

Techniques for the Translation of Costa Rican Folkloric Literature Addressed to English-speaking Readers

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Resumen: Una gran parte de la literatura de folclor costarricense todavía no se ha traducido al inglés, dejando a los lectores nativos de inglés sin conocer las características culturales y de idiosincrasia costarricense. La traducción de los cuentos populares ticos al inglés es un reto sobrecogedor pues es importante preservar todas las expresiones coloquiales y la representación correcta de las tradiciones, y esto fuerza al traductor a convertirse en un investigador de su propia cultura tan compleja. El proceso traductorio requiere un conocimiento vasto del matiz lingüístico y semántico que caracteriza a los cuentos populares ticos. Los traductores deben haber vivido, atestiguado o por lo menos entendido en su cabalidad las situaciones en las que se basan estos cuentos, ya sea por medio de entrevistas o investigaciones. Además, otra deber es la identificación de las técnicas de traducción específicas que aseguren la equivalencia óptima del espíritu del texto. La incorporación de elementos como si la intención del texto mera es elogiar la riqueza folclórica costarricense o dejar alguna moraleja de cómo son tradicionalmente los costarricenses tradicionalmente es también obligatoria. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de esta propuesta es establecer las técnicas de traducción más apropiadas para la traducción al inglés de cuentos populares costarricenses. Estas técnicas e establecerán basándose en el análisis de las características de tres textos originales de Carmen Lyra, sus traducciones y la revisión de las herramientas de traducción aplicadas.

Palabras Clave: folclor costarricense, literatura costarricense, traducción inversa, traducción literaria, técnicas de traducción

Abstract: A significant part of Costa Rica's folkloric literature has not been translated into English yet. Consequently, numerous cultural and idiosyncratic features that are unique to Costa Ricans remain out of reach for non-Spanish speaking readers. The translation into English of popular tales inspired by the *ticos'* way is one daunting challenge. The importance of the preservation of the colloquial expressions and the proper representation of traditions forces the

translator to become a researcher of his own complex culture. The translation process requires a deep working knowledge of the linguistic and semantic nuances that characterize popular Costa Rican tales. Translators must have lived, witnessed, or at least, thoroughly understand -by means of interviews and research- the situations which these tales are based on. If the intention of the source text is to acclaim the richness of Costa Rica's folklore, or to teach a moral on how Costa Ricans traditionally are, the complete and clear incorporation of such elements in the target text is mandatory. Consequently, the identification of the specific translation techniques that assure the optimal conveyance of the spirit of the text is a must. Therefore, the objective of this proposal is to set the most appropriate translation techniques for the translation into English of popular tales representative of Costa Rica's folklore. These techniques are established based on the analysis of the characteristics of three original texts of the same author, their translations, and the examination of the translation tools applied.

Keywords: Costa Rican folklore, Costa Rican literature, inverse translation, literary translation, translation techniques

1 Introduction

Costa Rican folklore has found representation by means of daring and touching pieces of writing throughout the years. Reputable authors like Joaquín García Monge: *Cocorí*, Carlos Luis Fallas: *Mamita Yunai*, Aquileo Echeverría: *Concherías*, and Carmen Lyra transport readers to an atmosphere of simple everyday life in the countryside or old San José where mothers, priests, rascals and animals steal the show with their witty words and crazy ways. One of the best representatives of Costa Rican idiosyncrasy is María Isabel Carvajal. Best known as Carmen Lyra, she was born in San José, Costa Rica on January 15th, 1887.

Being the most important female writer from Costa Rica, María Isabel worked as a teacher, nurse, journalist, translator, and she was among the first writers to speak out against foreign fruit companies arriving to Costa Rica. She died in 1949 in Mexico where she was forced to exile due to her communist ideology and bold actions. Her literary legacy includes *En una silla de ruedas* (1918), *Bananos y hombres* (1934) and the famous *Cuentos de mi tía Panchita* (1920).

Cuentos de mi tía Panchita is a collection of twenty three folk tales considered classics of Costa Rica's children literature. Through the characters' actions, the author represents traditions, ideologies and the peculiarities of Costa Rica and its people. Along these tales Carmen Lyra makes constant use of Costa Rican colloquial expressions that reflect how "campesinos" talk. Precisely, that *campesinos'* talk is somehow confusing even for Costa Ricans. Spanish-speaking readers may face difficulty understanding idioms and popular expressions, and the pronunciation or abbreviation of many words. Therefore, the translation of such aspects requires special attention when it comes to choosing the right translation techniques to meet the cultural needs of the target readers, English-speakers.

Students of the English Teaching major from UNA, Brunca Region Branch translated into English three different short stories written by Costa Rican folklore author

Carmen Lyra. The tales chosen are: *Domingo Siete*, *Por qué tío Conejo tiene las orejas tan largas*, and *Tío Conejo y Tío Coyote*. Once the translation process was finished, Professors M.A. Gretel Torres and M.A. Noelia Jiménez proofread and edited the translations. The purpose of doing so is to identify what translation tools the students used, what techniques are the most suitable when working on folkloric pieces of writing in Spanish translated into English, and how effective they are in the target text.

Therefore, the research questions this paper aims to answer are:

1. What translation tools may be used by students when translating Costa Rican folklore literature from Spanish to English?
2. What translation tools are actually used by students when translating Costa Rican folklore literature from Spanish to English?
3. How effective are the translation tools used in the target texts?

The identification of such techniques or tools and their effectiveness intent to be helpful to all translators facing the challenge of inverse translation of literary works that represent a country's idiosyncrasy through vocabulary, traditions and style. Clearly, recommending these tools for this type of contexts is open to debate, and further study will improve the results. This paper is divided in two main sections. First, some basic principles of inverse and literary translation will be discussed. Then, some examples from the translation will be analyzed to show which translation techniques are helpful in literary translation.

