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(eds.)

# Transformando la educación a través del conocimiento

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# Phraseological Units in Literary Translation as Resources for the Empowerment and “Naturalization” of L2 Speakers in Multilingual Education<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** In bilingual education, it is crucial to study in depth as much as possible the several levels, strata, mechanisms, characteristics, elements and/or units that contribute to empower the speaker almost as a native speaker of the languages he is learning. We analyze several aspects of the linguistic “naturalization” of speakers in multilingual contexts (L2). It is not only a question of providing access to the grammatical and lexical elements of the language that is being learned. It is not just grammar, or language, rather it is transporting the speaker to the cognitive structural situation that (without disregarding grammar and other questions related to the linguistic functioning of the communication system of verbal expression being learned or activated) allows him to express himself as a native speaker. In this learning process that tends to empower the bi/multilingual speaker, Phraseological Units [UF], although occasionally they might seem insignificant to us, refer us to the referential universe of the cultural *traditio* of a language, and can provide us with an interpretive wealth of great relevance for the knowledge of the culture of a given language.

**Keywords:** bilingual education, linguistic improvement, phraseological units, literary classics, translation, Ausiàs March

## 1. THE FORMIDABLE POWER OF BI- / MULTILINGUAL CONTEXTS

In bilingual education, it is crucial to deepen as much as possible in the knowledge of the several levels, strata, mechanisms, characteristics, elements and/or units that contribute to empower the speaker almost as a native speaker of the languages he is learning. In every process of bi- / multilingual education, several languages play a role –as if “to tango”, let us use this phraseological unit [UF]. In turn, this platitude is a summary of the formidable –which comes from Latin *formido*, ‘to cause awe’– complexity of the cognitive processes taking place in the speaker’s mind in multilingual contexts (at least bilingual), if we were to describe them.

Neurolinguists have a strenuous task ahead of them. We owe much to them. Thus, for instance, we know that in the same way that it has been demonstrated that reading (reading much and well, being concentrated and attentive to what we read) changes not only the mind but the brain itself –by making the neuronal networks more dense and making the synapses more dynamic–, multilingualism (which

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includes contexts that are at least bilingual), especially in educational contexts, contributes just like reading (although more and in a better way) to making the neuronal networks denser and at the same time more flexible, plastic and polyvalent: in sum, it facilitates cognitive processes.

Learning other languages, and to do so in multilingual contexts (linguistic immersion) improves our mind (we wish it could be a panacea) and cognitive processes. To learn languages, and several languages, teaches us to learn in general; to speak several languages and to do it in multilingual contexts helps us think better. In fact, it is a *new trend* –and even a *trending topic* or a *hashtag*– in Neurolinguistics the fact that learning and speaking several languages and to live amongst several languages provides speakers with a certain predisposition to resilience in the face of neurodegenerative processes.

In fact, this can be a solution to the chaos of Babel. Multilingualism, contrary to what we have mentioned, that it represents something formidable regarding the enormous cognitive complexity involved, can offer (in fact it already offers) much good. To the chaos of Babel and the subsequent confusion of languages, the Scriptures already offered, as part of the New Testament, more hopeful than the Old one, the contrary virtue of Pentecostes. The tongues of fire that thanks to the Holy Spirit descended on each apostle had the goal and the effect that they preached in all languages. The biblical punishment of multilingualism was assumed as (part of the) solution for the missionary activity. Nothing less than that.

