THE PORTUGUESE PAREMIOLOGICAL MINIMUM, A USEFUL TOOL FOR INTERPRETERS' LINGUISTIC TRAINING

O MÍNIMO PAREMIOLÓGICO PORTUGUÊS, UMA FERRAMENTA ÚTIL PARA A FORMAÇÃO LINGUÍSTICA DO INTÉRPRETE

EL MÍNIMO PAREMIOLÓGICO PORTUGUÉS, UNA HERRAMIENTA ÚTIL PARA LA FORMACIÓN LINGÜÍSTICA DEL INTÉRPRETE

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ABSTRACT: The translation of phraseological units in an interpreting process can be complicated due to the immediacy that characterizes this activity. To facilitate this task, it is essential to develop the phraseological component of the future interpreter's linguistic competence, which allows the generation of automatisms in phraseological units and reduces the cognitive effort of comprehension and production. How can this phraseological component be developed, and which phraseologies should be included in Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PFL)? Focusing on paremias, in this paper, we present the Portuguese paremiological minimum project, a database that collects the most frequent paremias currently used in Portuguese with their correspondence in Spanish. Due to their high frequency of use, these paremias should be present in PFL programs to train future translators and interpreters in the Portuguese-Spanish combination.

KEYWORDS: Phraseology. Paremiology. Interpretation. Paremiological minimum. Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PFL).

RESUMO: *A tradução de unidades fraseológicas em um processo de interpretação pode ser complicada devido ao imediatismo que caracteriza essa atividade. Para facilitar essa tarefa, é essencial desenvolver o componente fraseológico da competência linguística do futuro intérprete, o que lhe permitirá gerar automatismos frente às unidades fraseológicas e reduzir o esforço cognitivo de compreensão e produção. Agora, como desenvolver esse componente fraseológico e quais fraseologismos incluir na sala de aula de língua portuguesa (PLE)? Com foco nas parémias, apresentamos neste artigo o projeto Paremiologia Mínima do Português, uma base de dados que coleta as parêmias mais frequentes atualmente em português com suas correspondências em espanhol. Devido à sua alta frequência de uso, essas parêmias devem estar presentes em programas de EPP no âmbito da formação de futuros tradutores e intérpretes na combinação português-espanhol.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Fraseologia. Paremiologia. Mínimo paremiológico. Interpretação. Português como Língua Estrangeira (PLE).*

RESUMEN: *La translación de unidades fraseológicas en un proceso de interpretación puede resultar complicado debido a la inmediatez que caracteriza esta actividad. Para facilitar esta labor es fundamental desarrollar el componente fraseológico de la competencia lingüística del futuro intérprete, lo cual le permitirá generar automatismos ante unidades fraseológicas, y reducir el esfuerzo cognitivo de comprensión y de producción. Ahora bien ¿cómo se puede desarrollar este componente fraseológico?, y ¿qué fraseologismos incluir en el aula de lengua portuguesa (PLE)? Centrándonos en las paremias, en este trabajo presentamos el proyecto Mínimo Paremiológico del portugués, una base de datos que recoge las paremias más frecuentes actualmente en portugués con sus correspondencias en español. Por su elevada frecuencia de uso, estas paremias deberían estar presentes en los programas de PLE en el marco de formación de futuros traductores e intérpretes en la combinación portugués-español.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Fraseología. Paremiología. Mínimo paremiológico. Interpretación. Portugués como Lengua Extranjera (PLE).*

Introduction

The training of interpreters encompasses the development of various linguistic and extralinguistic competencies, including linguistic, cultural, and thematic knowledge, concentration ability, oratory skills, good memory, stress resistance, etc. Focusing on linguistic competence, a thorough understanding of the working languages is "a prerequisite that students must fulfill" (ALONSO; BAIGORRI, 2008, p. 5, our translation) to commence interpreter training. It is evident that to perform this activity, one must possess an excellent command of both the source and target languages (GILE, 1985; LAMBERT, 1991; JIMÉNEZ IVARS; PINAZO CALATAYUD, 2002; MAGALHÃES, 2007). According to Meng (2017, p. 15), the linguistic component is the most crucial aspect interpreters must develop: "*Of the skills required for an interpreter, linguistic competence is by far the most important aspect that plays a central role in aiding their expression of ideas, i.e., the production of information.*" The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) believes that interpreters must have excellent command of both their native language and foreign languages: *a polished command of their native language across various registers and domains and complete mastery of their non-native languages* (AIIC, 2016).

