A corpus-based study of English approximate negators and their translations into Spanish[1]

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Abstract
This study, which examines the expression of approximate negation by means of *scarcely, rarely, barely, hardly* and *seldom* (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 815) and their translations into Spanish, sets out to identify the patterns of usage of these items by analysing their behaviour in co-text and to observe how these items are translated into Spanish, with special attention being paid to renderings of negative connotations that are based on assumed grammatical equivalence. The study will empirically demonstrate the usefulness and usability of the ACTRES Parallel Corpus (P-ACTRES). The experimentation sequence replicates Krzeszowski's contrastive model (1990), namely, selection, description, juxtaposition and contrast. Qualitative and quantitative analyses cover the meaning-form interface, co-text and frequency of usage. The mapping of cross-linguistic correspondences reveals the actual Spanish equivalents used to express the (very) elusive meanings these items convey, as well as possible differences in polarity and the scope of negation.

Keywords: approximate negation, contrast, translation, English, Spanish.

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1. Introduction

Previous work on English-Spanish negation (Rabadán and Izquierdo 2013) revealed that a series of English adverbial elements, identified as conveyors of negative meanings, can pose serious problems in translation into Spanish. At least two reasons for this are posited. The first arises from the complex meaning properties of the English resources and the second from the considerable differences in the treatment of potential equivalents in the respective standard grammar of each language. English approximate negators *barely, rarely, scarcely, seldom* and *hardly,* represent a translation trouble spot as no counterparts are immediately retrievable in Spanish, owing to the lack of any grammatical treatment of the notion of approximate negation. Instead, a set of various resources, functionally dissimilar to a certain extent might do as the closest equivalents. On the assumption that the differences in their functionality are worth studying contrastively and so as to obtain some applicable findings, this paper deals with these five English adverbs and their functional equivalents in Spanish.

One reason why these English adverbs might trigger translation problems arises from their complex semantic nature for, in addition to conveying approximate negation, they also express circumstantial meanings. Furthermore, from an intra-linguistic point of view, the difference in meaning among the adverbs is rather elusive, so an examination of the behaviour of these items in co-text might shed light on lexico-grammatical patterns that prioritize one meaning over another.

Moreover, from a cross-linguistic perspective, the convergence of meanings might go unnoticed, yielding translations where the negative meaning is kept but the circumstantial one is lost in translation, or where the negation is not observed in the translation but the other convergent meaning in the source item is. Neither would render a complete functional equivalent and this would diminish the degree of equivalence attained or at least call it into question. Results from this study should help to avoid misinterpretations or generalizations of usage, benefiting both translators and language teachers in their tasks.

A second reason for studying this phenomenon contrastively is to identify any Spanish items of a similar nature, and so generate a list of English-Spanish translational equivalents conveying so-called convergent equivalence (Izquierdo, In press). Furthermore, other resources that are functionally equivalent may also be identified, which would contribute to mapping out English-Spanish translation options at the grammatical level. Any additional insights regarding the expression of negation in both English and Spanish will complement previous studies carried out by the research group ACTRES. [2]

2. Approximate negators in English

In their reference grammar, Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 815-820) label as approximate negators five adverbs, namely, *barely, rarely, scarcely, seldom* and *hardly,* which are considered quasi-negative adverbs by Carter and McCarthy (2006), together with two determiners, *few* and *little,* which function in a similar way. These items can be considered an alternative to non-verbal absolute negators, such as *no, none, nothing, nobody*, or *neither*. There are, however, issues concerning the strength of the 'not zero' implicature - i. e. the 'not yet' completed property, state, etc.-(Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 816) implicit in approximate negators that may affect negative scope and syntactic polarity. Three of the adverbs -*barely, hardly* and *scarcely*- are considered negative minimizers in Quirk et al. (1985: 598), clearly differentiated from non-negative items serving the same purpose.

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[2] Relevant publications listed at http://actres.unileon.es [Accessed 6 November 2012]

3. Spanish focus adverbs

The reference grammar of Spanish (RAE 2009: 2992), does not recognize a specific class of approximate negators. Instead, there is a class of adverbs that adapt their behaviour to the scope of other grammatical items they focus upon. Spanish focus adverbs can indicate exclusion, particularization, approximation and restriction. Items such as *solo* (English[3] *only*) or *exclusivamente* (En *exclusively*) convey the absence of alternatives to what is being proposed, as in (1):

>   (1)   Lema*: "Solo lo ético es práctico"*
>   (En Motto: Only what is ethical is practical).[4]

Particularizing adverbs (*precisamente*, En *precisely*; *en particular*, En *in particular*; or *especialmente*, En *especially*, among others) add emphasis to the item that is being focused upon, as in (2):

>   (2)   Un *vino pensado precisamente para consumir con sushi*
>   A wine specifically designed to accompany sushi

Approximate adverbs include *apenas* (En *hardly*), *casi* (En *hardly*) and *prácticamente* (En *practically*). They indicate that the property, action, amount or state they focus upon has not been reached or fulfilled, meaning that the referent displays a property, action, amount or state different from the one being focused upon. It is important to clarify that focus adverbs do not indicate degree unlike *muy* (En *very*), *bastante* (En *enough*), *demasiado* (En *too much/many*), etc. Degree adverbs signal the intensity (or absence of) of a given property, and they apply to scalar adjectives and adverbs. By contrast, Spanish approximate adverbs bear the connotation of limitation and/or incompleteness, of 'not yet'. This makes our items particularly suited to the expression of negative notions, functioning as negative licensers when they are in a negative polarity environment (RAE 2009: 3673). For example, *apenas* may indicate negation as in (3), where full negative *nada* (En *nothing*) makes negative alternance possible, i.e. ...*de los que no sabemos nada apenas* (En **of whom we do not know anything barely*). In positive polarity environments, however, *apenas* may indicate exclusion, as in (4), or approximation, as in (5).