## 2. ASPECTS OF LINGUISTIC “NATURALIZATION” IN MULTILINGUAL CONTEXTS

In multilingual education it is not just about providing access to the grammatical and lexical elements of the language or languages being learned at any given moment. It is not only grammar, nor language, rather it is about transporting the speaker to the cognitive structural situation that (without disregarding grammar and other questions related to the linguistic functioning of the communication system of verbal expression being learned or activated) allows him to express himself as a native speaker. It is, of course, an ideal. Reality is stubborn, when not recalcitrant, and the complexity of linguistic structures and, in sum, of communication as a globalizing act of expressive formalization, either in written or spoken forms (for others and even for one self), either just “felt” or “thought”, of the feelings, processes, actions, thoughts, wishes, longings, etc. causes it to be very difficult for the speaker to have a “perfect” (for instance in the phono-phonological level) effective competency of the acquired languages, even when learning them perfectly, similar to that of a native speaker. With great difficulty an L2 will be practised with the effective mastery (very frequently unconsciously) of an L1. This should not be seen as a problem but as confirmation of the formidable –now understood as something ‘awesome and marvellous’– richness of the language, and in multilingual education, of the languageS, and of the (mental, cognitive) benefits it provides, in addition to the improvement of human communication, of society and of the connectivity and empathy it generates.

The speaker’s *naturalization* (of all of us) in other languages when facing (when we face) the adventure of learning and using those languages is an ideal. In addition, it is something complex. For this challenge, learning the use (coherently, whenever appropriate) of the wealth of phraseology or phraseological units [UF] is very effective. We, like any other speaker, whenever begin to walk the path of a language (or when we haven’t done so for a while and say that “our language is rusty”) can experience anecdotes derived from the wrong use of some of these indicators of “naturalization” par excellence: the phraseological units. This can lead to laughter or even hilarity –better to take it this way—or simply to a lack of understanding. The truth is that UFs, even if they might seem insignificant

sometimes, refer to the universe of references of the cultural *traditio* of any given language; they can offer us interpretation possibilities of great interest when knowing the culture of that language. Through the UFs we will have access to elements that, once known, finetune the clauses of knowledge as speakers of language(s) understood as global “contexts” or cultural attributes and as the global communication tools they are.

### **3. UFS AND TRANSLATION AS A TOOL FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF MULTILINGUAL LEARNING AND LINGUISTIC “MULTINATURALIZATION”**

This can be perceived more clearly in a translation situation (whenever we translate there is an interaction of at least two languages). They are “clichés” that determine some behavioral criteria that must be part of the translation strategy, precisely because they can be elements that help individuate the original itself. They are concepts of great epistemological depth with regard to the Linguistics paradigms. It has to be verified when they should be resolved with transpositions, modulations, equivalences or adaptations. These elements are essential for understanding the construction of a text/discourse (from the linguistic rhetoric, lexicography or syntax, or the always-present semantics points of view), either from the perspective of the analysis of the original discourse or from the translation perspective. There is also an interest from the standpoint of the diverse activation of the procedures of metaforization, as a way of mixing questions that are properly philological and those that are cultural. Even more so when we deal with products from the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, obviously further removed from the translator diachronically and with regard to the linguistic stage or the world vision.

In a great part, the problems and at the same time the advantage that phraseology can offer, the Phraseological Units, in improving the knowledge of the language(s) come from the fact that they are deeply rooted in the cultural context. That is why there are so many untranslatable cases that must be resolved with adaptations of equivalences and because of it they constitute fighting grounds for cognitive linguistics and contrastive analysis.

Learning UFs “naturalizes” us in our L1 and in the L2s we learn. It does so, although in a multilingual situation we should say that it “polinaturalizes” us, for it places us amidst an interesting and exciting arrangement of intercultural and historical transferences. Language (any language and all languages) is much more than grammar, and even if we should not do away with mastering it, language (any language and all languages) brings together cultural history, the past, the present and the future of the linguistic community, and much more than just words, the identity, the identities and transferences that have existed and exist among them.

### **4. UF, TRANSLATION AND IBERIAN CLASSICS IN MULTILINGUAL TRANSLATIONS**

Let us see some examples of the great value of UFs through the mediation or intercultural transference that translation is, which makes of the word a cultural bridge. We will do so taking as an example the multilingual translation of classics of medieval and Renaissance Catalan literature that were paramount in their period in the Crown of Aragon, in addition to being classics for the entire Hispanic context and forerunners or precedents of the Golden Age of Spanish literature.