It is unanimous that interpreters must have a high level of linguistic competence, but what exactly does having an in-depth knowledge of the language mean? In addition to orthographic, phonological, grammatical, and pragmatic knowledge, lexical-semantic aspects play a central role, as they are fundamental in understanding the source text and retrieving precise vocabulary for the expression of the target text. In this regard, Professor and interpreter Jean Herbert, a pioneer in the analysis of interpretation practice and training, stated in his Interpreter's Manual, published in 1952, that interpreters must possess a substantial amount of vocabulary, memory, and mental agility to activate it (HERBERT, 1952, p. 5).

Within the lexical competence of interpreters, the phraseological-proverbial component may be the least attended to by researchers even though knowledge of it is a fundamental aspect of communicative competence. It provides resources that serve as a guarantee to find solutions and reduce stress in the interpretation process. A study of the factors defining the linguistic competence of French as language A, B, and C for interpreters concludes, among other elements, that language B is characterized by precision in language use and the ability to understand and produce a wide variety of phraseological expressions:

> Language B can be distinguished from language C by a larger and more precise vocabulary, the ability to understand and produce a variety of idiomatic expressions and collocations, as well as cultural references and metaphors—all qualities necessary to make a message accurate and smooth for the listener when a retour is required (LOISEAU; DELGADO, 2021, p. 485, our translation).

Furthermore, this study indicates that the linguistic competence of the interpreter should be placed in the upper sphere of reference frameworks for the acquisition and mastery of foreign languages: the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) and the Standards for Foreign Language Learning of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL):

> For interpreters (and consequently, interpretation candidates), only the highest end of the spectrum of the two frameworks presented here, namely C2 in the CEFR and 'Advanced-High,' 'Superior,' and 'Distinguished' according to ACTFL (2012a), provides relevant guidance (LOISEAU; DELGADO, 2021, p. 472, our translation).

If we analyze the descriptors of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEFR), supplementary volume (CONSEJO DE EUROPA, 2021), it can be observed that from level C1, the user possesses a broad lexical repertoire and knows a wide variety of phraseological units (PU). Regarding lexical richness, referred to in the supplementary volume as "lexical range," the CEFR provides the following description for levels C1 and C2:

> Lexical Scope
> C2 Has a good command of a very extensive lexical repertoire, including idiomatic and colloquial expressions; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning.
> C1 Has a good command of a broad lexical repertoire that allows compensating for deficiencies quickly through circumlocutions, hardly noticeable when seeking expressions or using avoidance strategies. Selects from various vocabulary options in almost all situations, using synonyms for even less common words/signs. Has a good command of frequent idiomatic and colloquial expressions; plays very well with words/signs. Understands and uses appropriately the variety of technical vocabulary and idiomatic expressions typical of their field (CONSEJO DE EUROPA, 2021, p. 145, our translation).

It should be noted that the C2 level "does not imply native speaker competence or near-native competence. The goal is to characterize the degree of precision, propriety, and ease in

language use typifying the speech of bright learners" (CONSEJO DE EUROPA, 2002, p. 39, our translation). In fact, in the supplementary volume of the CEFR (CONSEJO DE EUROPA, 2021, p. 47), it is stated that simultaneous interpretation professionals at European institutions and professional translators far exceed the C2 level. North (2020), citing Wilkins (1978), proposes including another level of competence, a seventh level, which would be that of professional translators and interpreters.

> Wilkins proposed seven levels incorporating the Threshold Level and the midpoint toward it, Waystage, which had also been detailed. His upper level was called "bilingual proficiency," the sophistication associated with interpreters and translators. The Framework Working Group later took on its first six levels (NORTH, 2020, p. 551, our translation).

