the Turkish proverb contains an animal nomination – *horoz* ‘rooster’. The rooster is associated with the sun and pride in many cultures, and there is a link between the sound of its crowing and the break of day. The rooster's first-known characteristic is its ability to herald the approach of morning in Turkish culture. The rooster's ability to adapt its crowing without deviation, even in the face of varying night lengths, is one of its most admired traits. In Turkish culture people used to sleep early and wake up at dawn especially in villages and in rural areas with their roosters' crowing to perform their morning prayers and then go to work in their fields, yards or other places. However, both English and French equivalents appeal to food and those who cook it. The common element is *cook* and *scullion* ‘cook’ while the dishes are different (*broth* as a and *sauce* that).

(11)

*Turkish: Huylu huyundan vazgeçmez.*

(Literal English translation: One doesn't give up the acquired temper).

*English: You can't teach an old dog a new trick.*

*French: L'habitude est une seconde nature.*

(Literal English translation: Habit is a second nature).

The proverbs in (11) are about character and temperament. Only the English proverb contains an animal nomination – *dog*. The three proverbs have different words and mean different things literally. However, there are similarities in contexts and meanings: ‘an individual may learn new things with difficulty because that person already knows how to do things in her/ his own way’. Dogs can learn to some extent in early period of their lives. The difficulty of teaching them something new later in life has a parallelism with teaching people in English culture. In Turkish and French *huyundan* ‘temper’ and *L'habitude* ‘habit’ correspondingly are used to render the same meaning.

(12)

*Turkish: Adamın adı çıkacağına canı çıksın.*

(Literal English translation: Let a man die instead his name will come out).

*English: Give a dog bad name and hang him.*

*French: Qui veut tuer son chien, l'accuse de la rage.*

(Literal English translation: Who wants to kill his dog, accuses him of rabies).

The proverbs in (12) are about honesty and falsity. English and French proverbs contain the same domestic animal nomination – *dog* and *chien* ‘dog’ – in the same context – killing or dying. Again, such similarity can be explained by the closeness of English and French cultures. The Turkish equivalent is anthropocentric exploiting the noun *adam* ‘man’ to convey the same meaning that ‘once a person's reputation is besmirched, her / his life becomes harder’ (better die than put your name to shame). The reason is that negative connotations of ‘dog’ in English and French cultures are not found in Turkish.

(13)

*Turkish: Tatlı dil yılanı deliğinden çıkarır.*

(Literal English translation: Sweet words get the snake out of its hole).

*English: Honey catches more flies than vinegar.**French: Douce parole n'écorche pas langue.*

(Literal English translation: Sweet speech does not scratch the tongue).

The proverbs in (13) are about being nice to others – kind words make the evil surrender. All the three proverbs mean the same – ‘if you are polite instead of being rude and insolent, you can get what you want easier’. Turkish and English ones contain nominations of two different animals – *yılan* ‘snake’ and fly respectively, but the French one does not. Snake is most commonly known to be associated with evil while *fly* does not have such associations. In all the three, the idea of sweetness is exploited, but the oppositions are different: sweet – snake in Turkish, honey – vinegar in English and sweet – scratch in French.

(14)

*Turkish: Baykuşun kısmeti ayağına gelir.*

(Literal English translation: Owl's fortune comes to her feet).

*English: A cat has nine lives.**French: Un chat a neuf vies.*

(Literal English translation: A cat has nine lives).

The proverbs in (14) verbalize the concepts of luck and predestination. All the three express the same meaning of ‘being lucky enough to feed oneself and getting rid of dangerous and difficult conditions’, all the three contain animal nominations: *baykuş* ‘owl’ in Turkish, *cat* in English, *chat* ‘cat’ in French. The same nominations in English and French stem from their cultural closeness. In English and French contexts, cats are lucky, and they can survive despite difficulties. In Turkish, *baykuş* ‘owl’ is used instead. Owls are wild animals, they must hunt for living, but cats are considered domestic animals that do not have to struggle so hard for their survival. In Turkish context, it is emphasized that owls are lucky, and the food can come to owls even if they cannot hunt. This difference about how to be accepted as lucky may stem from the cultural differences between Turkey, on the one hand, and western countries – on the other.

(15)

*Turkish: Anlayana sivrisinek saz, anlamayana davul zurna az.*

(Literal English translation: Mosquito is a musical instrument for those who understand, drums and clarion are little for those who don't understand).

*English: A word to the wise is enough.**French: À bon entendeur, salut!*

(Literal English translation: Greetings to a good hearer).

The proverbs in (15) express the value of even a single hint for an intelligent person. Literally, all three proverbs are different, however the context and the meaning are the same – ‘a slight warning is enough for an intelligent person’. Only in the Turkish proverb an animal nomination (*sivrisinek* ‘mosquito’) is used. A mosquito is a small animal with a disturbing buzz. When people hear mosquitos, they generally try to get rid of them quickly. In Turkish, this little voice of a mosquito is compared to a big orchestra meaning that if a person is wise and sensitive enough, s/he can understand the matter even from a slight hint. English and French equivalents are, again, anthropocentric making use of ‘the wise’ and ‘the hearer’ respectively. The closeness of English and French can be seen in the fact that instead of an animal, a person is used to convey the same meaning.