2 Literary Review

Even though some people refuse to translate into their second language, and others propose that it will not be accurate, worldwide inverse translation is needed every day in numerous daily situations. And Costa Rica having so many foreigners living and visiting the country, translators could take advantage of that and start translating the local literature to show them the country's culture. The translation process is pretty much the same in both directions whether from English to Spanish or from Spanish to English; it involves three stages: comprehension, desverbalization and reformulation. The difference will be the time and effort needed to get the job done (Beeby, 1948, p 47). It will also depend, using the concepts of PACTE group, on the bilingual and extra linguistic competence (p.3) the translator has; as it is known a translator cannot translate what he does not understand. Also, when translating literature translators need to understand and know both cultures to be able to express the same in a way that people from another culture/country will understand.

2.1 Inverse translation

When translating, in general, the basic idea is to transmit the intended message in another language in a clear and sufficiently correct way, in words of McAlister in his article in the Routledge Encyclopedia (p. 66). And as said before, to translate into a second language it is important to have a good bilingual and extralinguistic competence. The

bilingual sub-competence is the pragmatic, socio-linguistic, textual and lexical-grammatical knowledge in each language; and the extra-linguistic sub-competence is the encyclopaedic, thematic and bicultural knowledge (PACTE, 2003, p.3). Just to clarify, these are only two of the six sub-competences a translator needs to develop, according to what PACTE group has researched throughout the years. However, these two are important in inverse translation because they are used when understanding the original text (TO) and when reformulating the target text (TT). The easy part here is to understand the TO because it is in the translator's L1; and it is assumed the translator has good competence in it. Even though, it is necessary to stress that sometimes translators will be required to investigate a little about their own culture to assure an appropriate equivalence in the TT. The daunting part is using his extra linguistic competence to reformulate the TO into his L2. However, translators believe this task can be achieved.

In the first stage of comprehension in the translating process, the translator needs to be aware of the situational, verbal, and socio historical context the literary text is immersed in (Beeby, p. 52). As in translating any other text, it is always important to know who is the author of the TO, when and where was it written and who could have been the possible audience. This needs to be considered because the translator must portray the same characteristics of the writing style of the author in the TT. In the verbal context, the translator analyzes the way the text is written and will have to produce the same effect the words have in the original, into the translation. Regarding the socio-historical context, this is where all the cultural differences are found. Right here is where translation techniques are of use to accomplish the main goal: transferring the intended meaning in a clear and sufficiently correct way.

The second stage of desverbalization, which is where the translator forms the semantic representation of the TO, happens in his brain. This is the part where a lot of people have spent years trying to put in words what goes on in the translator's mind. Further, in the final stage of reformulation, the translator will write the TT taking into account everything that he already analyzed about the contexts the TO is involved in. He will find ways to reproduce the communicative situation, the purpose of the text, and the social and cultural differences.

2.2 Literary Translation

One of the aspects mentioned before is that even though the comprehension of the TO in our L1 is supposed to be the easy part, one must consider that literature is immersed in the ideology, poetics and universe of discourse of a language. Some of the things that may differ are grammar rules and conventions, and words or expressions that are characterized by time use or that are inextricably bound up with culture (Lefevere, 1992, p. 16).

Lefevere proposes some basic principles translators need to have in mind and apply when translating literary texts. The first characteristic in literary texts is the illocutionary power hidden in words or phrases, that is to say, the effect the author looks for words to have. Translators need to be aware of this to not render literal equivalences in the TT and lose the effect. In the same way, translators should not translate words or sentences alone;

they must translate “chunks” of text (p. 17) to always have in mind the context. Here, the relation between these principles and the context analysis Beeby proposes. When dealing with differences of cultural contexts, translators need to analyze the relation between the TO and the audience of the TT and decide if they want to bring the first to meet the second (foreignization) or the second to the first (domestication). By foreignizing the text, the translator leaves all the foreign aspects of the L1 culture in the TT to show those cultural aspects to culture in L2. By domesticating the text, all those foreign characteristics of the TO are omitted in the TT and explained or referred in a different manner using L2 referents, and in this way the culture of L1 is not portrayed. Thus, this paper proposes leaving all those foreign aspects in the TT to show the Ticos’ idiosyncrasy to the L2 culture. Since all of them are intrinsically bound up to Costa Rican culture, amplification and equivalence techniques are strongly proposed to be used in the translation of Costa Rican folk tales into English.

2.3 Translation Techniques

Translation techniques are needed when the experience, phrase, word, or situation described is accepted in the OT culture, but there is not exact equivalence, translation or is just not accepted in the same way in the TT culture. These differences, as said before, are related to ideology, poetics, universe of discourse and language (Lefevere, p.87). The genre used for this paper, short stories, gives some space to apply these tools since translators are not limited by rhyme and rhythm as it would happen in a poem. Translators can use footnotes, glossaries, and explanations in the body of the text or even images to produce the TT.

The first technique that needs to be used, if explained in preferred order of use, is **equivalence**. Equivalence transfers the same situation through different stylistics and structural resources; it goes beyond words and emphasizes in the meaning required in the situation. For example: if we analyze some phrases in different languages for the same situation: greetings: *hola* (Sp), *hello* (En), *bounjour* (Fr), *bongiorno* (It). Other example can be the expression people say to other when they sneeze: ¡*Salud!* (Sp), *God bless you!* (En), *À tes souhaits!* (Fr), *Salute!* (It). And just for the sake of another example if *God bless you* is the religious phrase people use to wish wellness to other, in Spanish someone would say *Dios le bendiga*, in French *Que Dieu vous bénisse*, and in Italian *Dio te benetica*.