In summary, the lexical component, along with phraseology, occupies a crucial place in the linguistic skills of the interpreter and should be exercised so that the student is aware of the importance and difficulty involved in its transmission, as adequate interpretation implies understanding and transmitting PU: *Adequate interpretation requires understanding commonly used idiomatic expressions that occur in natural language* (CREZEE; GRANT, 2013, p. 18).

The phraseological-proverbial component of linguistic competence

The term PU encompasses different types of more or less stable word combinations, such as collocations (*come out unscathed; emerge unharmed; media prestige*), phrases (*to plant sweet potatoes; to have bats in the belfry*), routine formulas (*I don't care; see you later*), conversation markers (*say there; what do you mean?; I think so too*), stereotyped comparisons (*dark as pitch; deaf as a door*), or proverbs (*the pot calling the kettle black; God writes straight with crooked lines; know thyself*). The description and classification of these units have been one of the most analyzed aspects by researchers (CASARES SÁNCHEZ, 1950; CORPAS, 1996; RUIZ GURILLO, 1997; VILELA, 2002; OLÍMPIO DE OLIVEIRA SILVA, 2007; GARCÍA-PAGE, 2008; SEVILLA MUÑOZ; CRIDA ÁLVAREZ, 2013; MONTEIRO-PLANTIN, 2014; MARTINS, 2020). For some authors, all these PUs are part of the field of study of phraseology; others, however, distinguish between phraseology and paremiology. As Sevilla Muñoz (2012-2013, p. 3, our translation) states, "The first is dedicated to the study of stable expressions or phraseologies, including some stable statements without a sententious

message; the second to stable, brief, and sententious statements, called proverbs." In this article, we focus on proverbs, a term used as a hyperonym to designate these statements.

Following the classification established by Sevilla Muñoz and Crida Álvarez (2013), proverbs are divided into two groups: proverbs of anonymous origin and popular use and, on the other hand, proverbs of known origin and cultured use. The first group includes sayings such as *The apple doesn't fall far from the tree* or *drowning man will clutch at a straw*, and phrases or proverbial expressions like *No one is born knowing everything* or *Put the cart before the horse*. The second group includes proverbs such as the last shall be first, which has biblical origins, and aphorisms of literary, philosophical, or political origin, such as *To err is human* or *I know that I know nothing*.

The difficulties that an interpreter must overcome when establishing equivalences for Proverbial Units (PUs) can be of various types: associated with the total or partial unfamiliarity with PUs in the source language or target language or derived from the specific characteristics of each interpretative process, such as the speaker's idiolect and how the PU is embedded in discourse, as well as the immediacy of interpretation, i.e., the lack of time to comprehend and reformulate the discourse fully. To address these challenges, it is essential that, during their linguistic training, interpreters develop interpretative strategies accompanied by phraseological-proverbial competence. This competence enables them to understand the maximum number of PUs in a discourse and have automated correspondences for quick responses in the interpretative process. Possessing an extensive vocabulary streamlines the process and allows for a balanced distribution of efforts to concentrate energy on discourse elaboration.

Proverbs are present in speakers' communication. Thus, they should be integrated into language teaching curricula. However, given the impossibility and inefficiency of studying the entire paremiological heritage of a language, a selection must be made, and a methodology must be applied according to the needs of the learner group, their level of knowledge, and learning objectives. For an interpreter, having a good command of paremiology means comprehending the proverbs used in a discourse and transferring the message to the target language using appropriate proverbs for the context. We distinguish between active, passive, and latent competence within paremiological competence. Passive competence is the ability to recognize and correctly understand the meaning of speech; active competence is the ability to find equivalence in the target language and incorporate the corresponding proverbs into discourse elaboration, and latent competence is a concept introduced by Manuel Sevilla (2012), is the

ability to intuit the meaning of certain proverbs having heard, read, or even used them occasionally.

In the case of teaching Portuguese to Spanish speakers in the context of training future interpreters, the methodology for developing the paremiological component will be adapted to the needs of these students for acquiring competencies that allow them, for example, to comprehend, analyze, and synthesize discourses containing proverbs, establish automated correspondences from Portuguese to Spanish and from Spanish to Portuguese, as well as apply appropriate interpretation strategies when encountering unfamiliar proverbs. Regarding the selection of sayings for learning, Portuguese for Spanish speakers (EPP) students dedicating themselves to interpretation should be familiar with, at least, those widely used in Portuguese and their Spanish counterparts. In this regard, the corpus obtained from the research project "O *Mínimo Paremiológico do Português*," a database gathering the most well-known and currently used proverbs in the Portuguese language, proves to be highly useful.

