

VERIFYING THE PRODUCTIVITY OF TOURY'S DESCRIPTIVE MODEL

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1. Introduction

Traditionally, theories of translation have proved to be source-oriented in the sense that they have the source-text with its source-linguistic code and its source system as their main point of reference. These theories have, in general, given primacy to the source-text over the target text and its configurations, which resulted in highly normative, prescriptive, source-oriented (only) accounts of translational phenomena. The target-text is neglected and translations are reduced to transpositions of linguistic systems. These transpositions, in turn, are evaluated in terms of 'correctness', according to norms previously established. Moreover, the principles underlying source-oriented theories are based on hypothetical translations, rather than actual existing ones.

Noticing this gap in the field of translation studies, Toury (1980) provided a theory of translation which was based on a semiotic framework: a systematic account of semiotic processes or all the possibilities of combinations of signs, the operations underlying these combinations and their representation in texts in order to establish communication. From a semiotic perspective, he attempted to outline a theory which focused on the target-text, its target-linguistic code and the target system. The reason for this choice, Toury argues, is that translated texts do not affect the source-system. They may affect the target-system, its linguistic and textual aspects.

Within this context, this paper proposes to apply the theoretical model of analysis of translated texts suggested by Toury — the De-

scriptive Model -, and check the validity of its principles. First, the theoretical basis of the model as well as its main goals and procedures will be summarised. Then, the analysis of the corpus through the perspective of the model will be presented. Finally, some concluding remarks are presented in relation to both the strengths and limitations of the model.

2. Corpus

The corpus of the analysis consists of a source-text and three target-texts (see Appendices). The source-text is an excerpt of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* — the interlude preceding the first chapter. The target-texts consist of one published translation by Lya Luft (Translation A) — the only one in Brazilian Portuguese -, and two texts translated by graduate students of English for the purposes of the present paper (Translations B and C, respectively).

3. Toury's descriptive model

At the time of the elaboration of his model, Toury points out the need for a descriptive discipline in the field of translation studies. In his view, source-oriented theories of translation speculate and work on hypothetical, idealised translations instead of focusing on actual, existing translations. Toury claims that theories of translation which are constructed on the basis of hypothetical phenomena lead nowhere and fail to explain how real translated texts came to be these texts. Such an explanation can only be given on the basis of a descriptive study of translated texts by means of a comparative analysis.

Toury suggests that any descriptive study of translation should begin in the target-system, because, in nature, a translation is determined — or conditioned — by the goal it serves. Therefore, if we want to understand the process of translation and its product, we have to define clearly the purpose of the translation. This can only be done through the perspective of the target pole which, in the function of a receptor pole, works as the 'initiator' of a transfer at the interlingual, intertextual, and intercultural levels.

Toury presents three basic steps in an analysis of translations through the descriptive model. The analyst will first select target-

phenomena regarded as translational phenomena from the viewpoint of the target-system. These translational phenomena are prior to, or independent of the source text. In the second step, the analyst will check these translational phenomena against the source text, through a comparative analysis in the form of a problem/solution pattern. The purpose of this analysis is to establish translational relationships between source-text and target-text. Finally, the third step consists of the reconstruction of the process of decision-making of the solutions for the respective problems.

A descriptive study is not merely a comparative analysis of source-text and target-text. In Toury's view, comparative studies may contribute to a broader dimension of the functional description of translational phenomena. He argues that comparisons can be made among (1) several translations by different translators into the same language, (2) different phases in the elaboration of a translation, and (3) different translations of the same text into different languages (p. 84).

As for the nature of translational phenomena — equivalent to translational problem— Toury claims that 'problem' and 'solution' are mutually determined during the comparative study. A translational problem in the source-text can only be defined as such if we can establish the solution for this problem in the target-text, and the other way around: a translational phenomenon in the target-text will only consist of a solution if there is problem in the source-text. Any entity may turn to be a translational problem in relation to a certain solution, or vice-versa. However, it is important to notice that items of the source-text will only turn into a problem if they are actually confronted in a translation. From the perspective of this descriptive model, translational problems are reconstructed, rather than presupposed. This implies that a process that can be reconstructed as a problem in one comparative study may not constitute a problem in another study. In this sense, translational problems are regarded in terms of relationships, which can only be dealt with after we have defined the appropriate units in both source and target texts.