>   (3)   Unos *personajes, (...), de los que apenas sabemos nada*
>   Characters (...), of whom we barely know anything

>   (4)   En *apenas 10 años, ha montado en Barcelona una compañía de teatro*
>   In only 10 years she has set up a theater company in Barcelona

>   (5)   ...*chillaban de tal manera que Dolors apenas pudo reprimir las lágrimas*
>   They cried in such a way that Dolors was barely able to suppress her tears

Casi is the central approximate adverb and may appear in both negative and positive polarity environments. Pragmatically, *casi no+ V, casi nadie, casi nunca, casi + affixal negative item* (En *hardly any*) are understood as full negatives in Spanish (6). *Casi* + positive items (*casi siempre, casi lleno, casi + V*; En *nearly always, nearly full, nearly fell down*, etc.) indicate the property, state or action previous to the one being focused upon: i.e. high frequency, high level, etc., (7). The fact that users may interpret these sequences in terms of possibility and/or probability bears witness to their close relationship with aspectual adverbs in Spanish (RAE 2009: 2350-55).

>   (6)   *La niña está agobiada de tareas, casi no tiene ratos libres*
>   The girl is far too busy with her homework, she barely enjoys any spare time

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(7)   *La obra histórica se basa casi siempre en datos tomados de libros o   documentos*
History work is based nearly always on data from books or documents

Prácticamente behaves like *casi* in that it modifies adjectives and/or adverbs that cannot be scaled and verbs that convey different stages of fulfillment. It indicates that the action is on the verge of completion, which has not yet been achieved, as in (8):

(8)   *Esta estructura mecánica está prácticamente terminada*
This mechanical structure is nearly completed

Spanish restriction adverbs (RAE 2009: 3019) focus on one property, amount or possibility among many others that remain, to some extent, unfulfilled. *Al menos, cuando menos* and *por lo menos* are typical indicators of this meaning (9)

(9)   Se estima que serán necesarios al menos treinta viajes
We estimate that at least thirty trips will be needed

The actual functional correspondence between these resources and English approximate negators is observed in real translations, using the English-Spanish parallel corpus P-ACTRES (cf. 4).

4. Methodology and tools

Our study uses a modified (and enlarged) version of Krzeszowski's classic model (1990) for contrastive analysis. The stages are selection, description, juxtaposition and contrast, followed by the interpretation of the results. This method is clearly empirical and descriptive, as it takes real instances of language use that are described according to (mainly) functional criteria. For this, two main tools are pertinent, namely, a parallel corpus, P-ACTRES, and, a *tertium comparationis* as described in Rabadán (2008).

The ACTRES Parallel Corpus (from here on P-ACTRES)[5] is a custom-made parallel corpus containing original texts in English and their translations into Spanish. The version used for this study (see Table 1) contains nearly two and a half million words, distributed among books (fiction and non-fiction) press (newspapers and magazines) and miscellanea.

Table 1
Composition of P-ACTRES. Number of words (June 2010)

P-ACTRES	English	Spanish	Total
Books (Fiction and non-fiction)	890,820	974,132	1,864,952
Press (Newspapers and magazines)	235,106	264,191	499,297
Miscellanea	40,178	49,026	89,204
TOTAL	**1,166,104**	**1,287,349**	**2,453,453**

The encoding of P-ACTRES was carried out with the computational assistance of Knut Hofland[6], who has contributed, ever since, to continual improvements. The tagged English-Spanish parallel concordances are aligned at the sentence level, for which Knut Hofland, together with Øystein Reigem, produced a newer, more interactive version of the Translation Corpus Aligner (TCA) that had been previously used for aligning the ENPC. Once aligned and POS-tagged, the

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[5](http://actres.unileon.es/inicio.php?elementoID=12)For a detailed narrative of the construction of P-ACTRES, see Izquierdo, Hofland and Reigem (2008).

[6] We are glad to take part in the making of this volume in honour of the person who made P-ACTRES computationally possible. Let us reiterate our acknowledgement and immense gratitude to Knut Hofland.

Corpus Work Bench browser (CWB) was customized to enable advanced types of searches on parallel concordances.

As we mentioned earlier, P-ACTRES supplies the empirical data that we have examined to carry out the contrastive analysis. The goal of this study is to identify similarities and differences between English approximate negators and their Spanish translation equivalents. This is done through a contrastive functional analysis which is, in turn, made possible thanks to a *tertium comparationis* which triggers the necessary perceived similarity between two linguistic resources which, despite belonging to different codes, share common functional grounds. In this study, the *tertium comparationis* is a set of cross-linguistic labels that serve to help identify and interpret English approximate negators and their Spanish translation equivalents. These labels do not belong to any particular model of linguistic analysis. Rather we capitalize on those interpretations that may be useful to characterize the meaning functions under study independently of their source.

5. The study

This study replicates Krzeszowski's classic model for contrastive analysis (1990). The four main stages, selection, description, juxtaposition and contrast, are followed. During these stages P-ACTRES data are examined on both an intra-linguistic and a cross-linguistic level.

5.1 Selection

The five adverbs under examination were entered, individually, as input queries in P-ACTRES through the CWB. This search revealed the occurrences of approximate negators (see Table 2).