The Paremiological Minimum of the Portuguese Language

The *Paremiological Minimum* is part of a research project on multilingual paremiology supported by the Instituto Cervantes and coordinated by professors Julia Sevilla Muñoz and María Teresa Zurdo Ruiz-Ayúcar from the Complutense University of Madrid. This paremiological collection, whose results are published in the Paremiological and Phraseological Library of the Centro Virtual Cervantes[2], began with the work *The Paremiological Minimum: Theoretical and Methodological Aspects* (ZURDO RUIZ-AYÚCAR; SEVILLA MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 17) and the *Spanish Paremiological Minimum* (SEVILLA MUÑOZ; BARBADILLO DE LA FUENTE, 2021), and is being expanded to include other languages, particularly those present in the *Multilingual Proverb (*SEVILLA MUÑOZ; ZURDO RUIZ-AYÚCAR, 2009). Different techniques for data collection and analysis are applied to establish the paremiological minimum with the highest possible degree of reliability in each language. In this way, its presence is confirmed in documentary sources (press, literature, essays, etc.), and research is conducted with native informants to verify the knowledge and active use of the proverbs. As reflected in volume no. 1 of the Paremiological Minimum collection, the objective of this project is:

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[2] https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/biblioteca_fraseologica/

> The development of a representative database of proverbs that, due to the frequency of their occurrence in spoken and written discourse, can now be considered a cultural heritage shared to a greater or lesser extent by the sociolinguistic community (ZURDO RUIZ-AYÚCAR; SEVILLA MUÑOZ, 2016, p. 17, our translation).

For the Portuguese language, this research begins with the development of the *Paremiological Minimum of European Portuguese* (DÍAZ FERRERO; SABIO PINILLA, in press), and the Paremiological Minimum of Brazilian Portuguese *is currently undergoing the revision process*. Consequently, through this research, specific proverbs are obtained from a particular community, such as the case of *apressado come cru* (Brasil) or *da Espanha nem bom vento nem bom casamento[3]* (Portugal); Differences in variants across different communities can be analyzed, as seen in *em briga de marido e mulher não se mete a colher* (Brasil); *entre marido e mulher não se mete a colher[4]* (Portugal); *gato escaldado tem medo de água fria* (Brasil); *gato escaldado de água fria tem medo[5]* (Portugal) or working with proverbs that are common and used throughout the Portuguese language, such as: *é pior a emenda que o soneto[6]; quem ri por último ri melhor[7]; olho por olho, dente por dente[8]; a união faz a força[9]*, etc.

The proverbs in the Paremiological Minimum are presented in different ways, so the information can be helpful for various purposes. They are organized alphabetically into three groups, from the most to the least frequently used. Additionally, each proverb is organized in a file following the model established in the *Multilingual Proverb (SEVILLA* MUÑOZ; ZURDO RUIZ-AYÚCAR, 2009). It is a descriptive sheet with nine sections that include information related to each proverb: literal translation, variants, key ideas, type of proverb, meaning, synonyms, contexts, correspondence in Spanish, and observations. Example:

Proverb – (One) swallow doesn't make a summer

(One) swallow doesn't make a summer
Literal Translation: *Una golondrina (sola) no hace verano*.
Variants: One swallow doesn't make a summer
Key Ideas: Collaboration – Solidarity – Deduction – Clue
Type of paremia: Proverb.
Meaning: Generally used with an assertive and persuasive intention to indicate that you need to work or collaborate as a team if you want to achieve certain goals. It can also be used to show that an isolated fact is not

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[3] A similar saying in English is "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread".
[4] A similar saying in English is "Let two fighting dogs alone".
[5] A similar saying in English is "A burnt child dreads the fire".
[6] A similar saying in English is "The remedy is worse than the disease".
[7] A similar saying in English is "He who laughs last, laughs best".
[8] A similar saying in English is "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth".
[9] A similar saying in English is "Many hands make light work".

valid for establishing a particular norm or judging a person; It is necessary to observe a certain frequency or regularity to make a judgment or prove a theory.