To convey the meaning of a unit it is necessary, first, to outline the schematic presentation of the text. A text consists of *linguistic means* (Lms) which acquire function in a given linguistic system. When realising functions, these linguistic means are called *formemes*

(FM) — or an LM standing in opposition to another LM, in terms of functionality. In essence, linguistic means acquire different functions in the different textual traditions. The occurrence of an FM in a text makes it a linguistic-textual element. Certain combinations of FMs produce textual units, such as a paragraph, a chapter, a verse, etc. The basic meaningful unit in a text is the *texteme* — elements which possess textual functions.

Thus the comparative analysis of source-text to its various target-texts composing the corpus begins by a *textemic* analysis of the source-text, which leads to the formulations of an adequate translation, i.e., the equivalence, on the *textemic* level, between source-text and target-text. After having defined the *textemes* of the source-text, the second operation is to compare those target-text units which correspond to the source-text *textemes*, as well as to establish the shifts or deviations concerning adequacy of the target units from the source text. The last operation of the comparative analysis consists of stating generalisations of the distance between target-text and source-text equivalence and adequate translation, which can be done on the basis of partial comparisons of separate *textemes*.

Toury identifies two main types of translational relationships — one formal and the other functional — , each of which corresponding to the linguistic and textual levels. When carrying the analysis we have to find the relationships involved in the act of translation, enumerate and weight them in order to determine the centrality of the relationship. We have to establish which of the relationships will be considered dominant in the target-text and the overall translational relationship of the corpus in order to determine, as Toury labels it, its underlying poetics of translation.

Summarising, the descriptive study of translated texts involves three steps:

(a) describing translational solution to translational problems, through a comparative analysis of source-text and target-text, in which the solution found in the target text will be checked against their counterparts in the source-text;

(b) identifying the relationships between source-text and target-text in terms of problem/solution pairs, and

(c) reconstructing the processes of decision-making underlying

each problem/solution pair in the various target-texts corresponding to the same text.

4. Analysis

In stage 'a' of the comparative analysis between source-text and target-text, Toury suggests that a textemic analysis of source-text be carried out. For practical reasons, only those textual segments which seem to be more representative of the source-text — in terms of relevance to its general configuration —, were selected.

In *The Waves*, the narrator describes the landscape — the sunrising in the sea. The three central elements involved in the description are the sky, the waves, and the sea as it changes according to the rising of the sun. For each of these elements, the narrator elaborates metaphors, which, in turn, are developed shifting the focus from the element in question to the ones included in the construction of the metaphor. Thus, we have, for instance, in line 12, the description of the way the sky was clearing, by means of a metaphor — the arm of a woman raising a lamp — and, following this, a whole segment on the light produced by the lamp which is, in turn, compared to a bonfire and another segment describing the colours produced by the bonfire. The imagery and the metaphors built in this text are its main aspects and, missing them, the translator is missing the value of the text. The poetics of the text, in a linguistic view, lies on the author's choice of the vocabulary and of the organisation of the elements in the paragraphs so as to build up imagery. Thus, in hypothesising on a construct of an adequate translation, we may suggest that an adequate translation of this source-text is the one which maintains, in the target-text literary system the imagery and the metaphors present in the source-text.

The textemes of the source-text selected as representative of its general configuration are related to the degree they contribute to the construction of imagery and-or metaphors. From these, six examples were extracted:

- (1) l. 2: ...the sea was slightly creased...
- (2) l. 5: ...thick strokes...
- (3) l. 11: ...the sediment in an old wine-bottle...