Table 2
Occurrences of approximate negators in P-ACTRES

Approximate negator	N	%
Hardly	153	47.8
Barely	86	26.9
Rarely	46	14.4
Seldom	25	7.8
Scarcely	10	3.1
TOTAL	**320**	**100**

For convenience, the results commented upon in the coming sections concern the total number of occurrences. The second and third stages in the study are devoted to the functional examination of the English approximate negators and their translational equivalents.

5.2 Description of approximate negators in STs

Three main aspects of the usage of approximate negators are examined: i) meaning; ii) co-textual arrangement or syntactic function; iii) typical meaning in a given co-text. This descriptive stage revealed the functionality patterns shown in table 3. For the purposes of our corpus-based contrastive analysis, the semantic nature of these five adverbs needs to be clarified. Each one of the five adverbs shares two main semantic components. One which is common to all, negative connotation, combines with one other meaning. In the case of two of the adverbs that other meaning is frequency, and in the case of the remaining three the other meaning is completion. What this combination means is that we are concerned with low frequency and incompleteness (see examples [10] and [11]).

Table 3
Functionality of approximate negators

Approximate Negator	N	%	Meaning	Adverbial	%	Modifier	%
Hardly	153	47.8	Negation + completion	123	80.4	30	19.6
Barely	86	26.9	Negation + completion	56	65.1	30	34.9
Rarely	46	14.4	Negation + frequency	44	95.6	2	4.4
Seldom	25	7.8	Negation + frequency	24	96	1	4
Scarcely	10	3.1	Negation + completion	8	80	2	20
TOTAL	320	100		255	79.7	65	20.3

(10)   But he had **hardly** reached his desk when his PA put her head round the office door(FJPD1E.s317).

(11)   Certainly she **hardly** seemed the neighbourly type(FHJ1E.s564).

In the first example we interpret that the doer intended to fulfil the action but this had not occurred by the time something else happened. The action modified by the approximate negator gives an overall sense of incompleteness. With regard to the second example, the adverb *hardly* rejects the notion that the subject carries the attribute denoted by 'neighbourly type', either in full or arguably, partially. In other words, 'she' is not the type of person who is friendly and helpful or not likely to be so, which again refers to an incomplete state or even its non-existence.

Whereas *hardly*, *barely* and *scarcely* convey 'negation + completion', *rarely* and *seldom* convey 'negation + frequency'. Examples (12)-(15) show this meaning-form pattern.

(12)   Political membership has **rarely** been considered an important aspect of domestic or international justice. (EBS1E.s8)

(13)   New Yorkers **seldom** invite you to their apartments […].(ELE1E.s641)

The notion of frequency extends to both occasion and habit. The adverbs *rarely* and *seldom* could well refer to the number of occasions or times when something occurs or has occurred. These adverbs can also refer to habit. The usual or common thing to do on the part of the doer of an action becomes a habit, which is by definition, something done often or regularly.

(14)   Deacon's theory is **scarcely** credible […]. (EHJ1E.s515)

(15)   He has **barely** emerged into the world himself.(FCJM1E.s318)

Examples (14) and (15) are statements about the low degree of credibility of a theory or the low extent to which the action of emerging has been reached. In (14), this could be rephrased in such a way that the theory is not true. Likewise in (15), it is untrue that 'he' has emerged into the world. In other words, neither the state of being true nor the action of emerging fully occurs.

According to our data, all the approximate negators under study realize two main syntactic functions. As observed, all the adverbs most frequently function as an adverbial (80%), adding information on how frequently the action conveyed by the main verb of the clause takes place and/or at what stage of completion it is, as seen in (16). In a smaller number of occurrences (20%), these approximate negators act as modifiers as shown in example (17).

(16)   A strong, cold wind, compliments of Siberia, **barely** manages to ripple the huge 600-pound red, white, and blue North Korean flag.(RONT1E.s62)

(17)   Appropriate, he thought, **barely** able to contain his excitement.(FBD1E.s1231)

With regard to their adverbial behaviour, the following functional regularities have been observed. The preferred position of each of these adverbs is before the main verb, as is the case in approximately 90% of the occurrences. Example (18) illustrates this frequent word order. Another common position is between the auxiliary and past participle in complex verb phrases, as in example (19). On the other hand, these adverbs do not usually appear after the main verb except in the case of 'be' or 'there be', and this only in the case of the adverbial *hardly* (3%), as observed in concordance number (20).

> (18)   But reality **seldom** extinguishes myth.(EHJ1E.s347)

> (19)   Fiscal   measures   were   **rarely**   undertaken   for   countercyclical purposes.(R5E.s274)

> (20)   [...] it's **hardly** a surprise that tree-limbs snap and roof tiles go flying. (EBB1E.s333)

Even though the data reveal instances of all the approximate negators functioning as modifiers, this realization is rather peripheral for *rarely*, *seldom* and *scarcely*. However, in the case of *barely*, it is, highly frequent with a 35% share of usage. *Barely* mainly modifies adjectives as in *barely audible*. There is, however, a frequent pattern of modification in the data where *barely* premodifies a noun phrase which comprises a quantifier plus the nominal head, as in example (21).

> (21)   and **barely** half a dozen are of central importance to life.(EBB1E.s189)

Most instances of modifier *hardly* show an 'adverb + adjective' pattern (60%), as in *hardly unique* or *hardly alone*. Whereas the 'adverb + adverb' modification type is rather anecdotal with *barely* (6.7%), it is more frequent with *hardly* (26.7%). Two recurring combinations are *hardly ever* and *hardly even*, in addition to other one-instance possibilities. As is the case with *barely*, *hardly* has also been observed to premodify an indefinite quantifier such as *any* or *anyone* on various occasions, as in example (22).