Synonym: Unity is strength; one hand washes the other (and both wash the face).

Context 1: So, ladies and gentlemen, dear José Wellington, thank you very much for offering me this microphone, which is speaking to millions of people throughout Brazil. Perhaps some outside Brazil because this opportunity is unique. It demonstrates that you have confidence in me. And rest assured, I am also here because I very much respect Your Lordship.

To all, we are together. A lone swallow does not make summer, but all these swallows together have already arrived. More than hope, I am sure that down the road, when I leave the Presidency, I will leave a country much, much better than the one I received in January of last year. Because I am sure that this is God's will. (Speech by the President of the Republic, Jair Bolsonaro, at the Thanksgiving Service for the life of Pastor Wellington Bezerra da Costa, President of the Assemblies of God Churches of Brazil - São Paulo/SP, 05-10-2020).

Context 2: Pope Francis began a historic trip to the United Arab Emirates last Sunday.

Bishop Paul Hinder is the apostolic vicar of southern Arabia. As such, the Swiss Capuchin monk hosts the Pope in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Before Pope Francis's visit, ACN spoke with Bishop Hinder about tolerance in everyday life, the lack of religious freedom, and expectations for the papal visit. Check out the full interview below:

[...]

In conclusion, can the papal visit result in more than a shared cup of coffee and beautiful photos?

Bishop Hinder: What remains to be seen is whether the visit will leave any lasting impression. As we usually say, one swallow does not make summer. Dialogue with another religion and its representatives takes time and patience, and setbacks are inevitable (ACN, 04-02-2019) Available at: https://www.acn.org.br/emirados-arabes-abu-dhabi-eu-nunca-experimentei-animosidade/

Correspondence in Spanish: *La unión hace la fuerza; una golondrina no hace verano; una mano lava la otra (y ambas lavan la cara).*

Observations: Proverbs *ou scratch my back and I'll scratch yours/una mano lava la otra* and *and many hands make light work/la unión hace la fuerza* are partial synonyms, as they convey only the idea of solidarity or cooperation. They are not used to indicate that an isolated case is insufficient to establish a pattern.

Source: Paremiological Minimum of Brazilian Portuguese.

The applications of *Minimal Paremiology* for training future translators and interpreters are diverse: teaching Portuguese as a Foreign Language (PLE), instructing on sociocultural aspects related to the worldview conveyed by proverbs, and specific translation and interpretation exercises. As pointed out by different authors, sayings can be present from the early levels of foreign language learning (ORTIZ ÁLVAREZ, 2008; SARACHO ARNÁIZ, 2016; VALERO FERNÁNDEZ, 2021). In the case of related languages, it is clearly feasible to work with proverbs from the initial level, as many of them are similar in form and meaning.

Moreover, to facilitate understanding at lower levels, one can select those proverbs that do not have a metaphorical sense (*não faças aos outros o que não* queres que *te façam*[10]) and carry out exercises for vocabulary acquisition or simply activities to work on some grammatical or discursive aspect, such as plural rules (*para grandes males, grandes remédios*[11]; *os fins justificam os meios*[12]), verb conjugation (*se Maomé não vai à montanha, a montanha vai a*

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[10] Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

[11] Desperate times call for desperate measures.

[12] The ends justify the means.

Maomé[13]; *todos os caminhos vão dar a Roma[14]*), comparative phrases (*uma imagem vale mais (do) que mil palavras[15]; mais vale prevenir (do) que remediar[16]*) or pronunciation (*pão, pão, queijo, queijo[17]; o coração tem razões que a própria razão desconhece[18]*). This way, the student comes into contact with proverbs from the beginning of their linguistic education; as Díaz Ferrero and Monteiro-Plantin (2020, p. 107, our translation) state, "the frequency of use and formal and semantic correspondence can contribute to the development of phraseological competence in a natural way." It involves creating the appropriate conditions for the student to receive the necessary *input* to become familiar with proverbs and develop latent and passive competence until reaching active competence. To some extent, it consists of mimicking the continuous exposure to proverbs that a native speaker has to fix in their mental lexicon.