- (4) l. 13: ... the arm of a woman couched beneath the horizon...
 (5) l. 20: ... which lifted the weight of the woollen grey sky...
 (6) l. 32: ... and made a blue finger-print of shadow under the
 leaf by the bedroomwindow...

As already hinted, an adequate translation should aim at maintaining the semantic references of the units underlined above. Proceeding to stage "b" of the comparative analysis proposed by Toury, the target units corresponding to the source-text textemes chosen as examples and which constitute shifts or deviations are the following:

- (1) ... o mar estava um pouco marcado (transl. B)
 ... o mar tinha se elevado um pouco (transl. C)
 (2) ... fortes carícias (transl. C)
 (3) ... o sedimento numa velhá garrafa de vinho (transl. B)
 ... ao sedimento de uma velha garrafa de vinho (transl. C)
 (4) ... os braços de uma mulher estendidos além do horizonte
 (transl. B)
 ... um braço de mulher descansando debaixo da linha do
 horizonte (transl. C)
 (5) ... e a pesada cobertura do céu cinza (transl. A)
 ... que levantou o peso de um céu cinza (transl. B)
 (6) ... e fez uma marca de sombra azul (transl. B)
 ... deixando uma impressão azul de sombra (transl. C)

As we can see translators not always succeed in maintaining the reference of source-text, which results in distance of target-text from source-text.

Before going to stage C of the analysis, in which generalisations are made on the distance between target-text and source-text equivalence and adequate translation, Toury suggests that the translational relationships of each target-text be determined as well as the dominant relationship. It is necessary to point out that the extracts listed above constitute only examples of the kind of analysis proposed in stages A and B. These examples do not exhaust the translational relationships present in the corpus.

A detailed comparison of source-text textemes and its correspondents in target-text show that the translational relationships of the cor-

pus are characterised as problems of omission, collocation and mistakes, as well as instances of inversion, replacement, addition, paraphrasing, and arbitrary division of segments. A dominant relationship of each target-text can be set up as follows:

(1) Translation A: 50% of the translational relationships present in the target-text are characterised as omissions. The remaining 50% are characterised by inversions, replacement, paraphrasing, and addition.

(2) Translation B: 75% of the relationships are related to problems of collocation. Mistakes and omissions characterise the remaining 25%.

(3) Translation C: 67% of the relationships are characterised as problems of collocation and mistakes — the number of instances in which these two translational relationships happen are just the same. The other 33% are characterised by relationships such as additions, inversions, and omissions.

The last step required in the comparative analysis suggested by Toury is concerned with generalisations, on the part of the analyst, about the distance between source-text and target-text, in terms of equivalence and adequate translation. This step is perhaps the most problematic one, since Toury does not clearly state on what basis these generalisations can be made.

In "Norms of translation into Hebrew" — an application of his model — Toury (1980) performs stage C of his analysis by means of the construction of paradigmatic operational norms, classified into matricial and textual norms. The purpose of the analysis of matricial norm is to make statements of the nature of the translational relationships present in the corpus. Thus, in the corpus of the present study, the most relevant relationships detected are characterised as omissions, collocations, and mistakes.

The material omitted consists, mostly, of those elements which, in the source-text, are repeated. That is, in the target-texts translators tend to avoid the repetitions of a lexical item within the same segment, in spite of its repetition in the source-text. We can consider, thus, that these omissions are related to more peripheral elements, since omissions of whole segments or sentences do not happen in the corpus.

With regard to problems of collocation and mistakes, these two relationships happen mainly in translations B and C. In the first relationship — collocation — the problem is in the combination of lexical items (e.g. free word combination) which result in a marked construction of the sentence in the target-text. In the second relationship — mistakes — the problem results from a misinterpretation of the source-text which harms the quality of the target-text, as the following example shows:

L 10: “Gradually the dark bar on the horizon became clear as if the sediment in an old wine-bottle had sunk and left the *glass* green”.