> (22)   There are **hardly** any ladies present, [...]. (FIK1E.s171)

This first descriptive stage has focused only on the English source texts to ascertain that the five adverbs share similar functionality patterns. Differences regard co-textual environments and frequency rates. Concerning their semantics, data suggest that whereas the negative connotation is always present irrespective of syntactic function, the circumstance component, be it frequency or completion, triggers one given form. As such, it seems that the frequency meaning is conveyed through an adverbial only, while the notion of completion is expressed by means of both an adverbial and a modifier. However, not only does the syntactic function favour the realization of one meaning over another, but the actual semantics of some of the adverbs draws on its lexical nature, as is the case of *rarely*. The *tertium comparationis* (Chesterman 1998) is instrumental in mapping the expressive capabilities of our object of study. Our next stage involves a mirror description of the Spanish translational options provided by P-ACTRES in order to identify recurrent functional patterns that can be later brought into contrast.

5.3 Description of translational options

As table 4 illustrates, the regularities observed have enabled a classification of three main trends or types of solutions amongst the Spanish translations of English approximate negators. Each type comprises a varied repertoire of resources to render the source text (ST) meaning. Around 60% of translated Spanish resorts to what is here referred to as adverbial solutions, comprising a fairly large inventory of adverbs which, as we will comment upon, have a similar semantic behaviour to Huddleston and Pullum's approximate negators (2002). Slightly more than 30% of the translational options have been labeled syntactic solutions, as these are either a full sentence or sentence constituents through which the ST meaning is conveyed. As can be observed, the negative clause is the most recurrent pattern (72%), followed by other lower-ranked solutions

much less frequently used (16% and 6% respectively). Finally, on a few occasions translators have resorted to so-called lexical solutions, composed by idiomatic expressions that render the semantic connotations conveyed by the source text (ST) item (2.5%).

Table 4
Spanish translational solutions for English approximate negators

	TR Option	Resource	n	
1	Adverbial Solutions	Apenas	102	205 (60.1%)
		Rara(s) vez(ces)	27	
		Casi	24	
		Difícilmente	23	
		Raramente	18	
		Prácticamente	5	
		Nada	2	
		Poco	2	
		Menos	1	
		Sólo	1	
2	Syntactic solutions	Negative clause	72	100 (31.2%)
		Adjectival Phrase	16	
		Prepositional Phrase	6	
		Noun Phrase	6	
3	Lexical solutions	Idiomatic expressions	6	8 (2.5%)
		Affixal negation (des-)	2	
4	Zero translation	Ø	7	7 (2.2%)
	TOTAL		320	

Table 4 displays those resources which have been frequently used in the Spanish translations. Such resources bring to light a lexico-grammatical interplay whereby the realization of the ST meaning is expressed in translated Spanish by means of both lexical and grammatical means, which will be commented upon in more detail below.

Table 5
Distribution of translational solution/resource per English approximate negator

TR solution	Resource	Hardly	Barely	Rarely	Seldom	Scarcely	N
Adverbial solutions	Apenas	39	56	2	1	4	102
	Rara(s) vez(ces)	-	-	13	14	-	27
	Casi	15	6	2	-	1	24
	Difícilmente	21	1	-	-	1	23
	Raramente	-	-	11	7	-	18
	Prácticamente	1	3	1	-	-	5
	Nada	2	-	-	-	-	2
	Poco	1	1	-	-	-	2
	Sólo	-	1	-	-	-	1
	Menos	1	-	-	-	-	1
Syntactic solutions	Negative cl	60	5	5	-	2	72
	AdjP	10	4	-	-	2	16
	PP	-	2	4	-	-	6
	NP	-	1	2	3	-	6
Lexical solutions	Lexical neg	5	1	-	-	-	6
	Affixal neg (des-)	2	-	-	-	-	2
Zero translation	Ø	-	4	3	-	-	7
TOTAL							320

An illustration of the distribution of these Spanish resources across the different approximate negators in English is provided in table 5. Only one resource belonging to the first type of translational solution, i.e., an adverbial solution is common to all the adverbs under study. This is the case of *apenas*, the *a priori* assumed equivalent. The negative clause is also widely used, as it renders the meaning of four of the five English adverbs under study, the exception being *seldom*. All remaining resources are unevenly distributed as equivalent of just three, two or one English approximate negator.

The analysis of the translational solutions found in P-ACTRES has brought to light a high component of lexical negation. In other words, many of the grammatical resources found convey negative and circumstantial connotations lexically. This is the case of the adverb *raramente*, which negates a high frequency of the action it modifies i.e., it conveys low frequency. The same is true of adjectival phrase *poco científicas*, representative of the so-called syntactic solution, whose component *poco*, En *little/hardly*, implies that whatever the noun characterized by the head adjective, namely *científicas*, En *scientific*, it does not bear the attribute denoted by that adjective completely or, at least, not sufficiently. On other occasions, however, the co-textual constituents confer, in combination, the blended semantics of ST approximate negators. Let us discuss each type of translational solution and the main resources in detail now.

5.3.1 Adverbial Solutions

The RAE reference grammar does not label anything as *approximate negator,* nor is the notion of something like approximate negation reported upon in the chapter devoted to this semantic function, that is, negation. Thus, *a priori*, it seemed difficult to carry out either a comparable-corpus-based contrastive functional analysis from form to meaning or the other way round. Instead, a parallel-corpus-based contrast seemed to pertain. The literature review undertaken, thus, has focused on those Spanish resources which could function in a similar way. As such, it turned out that so-called *negative licensers* could be potential equivalents, as they trigger negative connotations and, thus, a negative polarity environment. The above-mentioned grammar reported on three main adverbs, namely, *apenas, casi* and *prácticamente*. Hence, one research hypothesis has been to check whether such resources are used in Spanish to translate English approximate negators, amongst other possibilities, and to what extent ST meaning is preserved. Our data confirm the hypothesis above, as not only are these three adverbs fairly frequent, but the adverbial solutions are preferred. Let us briefly discuss the major functional aspects of these solutions.

