

ASSESSING TRANSLATIONS THROUGH COMPARISONS

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When people in general think of translation the concept presented by Catford as being "a process of substituting a text in another", seems to be enough, but when a person, having a good command of two different linguistic codes, is faced with the task of translating, he/she very quickly realizes that there is more to it and that there are a lot of details which he has to keep in mind as, for example, the play on words, proper nouns, culture-specific items, conventional/idiomatic expressions, polissemes, false cognates, metaphors, etc.

Moreover, the original text is always presented within a context of which, ideally, the translator knows about in order to keep and/or highlight the function of the text. The translator can never forget the audience to which the text is directed to in order to keep the style, the general tone and the register, where his lexical choices become important. The original author had an ideal reader in mind which does not in fact exist, so the translator tries to get very close to the real reader who, most of the times, stands between a listener, who is not the addressee for a message but is recognized as a participant; and a overhearer, who is neither the addressee for a message nor a recognized participant (Coulthard: 2-3).

Every translation is a different version of an original text. It is an invention which resulted from the combination of craft and art and constitutes a unique text. It is a craft if we think of it as the rendering of a source language text into the target

language text, so that the surface meaning of the two will be similar and with the structures of the source language text close to the those of the target language in a way that the target language structures are not distorted (Basnett-McGuire: 2).

It is art because it is a creative process involving interpretation, aesthetic features, and the constant goal of trying to improve the source language text. Because it is a creative process we will never have a final and definitive version and thus, we cannot evaluate a translation, unless we take into account the process of creation and the fulfillment of its function in a particular context (Basnett-McGuire, 6-9).

Moreover, if we ask "Is this a correct translation?", we should immediately after ask "For whom?". Correctness exists if the average reader to whom it is intended to will understand the message correctly and not misunderstand it. So, we will have different versions that can be considered correct if they take into account vocabulary and grammatical structures which meet the different socioeducational levels of speech and comprehension of the readers (Nida, 2).

What we still can do to see if one translation is more successful or less successful concerning the creative process and its function in a context is to compare two or more versions of the same original text. This paper, then, is an attempt to compare two translated versions of an original text, taking into account cultural implications and cultural constraints because a translator does not forget that we live in cultures and that we talk in cultures and that this is an important point to be considered when translating, as it may bring problems concerning function and even the full understanding of the text.

The chosen source text for this paper is written in German and its ideal reader would be a tourist visiting Munich for the first time. The two translated versions are one in English and one in Portuguese and it is assumed that the translator(s) has/have some experience in translating this kind of discourse.

Fortunately, there are some mechanisms which help the translator in his hard job of fast decision making. Some of them appear in the translated versions of the selected source text here and will be commented in the following paragraphs.

In summary, the assumption is that the translator understands how communication through language happens

and is also aware of the main aspects which distinguish the source language from the target language if he wants to perceive the processes and the problems of translation (Coulthard, 1).

Open Choice Principle and Idiom Principle

One of the mechanisms used by translators is the open choice principle which is the selection of a significant word in a clause or phrase, obeying the rules of grammar. The translator may see first if there are marked choices or unmarked choices in the original text and decide which one to use. Another mechanism is the idiom principle where the translator can choose between a pre-constructed string of words which constitute single choices. Idiomatic expressions are an example of this principle.

The source text starts with a proverb: "Liebe geht durch den Magen" which in the English version is translated as "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach" which is the popular equivalent in this language. This shows that the English author has decided to apply the idiom principle. But, when we see the Portuguese version, we notice that the translator uses the open choice principle and gives a word-for-word translation "O amor passa pelo estômago", instead of using the idiom principle which would not give us a clue that this is in fact a translation. The equivalent proverb in Portuguese would be "O homem se conquista pelo estômago" or "O peixe morre pela boca", thus placing the Brazilian reader in his familiar Brazilian culture. This also shows that maybe knowledge about some cultural aspects are missing in the Portuguese translator.

Omissions

Omission is a mechanism that avoids redundancies, unimportant explanations or odd combinations of phonetics sounds. Omissions may also happen because of distractions during the translation process itself or during the editing.

In the fifth line of the source text we have an adjective "Münchner" and a noun whose meaning is specific to the

German language which is "Gemütlichkeit". The English version omits these two words, probably on purpose due to its difficult transposition into English, while the Portuguese version uses the adjective *muniquense*, and keeps the word "Gemütlichkeit" followed by an attempt of translation — "bem estar".