Transl. C: “Aos poucos a banda no horizonte fazia-se mais clara igual ao sedimento de uma velha garrafa de vinho que afundou e deixou o *copo* esverdeado.

The translator seems to have misunderstood the meaning of the word *glass* in the source-text, choosing an inadequate lexical item in Portuguese for the target-text.

Concerning textual norms, the target-texts of a corpus can be evaluated in terms of style, which involves an analysis of the language chosen by translators: colloquial language, synonyms, repetitions, foreign-language elements inserted in the target-text, among others.

In the corpus under analysis, one interesting aspect concerning style is that translation A seems to be the one which constitutes more appropriately a literary text. This is due mainly to the choice of lexical elements — less colloquial -, and to the avoidance of repetitions. The translator chose, most times, to replace repeated items by synonyms and this is a consistent strategy on her part. Another strategy adopted by translator A is inversion of elements. These inversion can either be of single elements — adjective before nouns, for instance —, or of longer constituents.

5. Concluding remarks

The comparative analysis carried out in this paper has shown us the kinds of translational relationships underlying the corpus as well as the dominant relationships of each target-text. By means of an analysis of matricial and textual norms it was possible to make some linguis-

tic generalisations on the distance between source-text and target-text in terms of equivalence and adequacy. Through the analysis it was also possible to conclude that translation A seems to be the most adequate one since it keeps the style of a literary text more appropriately. Translations B and C, on the other hand, are impaired by the number of problems of collocation and mistakes.

Models are, by nature, limited to a certain aspect of the phenomenon they investigate. When arguing for a descriptive analysis of translations, Toury suggests that after having established the textemes of the source-text and the translational relationships underlying "problem/solution" pairs, the analyst should attempt to reconstruct the process whereby translators made their decisions. Nevertheless, Toury himself does not elaborate on this part of the analysis, and does not make it clear how one can reconstruct the processes of decision-making performed by translators. In this case, the analyst can only make guesses based on the linguistic evidence of the texts, which sometimes are not enough to explain a process of decision making.

Thus, Toury's model is productive in relation to the comparative analysis between source-text and target-text — it is this analysis which allows us to make less intuitive statements on the notion of source-text/target-text equivalence and adequacy. However, in order to be able to account for the processes of decision-making taken by translators this model would require further refining and expansion especially with respect to the last step of the analysis.

Toury's model serves as a descriptive study of translation to the extent of the lexical and syntactic levels — a purely linguistic approach to texts. His contribution to translation studies certainly has to be acknowledged since by the time his model was published most approaches to translation were still highly normative. Nevertheless, we have to recognise that a linguistic approach to text alone is not enough to account for the many features texts have. Apart from the linguistic forms, we need to take into consideration the sociological variables involved in the construction of a text — participants, purposes, settings —, the features of the text as discourse, the signals within the text of the relationship between sender and receiver, the channel chosen to send the message, and the function of the discourse built in the text (Bell, 1991). All this is equally true to the study of translations.

In the long run, the aim of translation studies should be shifting the focus from the description of translation as a product only, to the description of translation as a process as well, which allows for the interface process/product. For the time being we acknowledge the fact that normative rules and analysis of the linguistic aspects of a translated text alone are not enough to explain its complexity.



REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

THE WAVES

THE SUN HAD NOT YET RISEN. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it. Gradually as the sky whitened a dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky and the grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually.

As they neared the shore each bar rose, heaped itself, broke and swept a thin veil of white water across the sand. The wave paused, and then drew out again, sighing like a sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously. Gradually the dark bar on the horizon became clear as if the sediment in an old wine-bottle had sunk and left the glass green. Behind it, too, the sky cleared as if the white sediment there had sunk, or as if the arm of a woman couched beneath the horizon had raised a lamp and flat bars of white, green and yellow spread across the sky like the blades of a fan. Then she raised her lamp higher and the air seemed to become fibrous and to tear away from the green surface flickering and flaming in red and yellow fibres like the smoky fire that roars from a bonfire. Gradually the fibres of the burning bonfire were fused into one haze, one incandescence which lifted the weight of the woollen grey sky on top of it and turned it to a million atoms of soft blue. The surface of the sea slowly became transparent and lay rippling and sparkling until the dark stripes were almost rubbed out. Slowly the arm that held the lamp raised it higher until a broad flame became visible; an arc of fire burnt on the rim of the horizon, and all round it the sea blazed gold.