However, when a translator can’t find the right equivalence, the second technique to use is **amplification** or expansion, which is applied when the TT needs to use more words than the TO to re-express the idea or reinforce the sense because its correspondence cannot be expressed as concisely (Deslile). Amplification is also used to cover syntactic or lexical gaps (Albir, Molina, 2002, p. 4). For example from Spanish to English *vivificante* will be better expressed as *live-giving*. In here footnotes, translators’ notes or explanations in the body of the text are of use.

The third technique is **adaptation**, in simple words is to “express the message using a different situation” (Albir, Molina, 2002, p. 4). This procedure is more related to the

content than to the expression; for example, one well known case analyzed by Nida is the Bible phrase *blanco como la nieve*; if someone is translating to a culture that has no idea of what snow is, translators will need to find something that will relate to the color *white* and the use that as the reference to the expression *as white as...*. Adapting helps translators avoiding a cultural *calque* which can lead to confusion and loss of some extra linguistic elements. Another example proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet is an English father who kisses his daughter on the mouth after a long trip, *he kissed his daughter on the mouth*, if the target culture will think this is not appropriate, a suggested translation can be *abrazó tiernamente a su hija* (Vazquez, 1979, p325). In this way we can avoid conflicts between different cultures.

A fourth technique is to compensate (**compensation**) for those features that are implicit in the TO and need to be explicit in the TT for better understanding. The two basis of compensation are, first the difficulty to find the right, accurate and natural equivalence, and the loss of content or stylistic effects (Vasquez, p. 374). For example, *the praise he gets in the remembrances of sentimentalist* can be translated as *los elogios nostálgicos que le dedican los sentimentalistas* (374). The verb *get* in English is a very common one with a lot of connotations, so in Spanish is better translated, according to the situation and style of the TO, as *dedican*. And then *remembrances* as *nostálgicos*, is by the effect implicit in the sentence in the TO that needs to be explicit in the TT. By compensating all those elements, the TT will be as faithful to the original as possible and will express the best it can the culture of the TO.

The final technique to use is **omission**. Omission is applied when translators need to be economic or as natural as possible in the TT. The concept of natural is not an easy one, but it can be explained as when in the TT there are no foreign elements to the culture and to the language; as people commonly say “this translation does or does not sound natural in X language.” In this way, we need to know what the “preferences” of each language are. For example, English uses more verbs than Spanish, and Spanish uses more nouns than verbs; this can be explained in how English uses gerunds and infinitives to create nouns and present and past participles to create adjectives.

3. Body

3.1 Description of the participants

The students that translated the three short tales written by Camen Lyra were the students (ten in total) from the course Translation Workshop: Translation for Specific Purposes, taken along the second semester of 2012. They were students in third and fourth level of the English Teaching Major at UNA, Brunca Region Branch. They had already taken the course Translation Workshop: Introduction to Translation where the basic principles of translation are studied and applied. Their ages ranged from twenty one to twenty five years old, and they were eight women and two men. They translated the tales, and gave an analysis of examples of the translation techniques they used where they had to explain the reasons why they chose those specific techniques.

3.2 Description of the process

Students translated the tales in two groups of three and one group of four participants. The assignment was the second quiz of the course Translation Workshop: Translation for Specific Purposes, based merely on the translation of literature field. They were given five days to develop the translation process and the analysis. Students were allowed to use printed and online dictionaries, glossaries, forums and any other internet-based source of information, as well as interviews with translators, English professors and other potential informants. The final papers were e-mailed to the professor to be proofread. Students were given a grade on their translations and analysis by the professor of the course. Next, Professors Noelia Jiménez and Grettel Torres proceeded to examine the translations given, the techniques used, and their effect on the target text. The students involved were fully aware of the fact that their work would be analyzed and presented by the authors of this paper as part of a proposal in CONLA-UNA 2013.

3.3 Translation techniques that may be used in the translation of folklore short tales from Spanish to English

Based on their formal studies in translation, their own experience working on the translation of folklore pieces of writing and a literature review, the authors of this paper can say that these techniques offer the translator the opportunity to bring the source text and the target reader closer. Therefore, regarding the first research question: *What translation tools may be used by students when translating Costa Rican folklore literature from Spanish to English?*, the authors of this paper consider that the translation techniques that seem to be most suitable for the translation of folklore literature in Spanish into English are equivalence, amplification, adaptation, compensation, and omission. As mentioned in the literature review section, *equivalence* is a translation technique that transfers the message of the source text by means of different stylistics and structural resources. *Amplification* makes use of extra information to cover existing syntactic, lexical and cultural gaps between languages. *Adaptation*, which has to do more with content than with mere expressions, allows translator to use different situations to transmit the spirit of the author's ideas. On the other hand, *compensation* helps translator to make up for those features that are implicit in the TO but required to be explicit in the TT. And last but not least, *omission* authorizes the translator focus his attention on the aspects that actually need to be covered in the translation, leave out issues that result redundant or unnatural to the target text readers.

3.4 Translation techniques used by the students in the translation of folklore short tales from Spanish to English

About the second and third research question: *What translation tools are actually used by students when translating Costa Rican folklore literature from Spanish to English?*, and *How effective are the translation tools used in the target texts?*, the authors of this proposal state that based on the translation and analysis made by the students, amplification and equivalence turned out to be the most frequently used techniques, and that their contribution to the understanding of the target texts by the readers seems to be

highly effective. Examples of the translations and analysis made by the students, and the observations made by the authors of the paper follow:

3.4.1 Examples of amplification and equivalence

3.4.1.1 Technique: Amplification

3.4.1.1.1 Tale: *Domingo Siete*

Example #1:

Source text: Les contó su aventura y mandó a su esposa que fuera adonde el compadre rico y le pidiese un cuartillo para medir el oro que traía. Ella fue y dijo a la mujer del compadre rico, que estaba sola en casa:

--Comadrita, ¿quiere prestarme el cuartillo? Es que vamos a medir unos frijoles que cogió mi marido.