The kind of sausage called "Weisswurst" keeps its German name in the English version, but is translated into Portuguese as "salsicha branca". The adjective "zarte" and noun "Köstlichkeit" are used in the original to describe the "Weisswurst". It is curious that the English version brings only the adjective, translated as "delicate", and omits the noun. On the other hand, the Portuguese version brings only the noun, translated as an adjective, "deliciosa", and omits the German adjective.

The German author explains the ingredients of the "Weisswurst" and the English version translates them one by one. The Portuguese translator seems to have forgotten to mention one of the ingredients - "pepper", which resulted in an omission maybe caused by distraction. But he repairs this fault probably unconsciously by making an insertion to explain better the main ingredient which is "*carne picada de vitela*" which the German and the English texts only mention as "Kalbsbrat" and "veal" respectively, not specifying that the meat should be "picada".

Insertions

Insertion is a mechanism which can provide additional information to the reader in order to put him into the context in which the text is written in. They can be very long when lexical iconicity appears in the original text, for example.

The moment when the German text starts to talk about beer, the English text presents an insertion probably with the purpose of explaining. The English translator writes: "Munich has been styled the unofficial beer capital of the world and who would contest this claim ?".

The word in German "Pils" which describes a kind of beer is kept in English with the insertion of the word "pale" to clarify

better the kind of beer and is translated into Portuguese as "Pilsen" which is enough for the Brazilian reader to understand what kind of beer it is. When we come to the other kind of beer called "Weissbier" in German and the explanation "Weizenbier", we notice that the English version has a mistake. Instead of writing "made of wheat", we read "made from wheat". This is not a serious mistake, but is a hint showing us that the English text might not be the original one. The Portuguese version keeps the name "Weissbier", translates it as "cerveja branca" and inserts an explanation ("altamente fermentada feita de trigo") probably because it is not common in our country to produce beer made of wheat.

We notice that German text uses a normal register when we come to the word "Radi". The German explains that in a higher register this word is "Rettich". In English we see "Radi" and its translation "radish" and the same happens in Portuguese where we see "Radi" and "Rábano".

A kind of German *sausage* is called "Leberkäs" which appears in the source text followed by an explanation of what it consists of. The original name is kept in the English version with its explanation fully translated into English. In Portuguese, the name itself is also kept but the explanation uses the original words "Leber" and "Käse" followed by a parenthetical translation in Portuguese reading "fígado" and "queijo".

The original word "Schmankerl" is kept in the English and Portuguese versions. The Portuguese version assigns it as a masculine noun when inserting "os". At least this shows us that the translator probably knows what they are or that the word is considered to be a masculine noun in German (in the German text no article appears in front of "Schmankerl"). The original text says that it is a "Münchener Spezialität" which in English is translated in the plural "Munich specialties" due to the rephrasing of the sentence which requests the plural. The Portuguese version also rephrases the original sentence, but prefers to keep the original words, now also required in the plural, and so we have "Münchener Spezialitäten".

The German food called "Leberknödel" is used in the English and Portuguese versions and the German word "Knödelarten", which is an attempt of the German author to

say what they are, is translated into English as “dumplings”, but is kept in Portuguese only slightly changed to “Knödel” which gives no idea to Brazilians of the kind of food it might be. On the other hand, while the German text only mentions the word “Schweinwürsti”, the English version keeps this word but uses a parenthetical explanation (an insertion) saying that they are “pork sausages”. The Portuguese version goes beyond this and changes the original word by inserting “brat” in its middle. Thus, we have “Schweinbratwürsti” accompanied by the explanation “lingüiças fritas de porco”.

Lexical Choices

Another aspect to be considered is the selection of words made by the translator which can call the reader’s attention because the chosen words are marked choices or, on the other hand, can pass unnoticed by the reader. If we take, for example, the word “muniquense”, we find it strange because we are not used to hear or read it. If the text brought “de Munique” instead, it would not call the reader’s attention so much as I think “muniquense” does. Comparing to the expressions “de Paris” or “parisiense”, we can see this better. These two last ones are frequently heard, while “muniquense” is less heard in Portuguese, thus constituting a marked choice.

The German string of words “Rindsbrat und Speck gebackener Laib” was translated successfully into English as “baked loaf of ground beef and bacon”. The Portuguese translator used “massa de carne de vaca e toucinho” which leaves the Brazilian reader wondering what exactly it is and signals that the text is a translated version, besides showing that the translator made a not very lucky lexical choice.

The concept “chucrute” in German is represented by two words: “Sauerkraut” or only “Kraut”. The German version brings “Kraut”; the English version brings “Sauerkraut” which is the word commonly used in English to refer to this food and which is a borrowing from the German language. The Portuguese translator used the word “Sauerkraut” and its translations “chucrute” in parentheses. The use of “Sauerkraut” in the two translated versions shows that the

translator(s) knew that "Kraut" referred to "Sauerkraut", a more specific term to describe this food.