> *a.*   *Apenas*

Not only is *apenas* the most recurrent adverbial solution (49.75%), but it is also the only one common to all five approximate negators. This adverb was expected as an assumed equivalent, on the assumption that it is a negative licenser when it means *casi no* (En *hardly any*). Keeping this in mind, the actual translations have been examined to find out that around 70% of them do maintain this sense, as observed in example (23).

> (23)   […] pero apenas había tenido tiempo de respirar cuando cayó el mismísimo Lord Nelson […]. (EAR1S.s61)
> English: …but he had **hardly** time to breathe there, when Lord Nelson himself fell, […].(EAR1E.s59)

On some occasions, when *apenas* is followed by a numeral, approximation implies the idea of less than or just a given amount or quantity. Example (24) shows this point, which has only been identified when *apenas* is the translation of English *barely*.

> (24)   […] el joven Manolo tenía **apenas** doce años de edad. (EHE1S.s236)
> English: […] young Manolo was **barely** twelve years old. (EHE1E.s239)

Another recurrent meaning of *apenas*, other than 'hardly any', is 'shortly ago', with *not long ago* underlying, which again implies approximation to a point in time. This sense has only been observed when *apenas* is a translation of *barely*, as illustrated by example 25.

> (25)　**Apenas** acaba de poner el pie en el mundo y ya se ha anotado una muerte en su contra. (FCJM1S.s314)
> English: He has **barely** emerged into the world himself and already he has a death chalked up against him.(FCJM1E.s318)

We have analysed several instances where translated *apenas* conveys manner, which is the one meaning departing from core approximation. This divergence only occurs when the Spanish adverb is used to translate *hardly* and *barely* as observed in example (26).

> (26)　[...] y **apenas** se podía mover de la risa. (FRJK1S.s191)
> English: and he could **barely** move for laughing.(FRJK1E.s183)

We have noticed that this semantic usage of *apenas* conveys some degree of ambiguity and/or indeterminacy, as approximation and manner appear at time to overlap. We have also observed that the sense of manner is usually triggered when the Spanish adverbs modify verbs of achievement and/or ability.

The data suggest, therefore, that the central meaning of focus adverb *apenas* is approximation, irrespective of slightly different connotations, such as *hardly any*, *little or less than*, and *shortly ago*, while a small percentage of translated Spanish expresses *manner* (cf. 6 and table 5).

b.　*Rara(s) vez(ces) and raramente*

According to the data, these two resources are only found as equivalents of English *rarely* and *seldom*, which express low frequency. Whereas the former is a noun phrase (NP) that takes on an adverbial function in context (example 27), the latter, morphologically and syntactically, is an adverb (example 28). The RAE grammar treats the singular form of the first, *rara vez*, and *raramente* on an equal footing as time adverbs indicating imprecise frequency (RAE 2009: 2325-28). *Rara(s) vez(ces)* represents 13.2% and *raramente* 8.8% of the overall adverbial usage in the translations.

> (27)　La membresía política **rara vez** ha sido considerada un aspecto importante de la justicia nacional o internacional. (EBS1S.s8)
> English: Political membership has **rarely** been considered an important aspect of domestic or international justice. (EBS1E.s8)

The plural form, *raras veces*, seems to be more frequent when translating adverbial *rarely*, whereas *rara vez* is clearly preferred as the translation of *seldom*.

> (28)　Los neoyorquinos **raramente** te invitan a su casa [...]. (ELE1S.s661)
> English: New Yorkers **seldom** invite you to their apartments [...].(ELE1E.s641)

As shown in table 3, both English adverbs function most of the time as adverbials, which is the typical function of these translational options. It is through their syntactic behaviour together with their lexis that the circumstantial meaning is conveyed and the negative connotations rest. They both contain the Spanish base *rara*, a cognate of English *rare-ly* which, by definition, means 'infrequent'.

c.　*Casi*

Nearly 12% of the adverbial solutions resort to Spanish *casi*. Data bring to light the co-text where *casi* functions as a negative licenser. Generally speaking, this adverb is always surrounded by negative polarity items such as *no,* (En *no*)*, nadie*, (En *nobody*), *nunca*, (En

never/rarely), or words made up of negative prefixes such as *casi incapaz*, (En *hardly able*), in addition to words of different grammatical nature that lexically convey negation (Rabadán and Izquierdo 2013), like preposition *sin* (En *without*), as the introductory particle of non-finite infinitive clauses that take on an adverbial function. Concordance (29) provides an example of the most recurrent co-textual pattern of *casi*, i.e., *casi no + V*.

> (29)   **Ya casi no** la consideramos una teoría susceptible de ser verdadera o falsa. (EHP1S.s403)
> English: It is **barely** regarded as a theory - something that could prove to be right or wrong. (EHP1E.s413)

Whereas English syntax does not permit two items of negative polarity together and therefore resorts to non-assertive items such as ever as in *hardly ever*, or *any-* compounds as in *hardly anyone,* it is common to find double negation in Spanish, as illustrated in example (30).