Suggested translation: He told them about his adventure and sent his wife to the rich *compadre* to ask him for a *cuartillo* (a measure unit to weigh grains, beans and others used long time ago in Costa Rica) to measure the gold he had brought. She went out and told the rich *compadre's* wife, who was alone:

---Comadrita, can I borrow your *cuartillo*? I need to weigh some beans that my husband harvested.

Analysis and observation: The translators used amplification to provide some background information about the object as a unit of measure used in old times so that the word “*cuartillo*” could be kept in Spanish in the target text. In this way, readers know the name of the object in proper Spanish and its definition in English. The purpose of doing so is to offer the English-speaking reader a bit of Costa Rican culture through the word *cuartillo* and a short definition to give an idea about the concept that might work as a basis for further research if desired by the target readers.

Example #2

Source text: Comadrita

Suggested translation: *Comadrita*¹

¹The godmother of child who is also a very close friend of the family or the mother of the baby.

Analysis and observation: The translators used amplification by means of a foot note because they wanted to keep the essence of the word by conserving it and involving the reader in the cultural context he/she is reading. They decided to use a footnote to avoid repeating the use of amplification in the body of the text as it happened for the word

cuartillo. In the foot note the translators gave a simple but concise explanation of the term that clarifies the concept and functions as well as a starting point for further research.

3.4.1.1.2 Tale: Tío Coyote y tío Conejo

Example #1

Source text: Tío Conejo respondió: --Aturúsele tío Coyote, ya entre poco acabamos.

Suggested translation: Uncle Rabbit talked back: Stuff your face (*Aturúsele*) Uncle Coyote, we are almost done!

Analysis and observation: Translator decided to apply amplification by using an idiomatic expression in English next to the word *Aturúsele* in Spanish. This gives readers a view of how *Ticos* speak compared to the way they speak. Even though there exist an equivalent in English that may replace the term in Spanish, translator decided to offer the chance for target readers to have both elements for a better understanding of the spirit of the text.

Example #2

Source text: Pero la viejita comenzó a encontrar los quelites de las matas de chayote zapallo comidos...

Suggested translation: One day the old lady found the *quelites* of the chayote squashes and zucchinis eaten up.



Figure 1. *Quelites* (shoots or stems)

Image taken for academic purposes only from:

http://www.google.co.cr/search?um=1&hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1280&bih=666&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=quelites&oq=quelites&gs_l=img.3..0j0i24i9.2466.4060.0.4727.8.8.0.0.0.0.224.1001.3j4j1.8.0...0.0...1c.1.Wlq1Hk1zLEU

Analysis and observation: Translators decided to offer the target reader three different elements. First, the word *quelites*, second, a picture to exemplify the term in Spanish, and third, the words for it in English. Based on this, the English-speaking readers can have a clear idea of the term *quelites*, which not only is a typical dish, but also part of

the *Tico*'s vocabulary. Once again, culture through colloquial words is emphasized in the translation.

3.4.1.1.3 Tale: *Porqué tío Conejo tiene las orejas tan largas.*

Example #1

Source text: ¡Tatica Dios!

Suggested translation: *Tatica Dios!* (Costa Rican colloquial expression to call on God – “Papa God” when in distress. Costa Ricans commonly use of the suffix –tico/-tica to soften up expressions and make them sound more traditional)

Analysis and observation: Translators kept the very common expression *Tatica Dios* and supported it by explaining its use and meaning. Being *Tatica Dios* such a common and unique expression to Costa Rica, it resulted mandatory to keep it and explain it. In this way, English-speaking readers have the colloquial expression in Spanish and its explanation in English for complete understanding.

Example #2

Source text: ¡Viera que almuercillo más ñeque le tengo!

Suggested translation: Wait to see what a *ñeque* (yummy) lunch I have for you!

Analysis and observation: Translators offered the word yummy to show what *ñeque* means in English. Yummy and *ñeque* are both informal words that are used by people to talk about delicious food. For Costa Ricans *ñeque* is both informal and colloquial, and since the purpose of the translation is to show English-speaking readers how *Ticos* speak and live, keeping it is a way for them to learn about those aspects by having the reference of the meaning of that word in their own language.

3.4.1.2 Technique: Equivalence

3.4.1.2.1 Tale: *Domingo Siete*

Example #1

Source text: ¡Con una envidia!

Suggested translation: Green with envy!

Analysis and observation: The translators applied equivalence in this case since one idiom was used by the author of the tale. The source text uses the expression “Con una envidia” which has the commonly used equivalent in English “Green with envy”. Through this idiom in English, the target text readers understand what the characters want to express, since it has exactly the same meaning and intention than in Spanish.

Example #2

Source Text: ¡Ave Maria!

Suggested Translation: Hail Mary!

Analysis and observation: The translators applied equivalence in this case since both languages, Spanish and English, use the expression and give it exactly the same meaning. Both expressions are part of a famous catholic prayer meant for Virgin Mary, and used by people when is distress or surprise. Most readers can understand the expression regardless their religious believes.

3.4.1.2.2 Tale: *Porqué tío Conejo tiene las orejas tan largas*

Example #1

Source text: ¡Ai verá!

Suggested translation: I'll show ya!

Analysis and observation: Translators decided to use an informal expression in English to replace the informal expression *¡Ai verá!*. It can be noticed that when being informal or colloquial speakers tend to change the pronunciation of words or to shorten them up. This happens in the source text with *¡Ai verá!*, the word in Spanish *Ahí* turns into *Ai*; consequently, translators looked for an expression in English that is both, contracted and reduced. In this way the meaning and style of the source text are conveyed in the target text.

Example #2

Source text: Hasta luegoito...

Suggested translation: Tootles...