When talking about beer the German text uses the words "Eine Mass" and "Eine Halbe", specifying the volume after each one in liters. The English and Portuguese texts use the original words and also specify the volume. The English brings "a quarter" and "a pint" both typical measures found in the United Kingdom, but not in the United States. We are led to think, then, that this version would be directed to the United Kingdom and that, ideally, there should be another version directed to an American audience aiming at a better understanding. The Portuguese version keeps the originals "Eine Mass" and "Eine Halbe" also bringing the measures expressed in liters which are our official terms to express volume. Here, a question could be raised. If the German text would not have specified the volume, would the two other versions have mentioned them? This would probably be a decision to be taken by the translator(s), whether this would be or not an important item concerning the function of the text.

There is a list of names of kinds of bread found in Munich, but the English version brings other names in German in their place. We are left with a doubt here. Are the German names, used in the English version, more known in the English environment; or are these other German names easier to be compared to the English doughnut as the English version does and, consequently, easier to the English reader to understand what they are? The Portuguese version brings the names in German according to the original text with no attempt of comparison to Brazilian kinds of bread.

Looking at the translations compared above we see that one of the procedures used was "borrowing", that is, the use of the foreign word when there is the target language (Costa, 287). One alternative that could have been used by the English and the Portuguese translators would have been the long, exhaustive and not always successful explanation of the different kinds of food and beer. By keeping the original names, though, the translators have made clear that these different kinds of food and beer have names which are specific to a language and are close related to a culture. This, in my opinion, is more worthwhile because it shows that we live and talk in

different cultures. It may also arise curiosity and the desire to check personally what this food and this beer is like and this means going to the country and, thus, fulfill the purpose of the text. Besides, keeping the original names in the translations helps the tourist in the understanding of a menu.

Through the comparisons described in this paper it is easy to see that translations require a lot of decision making, especially when culture aspects are brought into play. The translator is constantly faced with the decision of omitting something or not; of inserting something aiming at a better clarification; of keeping original names because of untranslatability. We realize that translation is a rather personal process and that is why it is difficult to teach. Maybe the individual processes should be studied and the final products should be analysed in order to find out how translation really works — its strategies, the influence of the context, the role of the translator's first language in relation to his writing in the foreign language. After that, the teaching of translation could take place and could be improved. In the meantime, dictionaries, a satisfactory knowledge of the source language, educational background, previous knowledge of the world, experiences and a lot of common sense help the translator in finding the way to get to end of the road, that is, the target text.

Appendix I – GERMAN

Spezialitäten

"Liebe geht durch den Magen"
Dieser Spruch findet in München seine besondere Bestätigung. Denn es gilt als ein Teil der vielzitierten Münchner Gemütlichkeit, dass man hier auch zu essen und zu trinken versteht. Probieren Sie deshalb zuerst, was unter "Schmankerl" als Münchner Spezialität auf der Speisekarte

Appendix II – ENGLISH

Specialities

"The way to a man's heart is through his stomach" it is said, and this proverb is perhaps particularly true in Munich, a city where some attention is devoted to good eating and drinking. As an introduction, try some of the "Schmankerl" on the menu, that is, Munich specialities. Weisswurst, that delicate mixture

aufgeführt ist: Die Weisswurst, jene zarte Köstlichkeit, "gemixt" aus Kalbsbrat, Salz, Pfeffer, Zitrone und Petersilie. Den Leberkäs, der weder mit Leber noch mit Käse etwas gemein hat, sondern ein aus Rindsbrat und Speck gebackener Laib ist. Den Leberknödel, die berühmteste Sorte bayerischer Knödelarten. Kaum wegzudenken sind ausserdem die altbekannten Schweinwürsti mit Kraut. Kenner wissen, wo sie besonders schmackhaft am Rost gebraten werden. Aber was wäre die gute Speis' ohne das berühmte Münchner Bier? Der Durstige bestellt "Eine Mass" (1 Liter). Die Meisten nehmen "Eine Halbe" (1/2 Liter). Hell oder dunkel? Süffiger ist, laut Volksmeinung, das "Dunkle". Aber immer mehr bevorzugen das "Helle" und das "Pils". Und wie wär's mit dem obergängigen Weissbier (Weizenbier)? Oder mit "Märzen" und "Bock" (Starkbiere)? Köstlich schmecken sie alle. Vor allem, wenn Sie mit einem sorgsam gesalzenen "Radi" — auf Hochdeutsch Rettich — Ihren Durst erst so recht schüren und dazu die Münchner Brot-Spezialitäten probieren: Brez'n, Remische, Salzstangen, Loawen, Mohnzöpfel. Noch vieles liesse sich nennen. Aber lassen Sie sich doch einfach vom Magenfahrplan einer altmünchner Gaststätte inspirieren! Auch die sich ständlich erweiternde internationale Speisekarte der Stadt darf hier nicht unerwähnt bleiben. Wer in München eine kulinarische Weltreise unter-