The light struck upon the trees in the garden, making one leaf transparent and then another. One bird chirped high up; there was a pause; another chirped lower down. The sun sharpened the walls of the house, and rested like the tip of a fan upon a white blind and made a blue finger-print of shadow under the leaf by the bedroom window. The blind stirred slightly, but all within was dim and insubstantial. The birds sang their blank melody outside.

TRANSLATION A

O SOL AINDA NÃO NASCERA. O mar não se distinguia do céu, exceto por estar um pouco encrespado, como um tecido que se enrugasse. Gradualmente, conforme o céu alvejava, uma linha escura assentou-se no horizonte, dividindo o mar e o céu, e o tecido cinza listrou-se de grossas pulsações movendo-se uma após outra, sob a superfície, perseguindo-se num ritmo sem fim.

Aproximando-se da praia, cada uma dessas ondas erguia-se, acumulava, quebrava e varria pela areia um tênue véu de água branca. A onda parava, partia novamente, suspirando com um ser adormecido cuja respiração vai e vem inconscientemente. Aos poucos, a faixa escura no horizonte clareou como se a borra numa velha garrafa de vinho se tivesse acomodado, deixando transparecer o verde de seu vidro. Ao fundo, também o céu se fez translúcido, como se ali baixasse um sedimento branco, ou como se o braço de uma mulher deitada sob o horizonte erguesse uma lâmpada e faixas brancas, verdes e amarelas se espriassem pelo céu como as varetas de um leque. Depois, a mulher ergueu a lâmpada mais alto, e o ar pareceu tornar-se fibroso, apartando-se da superfície verde, bruxuleando e chamejando em fibras vermelhas e amarelas, como flamas enfumaçadas que se alçam de uma fogueira. Pouco a pouco, as fibras fundiram-se numa só brasa incandescente, e a pesada cobertura cinza do céu levantou-se e transformou-se num milhão de átomos de um mácio azul. Lentamente, transluziu a superfície do mar, fremindo e cintilando, até que as linhas escuras apagaram-se quase completamente. Devagar, o braço que sustinha a lâmpada ergueu-se mais alto, e um larga chama apareceu enfim. Um disco de fogo ardeu na fímbria do horizonte e o marinteiro acendeu-se em ouro.

A luz incidiu sobre as árvores no jardim e suas folhas, tornadas transparentes; iluminaram-se uma depois da outra. Um pássaro trinou no alto; houve uma pausa; outro pássaro trinou mais abaixo. O sol aguçou os contornos da casa e pousou como a ponta de um leque sobre uma cortina branca, deixando uma impressão digital azul sob as folhas próximas à janela do quarto de dormir. A cortina moveu-se de leve, mas dentro da casa tudo era penumbroso e sem substância. Fora, os pássaros cantavam sua vazia melodia.

TRANSLATION B

O SOL AINDA NÃO TINHA SURGIDO. O mar não se distinguiu do céu, só que o mar estava um pouco marcado assim como um tecido que está amassado. Aos poucos, à medida que o céu branquejava, uma linha escura se instalava no horizonte dividindo o céu do mar e o tecido cinza ficava barrado de grandes vagas que se moviam, uma atrás da outra, sob a superfície, uma seguindo a outra, perseguindo uma a outra, perpetuamente.