Analysis and observation: For the translation of the expression *Hasta luegoito*, translators decided to use the informal word in English Tootles. This word is a way to say goodbye in an informal, mischievous or playful manner, just in the way the character meant the *Hasta luegoito* to sound like in the original text. The use of an equivalent allows the readers to feel the tone of the story being told by the author through the characters' talk.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

As seen along this paper, translators working on pieces of Costa Rican folk literature in Spanish to be translated into English need to take several aspects into account before, during and after the translation process. First, social, cultural and cognitive contexts altogether need to be analyzed in order to choose the best tools to translate and convey the message intended by the author of the original text. Second, previous the translation process, translators are required to fully understand the source texts. All words, expressions, actions and nuances of the text are to be clarified. A great deal of research is mandatory so that the results of the translation benefit not only the target readers, but also the author of the original text since his art is being spread.

Third, identifying and applying the right translation techniques is a process that starts even before initializing the translation. It is developed during the translation and is verified after the translation. The translator is allowed to correct and improve his job while going over the so-called “final version” of the translation. Asking colleagues for advice is accepted and strongly recommended when a translation becomes a challenge due to certain elements. Fourth, comparing the translation to parallel texts (translations of similar genres) is of great use to assure a natural presentation of the message to the target readers.

Target readers and their needs become the focus of the translator when the purpose of the translation is to convey a message expressed by the author and her desire to celebrate and spread Costa Rica’s idiosyncrasy. The translation of the folk tales demands paying attention to both, the ideas of the author and the needs of the target text readers.

Fifth, based on the translations and analysis made by the students and the observations and working experience of the authors of this proposal, it can be suggested that amplification and equivalence are the most suitable tools to be used when translating Costa Rican folk tales to English. These tools give the translator the possibility to diminish the gap between the source text and the target text readers by giving them useful extra information or natural and common expressions in their own language to fully understand the texts and their spirit. Sixth, the use of these techniques is strongly recommended; however, applying them on this specific genre is open to debate and changes or improvements will always be embraced.

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Noelia Jimenez' Biography

Professor Noelia Jiménez Valverde holds a Master's degree in English-Spanish translation and interpretation from UNA. She has worked as a freelance translator since 2009. Also, she has worked in the areas of translation and applied linguistics as a professor at UNA, Brunca Region Branch for five years. She has also participated in projects like CI-UNA and Costa Rica Multilingüe.

Gretel Torres' Biography

Gretel Torres is graduated from the UCR with a bachelor's degree of English as a second language and also a master's degree of translation and interpretation English – Spanish from UNA. She has worked as a freelance translator since 2009. Also, she has worked as professor in the UCR- Sede Guanacaste since 2010 and participated in a couple of congresses here in CR and in Spain.

Appendices

Translation: Why Uncle Rabbit Has Those Long Ears

Imagine! One day Rabbit got a craving for becoming taller and he talked to a black vulture for he wanted this bird to take him to the clouds where *Tatica Dios* is. (Costa Rican colloquial expression to call on God – “Papa God” when in distress. Costa Ricans commonly use of the suffix *-tico/-tica* to soften up expressions and make them sound more traditional).

Rabbit arrived at the presence of The Lord, who had good mood that day. Rabbit told The Lord that he wanted to be taller, that it was a handicap to be so small because everybody wanted to eat him, here and there.

The Lord said: “You will, but first you must bring three skins to me; the lion’s the tiger’s and the alligator’s and with the requirement of killing all of them on your own”

Rabbit did not wait for more details; he got on the black vulture without saying goodbye to the Lord and came back to the Earth. The first he did was to keep an eye on Tiger and one day that this one was taking a nap, Rabbit appeared yelling crazily: “Most Holy Trinity, Hail Mary, Full Grace, The Three Very Sweet Names!

Due to the fuss, Lion woke up and very scared he screamed: “What is wrong with you buddy? “Oh, Tiger, do not even ask! Imagine that a hurricane is just coming! For God’s sake, tie me up with these little vines because I do not want to be taken away”. And Rabbit ran from here to there, from there to here. Lion was extremely frightened.

“Do not tell me that Rabbit! Now, what am I going to do? Is not there something to tie myself as well?”

Rabbit had some very hard-wearing vines ready covered by some leaves and pretending that he did not expect that request, he said: “ Well, there are here some little vines if you want, the problem is that I may not be able to tie you because my hands are trembling”.

Tiger exclaimed: “try Rabbit, pleased try!

And Rabbit, who was very good at making knots, left poor Tiger well- tide to a tree. Then, Rabbit started stoning him. When Rabbit saw that Tiger was more dead than alive, he approached Tiger with a stick and hit him until he was dead. Then, Rabbit untied Tiger and took his skin off with a knife and left the skin under the sun to ventilate it. After that, Rabbit started thinking how he would obtain the Lion’s skin.

Rabbit knew about a mountain lion who was messing around in a ranch cattle.

He went to see the owner and told him, “hey man, can we make a deal?”

“Let’s see, what’s the matter?” he replied.

Listen! Do you want to get rid of the Lion?

The man laughed and said, “Yes, but, how are you going to do it if you are too short?”

“I’ll show ya! Promise me that after he is dead you will help me in everything I ask, and I promise that in ten days this nuisance will disappear.”

Rabbit took him to a place where there was a deep, sandy hole with funnel shape and smooth walls. If someone fell there, there was no way to get out without help. Rabbit demanded the owner to cut branches and cover the hole with them in order to give a ground covered with leaves appearance. Then, he suggested the owner to tie a fat calf on the very sore of the hole and he ran in search for the lion.

When he finally found the lion, he yelled at him, “Hey Brother Lion, I was looking for you. Wait to see what a *ñeque* (yummy) lunch I have for you! Follow me and you will see.”

Brother Lion did follow him, Rabbit drove him to the place and addressed him in a way that he had to pass over the hole. Of course, Lion stepped on the branches and rolled down into the

hole. Eight days later, he died of hunger. Rabbit ran in search of the owner in order to help him to take the lion out. Once they did it, he tore off his skin with a knife and extended it next to the tiger's skin and left it there airing.