of veal, salt, pepper, lemon, and parsley. Leberkäs which, despite its name has nothing to do with liver or cheese but is a baked loaf of ground beef and bacon. Leberknödel, the bestknown of the Bavarian dumplings. Life would be almost inconceivable in Bavaria without the famous Schweinwürsti (pork sausages) with sauerkraut. Experts know the places where they are grilled to perfection. But what would good eating be without the famous Munich beer? Munich has been styled the unofficial beer capital of the world and who would contest this claim? If you're really thirsty, order "eine Mass" (a quart). Mostly one drinks "eine Halbe" (a pint). Which do you prefer, light or dark? Previously, dark had the preference. But now, more and more people drink "pale" or "Pils" beer. Then there's the sparkling Weissbier made from wheat. Or "Märzen" and "Bock" (strong beers). All of them are delicious, especially when enjoyed a carefully — salted, thirst-inducing "Radi" — in English, radish — and some of Munich's famous bread and rolls. The "Dampfnudel", "Rohrnudel" and "Schmalznudel" are Bavaria's answer to the doughnut, each quite an individual in itself. One could go on and on. But let yourself be inspired by the menu in an old-Munich restaurant. International cooking too has made great headway in Munich.

nehmen will, der braucht nicht lange zu suchen, um die Gaumenfreuden Italien, Frankreichs, Ungarns, Japans, Jugoslawiens, Mexikos, Spaniens, Österreichs, Griechenlands, der Schweiz, der Tschechoslowakei, ja selbst Chinas und Indonesiens zu genießen.

Without leaving the city, you can make a world tour and enjoy the culinary pleasures of Italy, France, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, Greece, Spain, Mexico. Or for that matter, China, Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

Appendix III – PORTUGUESE

Especialidades

“O amor passa pelo estômago”. Este provérbio encontra em Munique sua afirmação toda especial. Porque comer e beber faz parte da muito citada “Gemütlichkeit” (bem-estar) muniquense. Por isso prove primeiro os “Schmankerl” — que se encontram no cardápio entre “Münchner Spezialitäten”: a salsicha branca, aquela mistura deliciosa de carne picada de vitela, sal, limo e salsa; o “Leberkäs”, que não tem nada a ver com Leber (fígado), nem com Käse (queijo) mas é uma massa de carne de vaca e de toucinho. O Leberknödel é o mais famoso dos Knödel bávaros. Também quase não se pode imaginar o menu bávaro sem as famosas Schweinsbratwürsti (linguiças fritas de porco) com Sauerkraut (chucrute). Os conhecedores sabem onde encontrar as mais gostosas, grelhadas na brasa. Mas o que seria tudo isso sem a famosa cerveja muniquense? Quem tem muita sede pede “eine Mass” (um litro), a maioria pede “eine Halbe” (meio litro). Clara ou escura? Conforme a opinião do povo, a cerveja escura é mais gostosa. No entanto, cada vez mais gente prefere a cerveja clara e a “Pilsen”. Ou, que tal uma Weissbier (cerveja branca), altamente fermentada, feita de trigo? Ou então uma “Märzen” e uma “Bock” (cervejas fortes)? Seja qual for a sua escolha, sempre será gostosa. Especialmente, se tomada com um “Radi” (rábano) bem salgado, que dá mais sede ainda. Ou com um dos tipos de pão

especial, como a “Brezn”, o “Remische”, o “Salzstangen”, o “Loawen” ou o “Mohnzöpferl”. O melhor é deixar-se inspirar pelo “roteiro culinário” de uma cervejaria. Também não devemos esquecer o cardápio cada vez maior de pratos internacionais, sem o qual a lista de especialidades ficaria bem incompleta. Se pretende fazer uma viagem culinária em volta ao mundo, não precisa ir longe: encontra aqui as delícias das cozinhas italiana, francesa, húngara, russa, iugoslava, mexicana, espanhola, austríaca, grega, suíça, tcheco-eslovaca, e até chinesa, japonesa e indonésia. .

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