Because of logical limitations of space and time, we will focus on just one, the great Valencian poet Ausiàs March (Archer, 2006; Martínez, 2009), who played a major influence on key authors such as Garcilaso de la Vega, Santa Teresa, San Juan de la Cruz, or Quevedo.

He is a very influential author whose poems exerted an influence in others who in turn had a great influence also. He is not an easy author, but because of his stature as an Iberian classic he can offer us relevant examples of the importance UFs had back then for the “naturalization” of their respective contribution to our shared cultural tradition.

For this, it is necessary to analyze the texts with more detail and go beyond the lexical units paying attention to the lexico-semantic solidarity established within the UFs. They are key elements for the characterization of an author's style (Dobrovolskij, 1990 [1992]). In this way, we will have the elements to be able to measure in detail the clauses of the morphosyntactic, syntactic and semantic compromise and to perform case analyses of “contexts” or essential attributes for the characterization, the comprehension and the understanding of the literary language of the author that is the object of our study (Honrubia & Rosique, 2011; Pastor, 2000; Ginebra, 2005; Le Fur, 2007; Ruiz, 1998; Sánchez, 2013; Sánchez & Fuster 2012, 2014; Sinclair, 1991).

In addition, an author such as Ausiàs March provides us with “noble” and contrasted models (because he is a classic) to be able to solve the –always present– doubts when learning a language(s) and also when wishing not to unlearn it/them because of disuse (Antolí, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2019; Cortijo & Lagresa, 2013; Cortijo & Martínez, 2012, 2013, 2017; Martínez, 2009; Martínez, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2021; Wittlin, 1991, 1995; Butinyà, 2012).

## 5. SAMPLE OF MULTILINGUAL ANALYSIS OF UP FROM AUSIÀS MARCH'S *DICTATS*

### 5.1. Questions on the Multilingual Method

We shall now proceed to offer some samples of the multilingual analysis of UFs from Ausiàs March's *Dictats* –as the great Valencian poet always referred to his poems, “dictats”–. In particular, we shall have into consideration translations of Ausiàs March into English, Italian, and Spanish:

- The English translations taken into consideration are the following, in chronological order:
  - 1951 [1963<sup>2</sup>]: WOOLSEY, Gamel: English translation –in parallel with the original version– of the first stanza of poem XXVIII (“Lo jorn ha por...”), Gerald Brenan, *The Literature of the Spanish People*, New York, 1951, pp. 112-117 [Harmondsworth, 1963].
  - 1976: TERRY, Arthur, *Ausiàs March. Selected poems*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press (“Edinburgh Bilingual Library”, 12).
  - 1986 [1987<sup>2</sup>]: CONEJERO, M. A., P. RIBES I D. KEOWN, Ausiàs March, *Selecció de poemes. Selected poems*, Valencia, Fundación Shakespeare.
  - 1993: ARCHER, Robert, *Ausiàs March: A key anthology*, Sheffield, The Anglo-Catalan Society (“Occasional Publications”, 8).
  - 1994: ARCHER, Robert: “Ausiàs March, an Unfading Voice”, *Catalan Writing*, 12 (1994), 9-19.
  - 1999: WITTLIN, Curt: «Ausiàs March en inglés, amb una versió rítmica del poema XXVIII: ‘Lo jorn ha por...’», Vicent Martínez (ed.), *Canelobre: Estudis sobre Ausiàs March [Revisada de l'Institut de Cultura Juan Gil-Albert]* (Alacant, Diputació). 39-40 (1999), 223-232.
- Translation into Italian: that done within ISIC-IVITRA by Profs Costanzo di Girolamo and Oriana Scarpati, both from the Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II (in progress).
- Translation into Spanish: that done within ISIC-IVITRA by Profs. Marion Coderch (University of Durham) & José María Micó (UPF), supervised by Prof. Robert Archer (King's College, Londres) in:

- 2018: Archer, Robert (ed), Marion Coderch & José María Micó (Trad.), Ausiàs March, *Dictats*, with the collaboration of Vicent Martínes, Jordi Antolí, Mª Ángeles Fuster & Elena Sánchez, Madrid, Cátedra.