> (30)   una situación que **no favoreció nada** la estúpida y poco oportuna declaración de Orrie Friedman, […]. (EWJ1S.s268)
> English: a situation **hardly helped** by the crass and not very sturdy claim made by Orrie Friedman […]. (EWJ1E.s266)

We have encountered one interesting occurrence where *casi* premodifies a head adverb which has positive connotations. Far from failing to preserve the original function, this choice is motivated by a shift of perspective from which the action is described, as can be seen in example (31).

> (31)   vivía una pareja de ancianos que **casi siempre** hablaban *en susurros*, incluso cuando estaban en la cocona. (FWM1S.s53)
> English: lived an elderly couple who **rarely** spoke *above whispers* even when they were in their kitchen. (FWM1E.s52)

d.   Difícilmente

This adverbial is only found as a translational solution of *hardly*, *barely* and *scarcely*, and most of the occurrences; twenty-one out of twenty-three (slightly more than 11% of all adverbial solutions), belong with En *hardly*. Each of these approximate negators expresses 'negation + completion' (cf. table 2), which means that *difícilmente* is never used for rendering 'negation + frequency' meanings. This might be due to the fact that, according to the grammar of Spanish, *difícilmente* is classified as a relational adverb of manner (RAE 2009: 2343). With this in mind, we examined the actual translations and observed that most instances refer to the way in which the action denoted by the main verb is carried out, which always implies difficulties. For example, in example (32) the adverb modifies the main verb so that it is difficult to ascertain that a given entity bears a given attribute.

> (32)   …y **difícilmente** podía considerárseles modelos de virtud. (EBUB1S.s239)
> English: […] and were **hardly** paragons of virtue. (EBUB1E.s235)

Most instances of translated *difícilmente* function as adverbials, as opposed to modifiers of an adjective, which occurs in just a couple of cases (example 33).

> (33)   El punto de vista de Darwin, **difícilmente** diferenciable del de Lamarck, constituye una declaración formal en favor de […]. (EMLSD1S.s366)
> English: Darwin's view, **scarcely** distinguishable from Lamarck's, was absolutely a statement for […]. (EMLSD1E.s387)

e.   Prácticamente

Together with *apenas* and *casi*, the Spanish reference grammar includes within the inventory of Spanish negative licensers the adverb *prácticamente*, as long as this triggers a negative-polarity environment. 2.4% of the adverbial solutions contain this adverb in such a co-text; in three

occurrences *prácticamente* keeps company with an item conveying lexical negation such as preposition *sin* (example 34), and an adjective like *oculta*, En *invisible*. One occurrence displays a different co-textual pattern comprising *prácticamente* + affixal negation (*prácticamente imposible*), and there is another pattern, namely, *prácticamente* + adverb where the semantic blend 'negation + frequency' is conveyed by means of a clear lexico-grammatical interplay, i.e., through the lexis of the head adverb and its syntactic function. This is shown in example (35).

> (34)   […] la rentabilidad cayó, para terminar el periodo **prácticamente sin cambios**. (M23S.s461)
> English: As a result, yields fell to end the period **barely** changed. (M23E.s470)

> (35)   Muslim resistance to Frankish rule, […], **rarely** reached beyond the level of localized banditry. (ETC1E.s308)
> English: la resistencia musulmana al dominio franco, […], **prácticamente nunca** pasó del nivel de bandolerismo localizado. (ETC1S.s307)

The RAE reference grammar considers *prácticamente* a focus adverb that conveys a relation of approximation between the item it focuses on and other possibilities to be found in a semantic range where the extreme could be the opposite of its focus (RAE 2009:2992). In other words, in example 35, *prácticamente* premodifying *nunca* implies that, contrary to the resistance having always reached beyond a given level, this situation was rather *never* the case.

f.   Nada, sólo, menos, poco

Other adverbial solutions barely recurrent are *nada* (1%), En *nothing*, *sólo* (1%), En *only* (0.5%), *poco* (0.5%), En *little* and *menos*, En *less*. The RAE reference grammar classifies *nada* as an adverb of negation (RAE 2009: 2290). The pattern *nada de + NP* is frequently used to reject vehemently what has been said or that something is the case, (RAE 2009: 1460), as illustrated by example (36).

> (36)   ¡**Nada** de eso! (FSO1S.s146)
> English: **Hardly**! (FSO1E.s160)

As a focus adverb, Spanish *sólo* implies restriction of the action it focuses on as seen in example (37).

> (37)   […] pero incluso su cumplimiento **sólo** atenuaría el aumento de las emisiones de gases invernadero. (RAT1S.s33)
> English: But even Kyoto would **barely** slow the rise in heat-trapping gases. (RAT1E.s40)

Quantification adverb *poco* may also behave as a negative licenser (RAE 2009: 1491), which triggers not only negative connotations but also negative polarity items in the syntactic environment. Spanish standard grammar considers it as an evaluative quantifier (RAE 2009: 1480). As such, it conveys the idea that the amount being referred to does not comply with expectations of 'how much'. However, in terms of meaning, this is no different from focus-approximation, and applies not only to quantities but also to actions, qualities, etc., as illustrated in example (38).

> (38)   Samuel toca el saxo alto. (FSA1S.s437) - **Muy poco** - dijo Samuel. (FSA1S.s438)

> English: "Samuel plays the alto saxophone." (FSA1E.s460) "**Barely**," Samuel said. (FSA1E.s461)

The co-text where Spanish *menos* occurs, in the one instance found amongst the adverbial translations (example 39), emphasizes that a given entity does not bear the attribute denoted by the adjective which is the focus of *menos*.