He was missing the lizard's skin.

Rabbit knew Lizard was really partying. Thus, a moonlit night, Rabbit took his guitar and went to the riverside to sing and be at the top of his voice.

Brother Lizard emerged and asked him:

"Man, why are you so happy?"

Rabbit answered, "How could not I be happy if I am going to a party in which there are four beautiful girls!

(Rabbit took his hand to his mouth and kissed his fingertips).

"Are you pulling my leg? Where is it?"

"Mmm somewhere..." and Rabbit pretended to continue.

Brother Lizard said: "why do not you take me with you bro?"

"I do not like nuisances like you", answered Rabbit.

"Well, what can I do? Let's go, but you must be careful with the account! And be careful of not putting one's foot in it!". Brother Lizard made a thousand of vows, and they continued in their way, but Rabbit pretended to be lame so Brother Lizard proposed him to ride over his back. Thus, Rabbit did it. When they were walking in a short distance, Rabbit hit him harshly with a little stick that he had hidden it, but he did not have a good shot because Brother Lizard was dazed, so Rabbit hit him again so that Brother Lizard spent several days without seeing the sun's light.

Rabbit treated himself badly.

"Oh foolish, it's a shame, I will not have an opportunity like this

However, he did not give up since he went to look for a parrot that lived near the river, where Brother Lizard lived.

Rabbit made a deal with the parrot. He said that if she could ask him several questions in the afternoon. When Rabbit walked over there again, the parrot yelled, "Hey! Rabbit! Where are you going?"

"I'm going to the marriage of the king's daughter."

"Imagine what a great party! Let's go.

Brother Lizard heard them, and when he saw Rabbit, he became mad.

"Mmm, you are here, you bandit, now I will tell you".

Rabbit got far from Lizard and asked the parrot, "Who is that elegant youngster? I do not know him, this is the first time I see him and I do not understand why he is so angry at me?"

"Do not tell lies! Do you think that the hit that you gave me the other day was soft?"

"No, you are the liar!", said Rabbit, "This Lizard thinks that I am my brother who is very shameless with experience". Thank God he is in jail because of one of his many mischieves. You do not know the embarrassments that I have suffered because of him! All of this, due to our almost identical appearance.

Brother Lizard trusted him: "Ha! So, it was not you! Go! Excuse me. But, where are you going?"

"Well, the king's daughter is going to tie the knot and I am going to be the best man. The party will rock, it'll be a blowout! Well, Gotta go. Toodles!"

Brother Lizard wanted to go. He was at the drop of a hat.

"Man, why don't you take me?"

"That's a pleasure! Come"

And they left.

After walking a lot, Rabbit pretended he tripped over and falls moaning: “ouch, ouch, ouch!” I guess my foot is crippled. Now I am a real hunk. You should better return home Brother Lizard, let me here. I can't take a step.”

“How come? Oh God! Get on my back and let's go to the wedding. There'll be plenty of people glad to massage you. What should the king say if you are not there?”

“I would not dare. That's unfair. You did me the favor of being my companion; I can't take advantage of your kindness.”

“Oh God! What's the matter? Get on and bite your tongue.”

“Just as I wanted” taught Rabbit. And finally, he got on Brother Lizard.

Rabbit was trying to distract Brother Lizard, so he was making noises and then started to talk, “Man, your silly brother instead of hitting my nose, knocked my nape.”

He did not finish telling this, when Rabbit gave to Brother Lizard a clubbed in his nose that left him stiff right there.

After that, Rabbit took his knife and started cutting the skin until it got dry. Once it was ready, Rabbit called the buzzard and asked if he could carry him and the different skins that he had with The Lord. When both Rabbit and the buzzard came to his Divine Majesty, Rabbit threw the skins at the Lord's feet without having any delay and said: “here it is!”

Unfortunately, that day The Lord was not in a good mood and asked rudely: “Well, so what?” Rabbit exclaimed: “well you told me that if I wanted to be largest I had to bring you a tiger, a lion and a lizard's skin, which must be killed by myself and here they are!”

The Lord said: “Oh wretch!” I supposed that you will get with your own way! I do not want to imagine all the things you made on the Earth!”

After saying this, The Lord took rabbit ears and started pulling them, it produced rabbit ears get larger (it is important to know that rabbit ears were short before being pulled by The Lord) and said: “Get out of here!”

Rabbit ran away quickly while rubbing his ears seeing this, The Lord forgot about his bad mood and started laughing.

Translation: Sunday Seventh

Once upon a time there were two güechos *compadres*, one rich and one poor. The rich one was very stingy, like those who don't even give salt to cook an egg. The poor one used to go every Friday to the mountain to cut some firewood that he used to sell in the city when it was dry. One of those Fridays he got lost in the woods and the sunset came before he could find the exit road. Tired of going from here to there, he decided to climb a tree to stay the night. He tied to a tree the donkey that helped him with his job and climbed up almost to the top. After some time of being there, he suddenly saw a light from the distance. As he got close, he realized it was a big illuminated house located in a clearing in the woods.

It seemed like there was a great party. There was music, singing and laughing. The man tied his animal and got closer little by little. The binge was on the inside because the rooms that were at the entrance were empty. He got into the house on tiptoes until he find what it was. He hid himself behind a door and stared across a crack. The living room was full of ugly, messed-hair witches who were dancing and jumping like the monkeys. They were all singing this only song:

Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday
third

Hours passed and the witches didn't get tired of their dancing and their continues swing

Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday

third

The *compadre* bored of hearing the same thing, he added singing with his güecho voice

Thursday and Friday and Saturday

sixth

The witches stopped shouting and jumping...

---Who has sung?--- some of them asked.

--- Who has fixed our song so well?—some others said.

--- What a beautiful thing! The one who has sung like that deserves a prize!