Quando se aproximou da costa cada barra se levantou, se encheu, quebrou e entendeu um fino véu de água branca pela areia. A onda parou, e logo recuou, suspirando como uma pessoa que dorme, cuja respiração vem e vai inconscientemente. Aos poucos a barra escura no horizonte ficou clara como se o sedimento numa velha garrafa de vinho tivesse afundado e deixado o vidro verde. Atrás, também, o céu clareou, como se o sedimento branco tivesse afundado, ou como se os braços de uma mulher estendidos além do horizonte tivessem se espalhado pelo céu como as hastes de um leque. Então ela levantou a lâmpada mais alto e o ar pareceu ficar fibroso e separar-se da superfície verde bruxuleante e brilhante como fibras vermelhas e amarelas de um fogo forte que ruge de uma fogueira. Aos poucos as fibras da fogueira ardente se fundiram numa névoa, uma névoa incandescente que levantou o peso de um céu cinza carregado até mais alto e o transformou em milhões de átomos de azul suave. A superfície do mar lentamente ficou transparente e ficou marulhando e brilhando até que as listas escuras estivessem quase apagadas. Lentamente o braço que segurava a lâmpada a levantou mais alto e então mais alto até que uma grande chama se tornou visível; um arco de fogo queimou na borda do horizonte, e ao redor dele o mar explodiu em ouro.

A luz atingiu as árvores no jardim, deixando uma folha transparente e depois outra. Um pássaro cantou alto, houve uma pausa, outro cantou mais baixo. O sol dava forma às paredes da casa, e descansava com a ponta de um leque sobre uma persiana branca e fez uma marca de sombra azul embaixo da folha perto da janela do quarto. A persiana mexeu um pouquinho; mas dentro tudo estava obscuro e insubstancial. Os pássaros cantavam sua melodia vaga lá fora.

TRANSLATION C

O SOL AINDA NÃO TINHA NASCIDO. O mar não se diferenciava do céu, mas o mar tinha se elevado um pouco como um tecido sulcado de rugas. Aos poucos, entanto, o céu clareava e uma linha escura pousava no horizonte dividindo o mar do céu, assim o tecido cinzento ficava em bandas pelas fortes carcícias, um movimento detrás de outro debaixo da superfície, em uma eterna perseguição.

Enquanto chegavam perto da costa cada uma das bandas se alçava, enchia, quebrava e estendia um fino véu de água branca sobre a areia. A onda se demorava uns instantes para retomar o movimento, suspirando, como a respiração do adormecido que vai e vem inconscientemente. Aos poucos a banda no horizonte fazia-se mais clara igual ao sedimento de uma velha garrafa de vinho que afundou e deixou o copo esverdeado. Por trás o céu também clareava como se o branco tivesse sedimentado logo ali, ou como se um braço de mulher descansando debaixo da linha do horizonte tivesse alçado uma lâmpada, disseminando no céu bandas brancas, verdes e amarelas como os raios de um leque. Então ela levantava a sua lâmpada e o ar tornava-se fibroso a fim de rasgar a superfície verde, bruxuleio inflamado de fibras vermelhas e amarelas como a fumaça que ruge desde a fogueira. Aos poucos as fibras que incendiavam a fogueira fundiam-se numa única bruma, numa incandescência que carregava com ela o peso de céu cinzento e lanoso, convertendo-se em milhões de átomos de pálido azul. Vagarosamente a superfície do mar tornava-se transparente, encrespava-se e centelhava até que as listras fossem quase apagadas. Vagarosamente, o braço que sustentava a lâmpada a elevava mais e mais alto até que a chama era visível. Um arco de fogo queimando no horizonte. E tudo no redor resplandecia em ouro.

A luz refletia nas árvores do jardim tornando uma folha transparente, depois outra. Um passarinho trinava no alto, houve uma pausa, e um trino mais baixo. O sol definia os muros da casa, descansando nela como um leque sobre uma veneziana branca deixando uma impressão azul de sombra embaixo da folha, perto da janela do quarto. A veneziana mexeu-se levemente, mas tudo no interior era insubstancial e sombrio. Lá fora os pássaros cantavam uma melodia.