From the intermediate level onward, exercises in expression or comprehension with more complex proverbs can be carried out. A productive exercise is creating situational frames (GARCÍA BENITO, 2020) o use proverbs according to their pragmatic and discursive function. To develop written expression, a sentence can be suggested at the beginning or end of a story; for example, write a text in Portuguese that starts with the sentence: *The proverb says that God gives nuts to those who have no teeth, and I believe because...* or write a text in Portuguese that ends with the following sentence That's why people say that justice may be delayed, but it does not fail. Oral or written mediation activities can also be conducted. Since the 2001 edition, the CEFR has included mediation as a linguistic activity:

> The communicative linguistic competence of the learner or language user is put into practice through the performance of various language activities, including comprehension, expression, interaction, or mediation (particularly, interpretation or translation) (CONSEJO DE EUROPA, 2002, p. 14, our translation).

The accompanying volume of the CEFR develops mediation activities and strategies in which the user acts as an intermediary between interlocutors to enable communication. These activities are organized into three groups: text mediation, concept mediation, and communication mediation, and include tasks such as summarizing texts, describing graphic information, or acting as an intermediary to facilitate communication. To achieve mediation,

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[13] If the mountain will not come to Mohammed, then Mohammed must go to the mountain.
[14] All roads lead to Rome.
[15] An image is worth a thousand words.
[16] Better safe than sorry,
[17] Clear and straightforward.
[18] The heart have reasons that reason itself doesn't know.

the user must employ different strategies and adapt them "to the conventions, conditions, and constraints of the communicative context" (CONSEJO DE EUROPA, 2021, p. 130, our translation). These strategies are directly related to how information is conveyed to the receiver and, therefore, have many commonalities with interpretation strategies. In this sense, with the contexts of the *Paremiological* Minimum, pedagogical interpretation activities can be carried out to familiarize the student with proverbs and interpretative strategies:

- Textual paraphrase: Convey the information from a Portuguese speech containing proverbs in Spanish. If it is not possible to use an equivalent saying in the target language discourse, the message will be reformulated using a paraphrase. In these cases, the process of de-verbalization of the message inherent to the interpretative activity plays a fundamental role.

- Summary of a text: Convey the fundamental information from a Portuguese speech containing proverbs in Spanish. This exercise is especially useful to raise awareness of the importance of understanding the essential idea of a message and can be combined with note-taking exercises.

Finally, with advanced students, it is possible to work with texts or speeches that contain truncated proverbs (*like father, like son...*; *little by little...*) or de-automatized, meaning consciously altered to adapt them to the discourse or to cause some effect on the message receiver. This is the case with this example of the proverb: *look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves*

> This is how we can politically contribute to the Araraquara society, engaging in conversations and presenting claims to the lawmakers who can amend the budget of the São Paulo state government and thus channel resources of paramount importance. As the saying goes, little by little..., which I translate in this context as, step by step, through amendments, we will achieve what is necessary to address the problems that arise in our daily lives, asserts Lapena (Câmara Municipal de Araraquara, 04-10-2013, our translation).

In these cases, it is necessary first to recognize the truncated or de-automatized proverb, its meaning, and the intended intention of altering it, and choose an equivalent saying in the target language – modified (if possible) – to achieve a similar effect on the recipient.

Final considerations

As shown in this article, having a broad vocabulary and a good command of formulaic language (including proverbs) in the foreign language and its possible correspondences in the native language expands the range of possibilities when finding solutions in the interpretation process. That is, it gives the interpreter the necessary resources to understand the message and the automatism to transfer it quickly into the target language. Therefore, teaching formulaic language and proverbs in translation and interpretation should encompass the development of phrase-proverbial competence.

One of the factors that can be taken into account in selecting the proverbs that should be part of the formulaic competence of translation and interpretation students is the frequency of use. In this regard, we present the project *Minimal Paremiology of Portuguese*, whose proverbs are very useful for the development of the paremiological competence of future translators and interpreters. It is a corpus that combines the most commonly used proverbs in contemporary Portuguese, making it highly likely that they will be used in any discourse or document that needs to be translated or interpreted.

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