(39)   La idea de que los artistas deben enfrentarse a la sociedad convencional es todo **menos** nueva. (EHP1S.s72)
English: The idea that artists must take an oppositional stance toward mainstream society is **hardly** new. (EHP1E.s75)

5.3.2 Syntactic Solutions

There is a great variety of other syntactic resources through which the ST meanings have been translated into Spanish. As in the case of other solutions, lexis and grammar are intertwined in the realization of the ST function.

a.   *Negative clause*

A significant number of occurrences of English approximate negators has been expanded in the Spanish translation into a negative clause. This solution is clearly preferred to render En *hardly* into Spanish. It is the second most frequent solution when translating *barely* and *scarcely*, and the third one in order of frequency amongst the resources which are equivalent to *rarely*. Regarding *seldom*, there has been no case where it has rendered a negative clause in Spanish (cf. table 4). Negative polarity is mainly conferred by the adverb *no* modifying the main verb, as example (40) shows.

(40)   **no tiene** *nada* de sorprendente que se rompan las ramas de los árboles y salgan volando las tejas de las casas. (EBB1S.s349)
English: it's **hardly** a surprise that tree-limbs snap and roof tiles go flying. (EBB1E.s333)

Clausal negation is also attained through negative polarity items such as *nadie* when it behaves syntactically as the subject of the clause, or through the pattern 'ni + focus adverb'. The latter emphasizes the negation put forward earlier in the sentence, as shown in example (41).

(41)   No tengo trabajos para nadie, **ni siquiera** para mí. (FGO1S.s634)
English: "I don't have a job for anyone, **hardly** *even* myself". (FGO1E.s636)

We have included within this resource two non-finite clauses containing the preposition *sin*, En *without*, followed by an infinitive. The two appear as translation of *barely*. It is the introductory preposition that confers negative connotations to the whole sentence, as observed in example (42).

(42)   **Sin darle tiempo a reaccionar** ante su presencia, vio que lanzaba al aire una piedra [...]. (FHJ1S.s335)
English: **Jay barely had time to react** to her presence before she sent a stone whizzing through the air [...]. (FHJ1E.s342)

Finally, there are a few cases where the ST item has been rendered in Spanish by means of a clause of positive polarity. This is seen in example (43):

(43)   [...]cuando se dé la señal, y **se dará** cuando Hitler lo decida así, habrá satélites del monstruo por todo el país y [...]. (EHJ1S.s173)

English: [...] when the signal is given, as it will **scarcely** fail to be when Hitler so decides, there will be satellites of the monster all over the country [...]. (EHJ1E.s170)

This polarity shift seeks to guarantee an acceptably idiomatic expression in the target language, arguably due to a wordy rhetoric in the ST.

b.   *Adjectival Phrase*

Some occurrences of *hardly*, *barely* and *scarcely* have been translated into Spanish by means of an adjectival phrase (AdjP). A close examination of the AdjPs found reveals a majority of adjectives which lexically encode negation that have been recurrently used, such as *difícil*, En *difficult* (example 44), or adjectives composed by negative prefixes like *improbable*, En *unlikely*.

(44)   Había tantos pájaros que cuando cantaban todos era **difícil** distinguir las voces de las diferentes especies. (EGJBM1S.s432)
English: So many birds. (EGJBM1E.s475) At its peak you could **barely** distinguish the voices of the different species.(EGJBM1E.s476)

Here too a shift whereby the target text (TT) acquires positive polarity has also been identified. Again, this shift is due to the need to render the ST meaning in an idiomatic way in the TT, as can be seen in example (45).

(45)   Es **natural** que el resultado sea a veces meteorológicamente interesante. (EBB1S.s351)
English: **Hardly** a wonder that the result is at times meteorologically exciting. (EBB1E.s335)

c. Prepositional Phrase

The prepositional phrase (PP) is rather a marginal translational option as indicated by two main factors: first, the small number of occurrences and second, the fact that translators have resorted to this resource only as equivalent of two approximate negators, namely, *barely* and *rarely*. Example (46) is representative of the type of PPs used as an equivalent of *barely,* where a typical resource for conveying circumstantial meanings, i.e., a PP, encodes negative connotations through lexical means.

(46)   Al final de la primera semana hacen un examen, que pasa **por los pelos**. (FCJM1S.s512)
English: At the end of the first week they write a test, which he **barely** scrapes through. (FCJM1E.s519)

Regarding the PPs found as a translation of *rarely*, these clearly express low frequency through the lexis of the head noun and premodifiers, as example (47) shows.

(47)   **Con menos frecuencia** algún jefe mesiánico edificará una Nueva Jerusalén provisional. (EHE1S.s57)
English: More **rarely**, a Messianic leader will appear to build a temporary New Jerusalem. (EHE1E.s58)

d. Noun Phrase

The noun phrase (NP) behaves in a way similar to the PP. Syntactically, the NPs found are adverbials. Again, a great deal of the combined meaning lies on the lexical components. There is, moreover, one recurrent NP, namely, *pocas veces*, as the only nominal possibility for translating *rarely* and *seldom* (see example 48).

(48)   La enfermedad es rara y normalmente no es grave, y **pocas veces** es necesario el control. (EWD1S.s216)
English: The disease is rare and usually not severe, and control is **seldom** required. (EWD1E.s217)

5.3.3 Lexical Solutions

The classification of translational options (cf. table 4) contains one category of lexical solutions, which comprises expressions that acquire negative connotations pragmatically, as observed in example (49), where the underlying meaning is that the action had not occurred frequently.