(16)

*Turkish: Dereyi görmeden paçaları sıvamak.*

(Literal English translation: Rolling up one's trotters without seeing the stream).

*English: Don't count your chickens before they hatch.*

*French: Il ne faut pas vendre la peau de l'ours avant de l'avoir tué.*

(Literal English translation: Do not sell the skin of the bear before killing it).

The proverbs in (16) advise us not to be in a hurry for an expected thing or situation. English and French proverbs contain different animal nominations: *chicken* (domestic animal) and *l'ours* 'bear' (wild animal) respectively. The Turkish equivalent does not include an animal nomination. Instead, the idea of 'crossing the stream' is exploited. On the surface, the context seems different. However, looking deeper, one can clearly see similarity in the meaning of 'to reap the benefits before the task is accomplished'.

(17)

*Turkish: Denize düşen yılanı sarılır.*

(Literal English translation: If a person falls into the sea, s/he holds on even a snake).

*English: A drowning man will catch at a straw.*

*French: Un homme qui se noie se raccroche à un fêtu.*

(Literal English translation: A drowning man clings to a straw).

The proverbs in (17) are about the desire to survive in a desperate situation. In contrast with example (16), English and French proverbs do not contain animal nominations while the Turkish proverb does. The context for all the three is the same – 'one can do desperate things in desperate times'. English and French proverbs exploit the lexical units 'a drowning man' and 'straw'. Although in the Turkish equivalent a person is not directly given the attribute of drowning, the indirect appeal to 'a drowning man' is quite clear. The desperateness of the situation in English and French is verbalized by *straw* whose properties are completely unsuitable to hold a drowning person while in Turkish an appeal is made to *yılan* 'snake' with slippery body and evil nature which in Turkish culture is no match to a good-natured religious Turkish person.

(18)

*Turkish: Boğulursan büyük suda (denizde) boğul.*

(Literal English translation: If you drown, drown in the great water (sea)).

*English: As well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb.*

*French: Tant qu'à être pendu pour un mouton, autant l'être pour un agneau.*

(Literal English translation: As long as you hang for a sheep, you might as well hang for a lamb).

The proverbs in (18) verbalize the concept of high ambition. The three proverbs are contextually similar meaning that 'it is better to take risk, and then, even if you fail, your failure may be accounted as success'. As in (17), English and French demonstrate the highest degree of similarity exploiting two animal nominations (*sheep* and *lamb*, *mouton* 'sheep' and *agneau* 'lamb' respectively). In general, the lexical equivalence of the two is very high (e.g. the use of the verbs *hang* and *pendu* 'hang') as well as the word order similarity. The Turkish proverb does not contain an animal nomination. Instead of 'hang' and 'sheep', 'drown' and 'sea' are used.

#### 4. Conclusion

Proverb studies in Turkish have a long history and are numerous in Turkish literature. English and French literatures also provide many proverbs, and the two languages borrow various proverbs from each other. When animal proverbs in different languages are investigated, the results may suggest that, on the one hand, specific traditions, customs and cultures of people are reflected in proverbs. On the other hand, proverbs may be accepted as universal values as well because the animal proverbs investigated in the current study have contextual similarities.

The concepts verbalized in the proverbs that were analyzed in the current study included greed, stability, determination, perseverance, threatening, mutual interest, criticism, success, determination, resilience, dissatisfaction, unity, solidarity, disorder, temperament, honesty, falsity, kindness, luck, predestination, warning, high ambition. The most common

animal found in the proverbs in the three languages is dog. Then, domestic animals such as horse, chicken, hen, goose, cat, sheep, bird, fly as well as wild animals such as snake, owl, mosquito, bear appear in the proverbs. In all the three cultures, dog, chicken, sheep, horse have been viewed as great companions for humans since old times. On the contrary, snake, wolf and bear have bad reputations being accepted as evil by many nations.

Out of 18 groups of proverbs (each including Turkish, English and French equivalents), 5 demonstrated equivalence of form, context and meaning with the same animal nominations. Among the 13 groups, 9 showed higher equivalence between English and French proverbs, 3 – between Turkish and French proverbs and only 1 – between Turkish and English proverb.

It was found that the connotations of animals like dog, chicken, horse, cat, bird, goose, snake, wolf may be suggested as similar in Turkish, English and French. It is obvious that animal proverbs have different connotations in various languages. However, in the current study, only the ones with the same connotations were chosen.

The reason why one or two languages of the three have animal nominations in a proverb while the other(s) does/do not have it may be explained by traditional, religious, geographical and historical differences. Due to these differences, proverbs in many cases cannot be translated directly into target languages. Therefore, while translating proverbs, the context and meaning should be preserved to convey the meaning of SL proverb into TL. With the usage of the two strategies exemplified in this study by 18 groups of proverbs, the original meaning of animal proverbs can be translated into target language properly.

The comparisons of animal proverbs in the current study contribute to understanding the variety and resemblance of the three cultures and their ways of thinking and living, aesthetic and religious beliefs and their surroundings. The obtained results also provide new ways of understanding the three cultures in a way that the same similarities and differences are referred by different or the same proverbs and the same meanings can be conveyed by different animals in different languages.

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