## 5.2. Sample of Multilingual Analysis of Locutions in Ausiàs March's *Dictats*<sup>2</sup>

### 1. *caure de l'esment* loc. verb. To forget.

Poem 46

V. 21

<O> En lo perill no·m *caureu del esment*  
 <TE> in (such) danger, you will never *leave my mind*;  
 <CO> Amidst the peril you'll not *leave my thoughts*,  
 <AR> But in the idst of this danger, I shall *think only of you*,  
 <DGS> Nel pericolo non mi *dimenticherò* di voi,  
 <ARCá> En el peligro no dejaré de *recordaros*

### 2. *córrer a recurs* loc. verb. To rush to find shelter.

Poem 46

V. 13

<O> grans e pochs peixs *a recors correran*  
 <TE> fish great and small will *rush to save themselves*  
 <CO> Fish, great and small, will *rush to have recourse*  
 <AR> and all the fish beneath will *rush for shelter to secret hiding-places*.  
 <DGS> i pesci, grandi e piccolo, *correranno a salvarsi*  
 <ARCá> Peces grandes y chicos *correran a refugiarse*

### 3. *deslligar nuus* loc. verb. To undo/cut ties.

Poem 66

V. 4

<O> a *desligar los nuus* c·Amor sab fer.  
 <TE> *to undo the knots* which Love can tie.  
 <CO> As *to undo the knot* that Love can tie.  
 <DGS> da sciogliere i nodi fatti da Amore  
 <ARCá> para *desatar los nudos* que el amor sabe hacer

### 4. *ser en tenebres* loc. verb. To be in darkness / in obscurity.

Poem 18

V. 36

<O> e tant com viu ab ell és *en tenebres*,  
 <TE> and as long as the soul dwells in it, *it is in darkness*),  
 <CO> It dwells *in darkness* e'er *it lives therein*,  
 <DGS> fin quando questa vive con lui, *vive nelle tenebre*—  
 <ARCá> y està, mientras tiene vida, *entre tinieblas*

<sup>2</sup> <O> = <Originale>; <TE> = <TErry>; <CO> = <COnejero>; <AR> = <ARcher>; <DGS> = <DiGirolamoOScarpati>; <ARCá> = <ArcherCoderchMicó> (Martínes 2006, 2009).

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

UFs can provide us with more keys, references and tools in order to, in a Multilingual Educational context, learn better the languages we are trying to familiarize ourselves with, and especially they can help in improving our degree of expertise in them. We all know Dante's famous verses from the *Divine Comedy*:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Commedia</b> , Dante Alighieri.   | <b>Catalan (Trans. Andreu Febrer, 1/8/1429)</b> , Ed. Raquel Parera Somolinos [PhD Dissertation, UAB, 2018:<br><a href="https://www.tdx.cat/handle/10803/664223#page=3">https://www.tdx.cat/handle/10803/664223#page=3</a> ]               |
| Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita /<br>mi ritrovai per una selva oscura, /<br>ché la diritta via era smarrita. /<br>Ah! quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura /<br>esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte /<br>che nel pensier rinnova la paura! / | En lo mig del camí de nostra vida /<br>Me retrobe per una selva escura, /<br>que la dreta via era fallida. /<br>Hay!, quant a dir qual era es cosa dura /<br>Esta selva salvatge, aspra e fort, /<br>qu'el pensament nova por me procura / |

Phraseology becomes a great aid in the wild, dark, difficult, and harsh forest that, in their thoughts, serves to renew the speakers' fears to speak without mistakes, to not know enough. Languages, education, multilingual environments, allow us to know more, think better and, hopefully, be better.

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