(49)   No era marinero; en realidad, **podía contar con los dedos de una mano** las veces que se había subido a un barco, […]. (FWJ1S.s418)

Gloss: [(he) was not a sailor; in reality, (he) could **count with the fingers of one of his hands** the times that (he) had got onboard]
English: He was no mariner, indeed he'd **hardly** set foot on a boat before. (FWJ1E.s398)

The descriptive stages reported so far shed light on the many-to-many functionality patterns of so-called approximate negation in English and Spanish. Such patterns comprise different formal resources required by or to the expression of various semantic connotations that arise in the realization of negation in English and Spanish respectively. The next stage of the analysis juxtaposes such patterns per language in order to contrast existing differences and similarities.

5.4 Juxtaposition and contrast

Whereas English resorts to adverbial forms to express approximate negation, Spanish - lacking a class of approximate negators-, offers a much wider array of formal possibilities. Empirical data in table 4 and, in more detail, in table 6, show that just over 60% of the translational solutions correspond to adverbs that have been used to convey the approximation meaning of the English items.

The target language shows a marked preference for formally dissimilar solutions such as different types of phrasal groups that are meant to encode the meaning conveyed by the original English item, which constitute over 31% of all cases. Of these, the most frequent options are various types of negative clauses (see 4.2.2.2.). Lexical solutions are primarily affixal negatives such as *desconocer* (En *not know*) and idiomatic expressions, and account for 2.5 % of our translational solutions, the same as in those cases where the meaning conveyed by the English approximate item disappears in the Spanish version.

Table 6
Juxtaposition of English approximate negators and translation equivalent adverbs in Spanish.

N	%	Adv En	Adv Sp	%	n
153	47.8	Hardly	Apenas	30	102
86	26.9	Barely	Rara(s) vez(ces)	8	27
46	14.4	Rarely	Casi	7	24
25	7.8	Seldom	Difícilmente	6.7	23
10	3.1	Scarcely	Raramente	5.2	18
			Prácticamente	1.5	5
			Nada	0.5	2
			Poco	0.5	2
			Menos	0.3	1
			Sólo	0.3	1
320	100	TOTAL		60.1	205

This juxtaposition clearly shows that both the length of the Spanish inventory of adverbial items and their frequency radically depart from the English language data. While English concentrates nearly 75% of the occurrences on two adverbs, *hardly* and *barely*, Spanish only features one adverb quantitatively significant, *apenas*, which accounts for 30% of the adverbial uses. The rest is spread unevenly among a number of adverbial possibilities, which, with the exception of *casi* and *prácticamente* tend to highlight secondary meaning aspects (frequency, manner, etc.). These figures give proof of the non-centrality of approximate negation resources in the economy of Spanish, which would demonstrate that there is no special class of formal items that speakers associate with this cluster of meanings. Even though negation is one core meaning of the adverbial solutions, other connotations which are not characteristic of the English approximate negators are associated to the Spanish items.

A contrast of meaning(s) (table 7) helps to identify discrepancies of semantic functions between the English items and their Spanish translations. The table falls into two main parts. The upper one shows the similarities across languages, whereas the lower part displays the

dissimilarities found in the Spanish adverbials. The English approximate negators which have triggered such interpretations are indicated in squared brackets.

Table 7
Contrast of meanings realized by English STs and Spanish TTs

Eng ST (N)	Similarities	Spanish adverbial	n
Barely (153) Hardly (86) Scarcely (10)	Approximation	Apenas	68
		Casi	24
		Practicamente	5
		Poco	2
Rarely (46) Seldom (25)	Negation + Frequency	Rara(s) vez(ces)	27
		Raramente	18
	Dissimilarities	**Spanish adverbial**	
[Hardly] [Barely] [Scarcely]	Manner	Apenas	33
		Difícilmente	23
[Hardly]	Restriction	Apenas	1
[Hardly]	Exclusion	Menos	1
[Barely]	Particularization	Sólo	1
[Hardly]	Negation	Nada	2
TOTAL			**205**

Whereas the notion of absence of completeness/ approximation is shared by the English adverbs and the majority of the Spanish adverbial solutions - *apenas, casi, prácticamente* and quantifier *poco*-, other connotations, which are not characteristic of the English approximate negators, are associated to the Spanish items.

6. Conclusions

Negation belongs in the core meaning of the English adverbs. Yet, the Spanish solutions are not necessarily negative and need additional company to actually produce negative meanings (see 4.2.2.1.c).

Exclusion (*menos*), particularization (*sólo*) and restriction (*apenas*) constitute a shift in the focus of the approximation conveyed by the English adverbs. As a result, the Spanish texts display these more specific types of approximation (see 4.2.2.1.f)

Spanish *difícilmente* is generally classified as an adverb of 'manner' and contributes the additional sense of 'being arduous', as a translation of the 'absence of completeness' conveyed by *hardly, barely* and *scarcely* (see 4.2.2.1.d)

In our corpus data English *rarely* and *seldom* have been found to indicate 'low frequency', which has been transferred into Spanish using frequency adverbs *rara(s) vez(ces), raramente, pocas veces* and *poco* (see 4.2.2.1.b).

Identifying the similarities has not been a straightforward task because of the radically divergent treatment of these resources in the grammatical traditions of each of the two languages, English and Spanish.

Qualitatively, the differences unveiled by our analysis point to a tendency to over-specify the notion of approximation in the Spanish translations. Besides, the addition of meaning components that were not in the English originals is, in some cases, recurrent, i. e., *difícilmente*.

In quantitative terms, it is clear that whereas English concentrates these meanings in a relatively small class of items, Spanish displays a longish repertoire of resources, grammatical, syntactic and lexical, that account for different aspects of approximation.

Further contrast, including non-translated Spanish usage, is needed in order to determine whether the adverbial choices in the Spanish translations follow the native patterns or whether they constitute a *third code* feature (Frawley 1984; Øverås 1998, Rabadán 2011:57).

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