All of the witches started to look around and they finally could get to the poor *compadre*, who was trembling behind the door. Hail Mary! They didn't know where to put him: some of them lifted him, others put him down and kisses and hugs were here and there.

One of them yelled:--- Let's cut his güecho.

And every one replied: Yeah, yeah!

And the poor man said: --- Over my dead body!

But before he finished, the inventor was cutting his güecho with a knife by no provoking any pain or bleeding for him. Then, the witches filled bags with gold from one quarter of their treasures as a way to pay the *compadre* for finishing their song.

He brought his donkey to load the sacks and he left where the witches told him. From the distance he heard them shouting:

Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday

third

Thursday and Friday and Saturday

sixth

He had no problem to arrive to his house, where his wife and children waited anxiously because they were afraid for their father's save. He told them about his adventure and sent his wife to the rich *compadre* to ask him for a *cuartillo* (a measure unit to weigh grains, beans and others used long time ago in Costa Rica) to measure the gold he had brought. She went out and told the rich *compadre's* wife, who was alone:

---*Comadrita*¹⁹, can I borrow your *cuartillo*? I need to weigh some beans that my husband harvested.

But the rich man's woman started thinking.

“Shut up!”, hasn't your husband plant anything? Who better than us? We know better than anyone that you do not have more land than the one where the four stakes of the hut are stuck? She smeared the bottom of the *cuartillo* with glue to find out what their *compadres* were going to measure.

They measured so many *cuartillos* of gold that they even lost how many had counted. When they returned the *cuartillo*, they did not notice that in the bottom of it, some coins were glued there. The rich *comadre*, who was very greedy and liked to take the bread out of people's mouth, to see that, cross herself and went looking for her husband.

“Look!” You say your *compadre* is penniless, that he has to walk with one hand behind him and the other in front of him to cover himself up, that he does not have where to die. Well, you

¹⁹ ¹The godmother of child who is also a very close friend of the family or the mother of the baby.

are wrong. –And the woman showed the cuartillo, told what had happened and bothered his husband until he went looking for his compadre.

“Aha! compadrito” he said, “How rascal you are! So, do we have to measure the gold in cuartillo?”

The other, who was an honest man, told his adventure simply. The rich man went back to his home, green with envy! The woman advised him go to the mountain and lumber wood.

Who knows- she said- that it happens to you too. On Friday morning he started the journey with five mules. The whole day he did nothing but to swipe with the axe the trees. At nightfall, he entered to the deeper part of the mountain and got lost. He climbed a tree and saw the light, so he follows it. He arrived to the house where the witches celebrated their party every night. He did the same thing that his poor compare did; he hid himself behind the door. The wishes were in the best moment of their singing:

Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday

Third

Thursday and Friday and Saturday

Sixth

Then, a little trembling voice coming from the güecho sang: Sunday seveth...

Hail Mary! Why he meant it!

The witches grew furious; they pulled their hairs and yell of anger.

Who is the daring person that has spoiled our song?

Who is who has said that “Sunday seveth”?

They searched showing up their teeth like god growling. The witches found the scary man and they take him out with stumbles and tugs.

You will see what will happen to you, güecho of trap – Said one witch that run away toward the interior of the house. Then, she came back with a big ball in her hands that was nothing less that the güecho of his poor compadre. Pawn! She planted the güecho in the poor wretch’s nape and it stack there as if there it had born. The witches took back the packages of firewood and untied the mules of the man and then they let them deep in the scrub. At daybreak, my rich compadre arrived at his home with two güechos, with aching body and without his five mules. Of course, his miss got so mad that bile run through her body and got so sick that had to rest in bed.

Translation: Uncle Rabbit and Uncle Coyote

An old little lady had a wonderful orchard in which there was everything you could imagine: little radishes, cilantro, tomatoes, little zucchinis, tender squashes and lettuces. One day the old lady found the *quelites* (see Figure 1.) of the squashes and zucchinis eaten up. Then, she saw a total damage in the plants; thus, she made a big wax puppet and planted it in the doorway.



Figure 1. *Quelites* (shoots or stems)

Image taken for academic purposes only from:

http://www.google.co.cr/search?um=1&hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1280&bih=666&tbm=isch&sa=1&q=quelites&oq=quelites&gs_l=img.3..0j0i2419.2466.4060.0.4727.8.8.0.0.0.224.1001.3j4j1.8.0...0.0...1c.1.Wlq1Hk1zLEU

Well, sir, the fact is that Uncle Rabbit was who was eating the plants; he got into the orchard at the night and ate everything up.

When he arrived and found the scarecrow, he hid behind some bushes to look at it carefully. Uncle Rabbit convinced himself that the scarecrow did not moving and that it was a lie; thus, he showed his bravery and said: - Oh man! Let's see what the thing is? Let's go and see if you can tackle me.

Thus, Uncle Rabbit gave a punch to the scarecrow but he got stuck because the scarecrow was made of wax. He became really angry and gave another punch to the scarecrow, but he got stuck again. Uncle Rabbit was trying unstuck his hands from the scarecrow, but his legs, head and ears also got stuck.

The next morning the old lady went to the orchard and she found Uncle Rabbit stuck on the scarecrow.

-Aha! I already found the problem. Naughty! You were the one who was destroying my orchard! -Hold on there, you will see what will happen to you. I'm going to peel you.

Thus, the old lady took Uncle Rabbit and put him into a sack. Then, she let him near the kitchen while she was going to bring some water.

Uncle Rabbit thought -Ah what a nuisance, what happened to me! So, he began to shout desperately, -Get me out of here! Get me out of here!

At that moment Uncle Coyote was passing near the old lady's house and heard that someone was shouting. He got into the kitchen and saw the sack on the floor. Uncle Coyote asked, - Who is here? And Uncle Rabbit answered, -I, uncle Rabbit! Someone put me into this sack to marry me with the king's daughter, and I don't want. I don't want to get married.

Uncle Coyote said:

-That's great! Marry you with the King's daughter! So, who doesn't? What else do you want?

Uncle Rabbit said:

-So, not even this way. She is the King's daughter, but I would not like to marry her. Not even if they gave me gold with her, I would say no. -What a trouble! What a trouble! Life is well managed by oneself! I wanted to die single.

Uncle Coyote said:

-If I were you I would be dancing of happiness. I would not think twice like you.

Therefore, Uncle Rabbit suggested: Why don't you help me to get out of here? You could take my place and get married to the King's daughter. In the wedding, the groom will be inside the sack. So, the princess could not see you because the King wants I marry his daughter. After the wedding, the king will have to accept you are his daughter's husband.

Uncle Coyote approved the idea without thinking about all times Uncle Rabbit had cheated him. Uncle Coyote untied the sack for letting Uncle Rabbit get out. Then he got into the sack. Once Uncle Rabbit had tied the sack again, he thought -here is the way! And then he ran as fast as he could.

He hid among the shrubbery to see what will happen with Uncle Coyote.

The old lady came back to the kitchen with a jar full of water. Then, she put a pot of water on the fire and sat down to wait.

When Uncle Coyote heard someone was in the kitchen, he began to talk. –Hey! What time the princess is coming? I really want to marry her.

-Yeah! I know what kind of princess you are waiting for. - The little old lady replied.

When the water was boiling, she untied the sack and said -Aha! The rabbit turned into a Coyote. That's okay!

Uncle Coyote trying to be loveable said: -Yes ma'am, but I really want to marry her.

The little old lady took the pot of hot water and threw it into the Coyote's back.

The unlucky Uncle Coyote went out running and howling.

When Uncle Rabbit saw Uncle Coyote running and howling, he shouted to him:

-Goodbye! Uncle Coyote, waiting for your marriage your back was burned.

Some days later, Uncle Rabbit ran into Uncle Coyote. Uncle Rabbit was like the day he was going to be buried. So he thought: –Oh God! Now, I am in troubles!

When Uncle Coyote saw Uncle Rabbit, he became really mad.

-Well, we have to talk seriously. –said Uncle Coyote.

Uncle Rabbit played dumb and said –What are you talking about Uncle Coyote? I try to remember and I cannot find any offensive act against you.

-Be quiet silly rabbit! Thank God I know the kind of rabbit you are. Pray God because you will pay me all together.

Uncle Rabbit was looking at all directions and he saw a sapodilla tree at the edge of a fence. It was full of delicious fruits. Then he told to Uncle Coyote: -Well, what are we going to do? The one who can is the winner.

-But before killing me, let me get on the tree and eat a sapodilla that I am seeing from here. It's look delicious; I don't know why it wasn't fallen yet. Don't kill me yet! Take my hand back down to make sure I coming back to you.

-What the hell! Said Uncle Coyote, go and eat the sapodilla. Then your story will change. I won't go away until you get off the tree.

While getting up the tree, uncle Rabbit was saying:

-Damn! I believe that I'm in dangerous. He is going to eat me.

Once on the tree, Uncle Rabbit began to pretend he was eating a sapodilla. He said: -Oh, it's delicious! It's like eating sugar! What a delicious fruit!

Uncle Coyote! I think God made these sapodillas full of sweet lumps.

-Do you want a try?

-Yes! Uncle Coyote replied.

-There it goes! Open your mouth and close your eyes.

So he did it. The dumb of Uncle Coyote opened his mouth. Uncle Rabbit chose the biggest sapodilla he could find and threw it into Coyote's mouth with all his strength.

Of course all the Uncle Coyote's teeth falling off and he began to run screaming of pain.

As the days were going by, Uncle Coyote ran into Uncle Rabbit again.

Uncle Coyote did not have any tooth. He took uncle rabbit of his ears and told him –Today you couldn't run away, silly rabbit! Look what you have done to me!

Uncle Rabbit couldn't stop laughing at Uncle Coyote because he didn't have teeth and his back was burned.

-Well, what can we do? When you say things are like you think; nobody cannot make you understand. God knows that I didn't want to hurt you. The problem is that I am an unlucky guy when helping you. Every time I want to give you a surprise, I finish make you feel bad. I hope you can be patient with me!

Uncle Rabbit took a deep breath.

-Be quiet liar! Only who doesn't know you, can believe in your words.

-Do you know where I was going? I'm going to eat a lot of cheese! What a cheese! It's looks delicious.

- Where is that cheese? - replied Uncle Coyote.

-Well, let's go and I will show you.

-So, both walked, but Uncle Coyote was holding Uncle Rabbit during the road.

They arrived to a large patch in which the moon was reflected.

-Look at that cheese! I think it is enough for year. Tell me if you don't want to taste it. -said Uncle Rabbit.

And the dumb Coyote believed what the Rabbit said. He asked -How can we get it?

-It's easy! We have to drink all the water. It is not too much, we can finish soon.

So, they did it. Uncle Coyote was drinking as much water as he could, but uncle Rabbit wasn't drinking anything.

-Ay! Uncle Rabbit, I can't stand it. -said Uncle Coyote.

Uncle Rabbit talked back: -Stuff your face (*Aturúsele*) Uncle Coyote, we are almost done!

After a while, Uncle Coyote was gasping and his belly seemed as a drum.

So, the cynic of Uncle Rabbit said:

-Do you know what we are going to do? We are going to run down the hill for getting our belly empty. Then, we could finish with the water.

Uncle Coyote agreed. Uncle Rabbit took the Coyote's hand and began to run.

Uncle Coyote could not even scream. Then, something was heard as when busting a bladder inflated beef. The belly of the poor Uncle Coyote burst in the middle of the hill.

Thus, Uncle Rabbit could run up and down freely.