

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF FORMS OF ADDRESS IN THE TRANSLATION OF *ANIMAL FARM*

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Introduction

IT IS NOT AN EASY TASK TO MAINTAIN THE MESSAGE contained in one language when it is translated into another. Words, sentences and paragraphs have to be analysed and restructured to convey the most appropriate meaning in the culture to which the translation is addressed. This has to be done with a minimum alteration of the content or message of the source text (ST). In order to achieve a pleasing impression, the translator must attempt to transfer the linguistic and extra linguistic signs from one text to another, maintaining what the author of the ST intended to express and taking into account the target language of the readers.

Attempting to examine a text which has been translated into Brazilian Portuguese, I have chosen a book with political connotation, *Animal Farm*, written by George Orwell in 1945. I intend to point out some choices regarding forms of address and pronouns made by the translator, Heitor Ferreira, analysing how familiarity and deference expressed by these elements are maintained in the translated text (TT).

Forms of Address

The lack of a one-to-one relationship between personal pronoun systems and forms of address has caused many difficulties for translators. One of the most confusing aspects of translation seems to be the difficult task of deciding the most appropriate equivalent forms. As Baker (1992) points out “the familiarity/deference dimension in the pronoun system is among the most fascinating aspects of grammar and the most problematic in translation”. Thus this problem is tackled according to the translator’s interpretations of the relations among the characters and the speaking situation. Baker (1992:96) considers that

The subtle choices involved in pronoun usage in languages which distinguish between familiar pronouns is further complicated by the fact that this use differs significantly from one social group to another and that it changes all the time in a way that reflects changes in social values and attitudes.

The translator therefore, has to understand the complexity of the address systems of both languages in order to deal with the problem of non-equivalence. Considering this difficulty, Odber de Baubeta (1992) argues that the translator has to select the most appropriate form based on the relationship between the people involved in the interaction. According to Odber de Baubeta (1992), specific factors, such as the identity of speakers, their roles, social position, the degree of intimacy between interlocutors and emotional attitude will determine the choice of one form of address rather than another. Translators have to take into account these factors in order to achieve an appropriate TT.

The Book

Animal Farm (1945), one of George Orwell's most significant and popular novels became a world famous classic. It is a political allegory in which animals play the role of humans in an imaginary place and time. The story is supported by details of the way a rebellion is organised by the idealistic animals of Manor Farm. At the beginning of the book they revolt against the exploitation and 'sub-human' conditions in which they live. In order to change the conditions of their lives, they organise themselves and usurp Mr. Jones (the owner of the farm), and proclaim their freedom. However, they become victims of their own success; the revolution turns sour. The changes imposed by their leaders (the pigs) does not lead them to the proposed equality and ideal world. On the contrary, the sadism, corruption and self-interest imposed on them steep their lives with terror and lead to acts of self-interest and disloyalty.

In spite of the fact that the characters are animals, Orwell's story clearly portrays an analogy to the Russian Revolution when Stalin took control and the people suffered under his repression.

Thus the book expresses social and political life, revealing irony and hypocrisy. Naturally, one of the fundamental responsibilities of the translator is to preserve this ironical tone in the text.

The analysis

In this specific text, the translator decided to adopt the use of the second person of plural *vós* (instead of the more informal form *vocês*), during the interaction of some characters. This decision portrays a lack of intimacy between the characters in the TT more than which is conveyed by the English pronoun *you*. Thus, during all the Major's (the old pig) speeches, for example, the other animals who are "comrades" are addressed as *you*, and such form is

translated as *vós* in Brazilian Portuguese (BP). This choice resembles a level of formality not overtly conveyed in the English original. Consequently, second person plural forms of verbs such as *ouvistes*, seem to indicate a degree of formality which does not exist in the source text since there is a great sense of comradeship among the characters in some passages.

Garcez (1992) posits that “BP translators of English dialogue have traditionally opted to keep the target text (BP) formally rather than functionally close to the text in the source language (...) This practice results in a BP text that is affected due to the usual forms”. It could be argued that in this particular translation, the translator’s selection of a more formal mode of address is used to remind readers that the *comrades* are not humans. This position is based on Forster 1964, cited in Odber de Baubeta 1992, who points out that in a certain Mexican village, *usted*, rather than the more informal form *tu*, is used to remind speakers that although their pets seem to be part of the family, they are not humans. For example:

*Comrades you have heard already about the strange dream
I had last night. (p.3)*

Camaradas , já ouvistes, por certo, algo a respeito do estranho sonho que tive a noite passada. (p.8)

In another example below, the Major talks about his accumulated knowledge regarding life and the world and the little time he has left alive:

I do not think, comrades, that I shall be with you for many months longer and before I die I feel it my duty to pass on to you such wisdom as I have acquired. (p.3)

Sei, camaradas, que não estarei convosco por muito tempo e antes de morrer considero uma obrigação transmitir-vos o que tenho aprendido sobre o mundo. (p.8)

In this instance, the translator could have opted for the more informal form of *vocês*, to reinforce the feeling of comradeship and solidarity embedded in the Major's speech. This would have made for a better linking with the nominative *Comrades*.

When interpreting and reproducing the form of address *you* into *vós*, the translator opts for an old-fashioned form that does not appear very appropriate. This form *vós* is more often encountered in Brazilian Portuguese prose written in the eighteenth or nineteenth century and is used infrequently in books written in the middle of the twentieth century, as is the case of *Animal Farm*.

One could claim that the justification for the choice of style made by the translator is related to what Paes (1990:97) has argued about the adoption of the form *vós*. In spite of no longer being in use, the translator uses it in order to create the idea of time and distance between the reader and the text. Otherwise, according to Jensen 1981, cited in Garcez 1992, the relationships between interlocutors and the formality of the speaking occasion determine the use of the forms of address.

In addition, when the *old Major* questions his *comrades* about the cruel reality into which their lives have been transformed, the translator's choices may denote less commitment from the old pig towards the other animals:

Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it, our lives are miserable, laborious and short. We are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty. (p.3)

Então, camaradas, qual é a natureza da nossa vida? Enfrentemos a realidade: nossa vida é miserável, trabalhosa e curta. Nascemos, recebemos o mínimo de alimento necessário para continuar respirando, e os que podem trabalhar são forçados a fazê-lo até a última parcela de suas forças; no

instante em que nossa utilidade caba, trucidam-nos com hedionda crueldade. (p.8)

The expression *those of us* which gives the ST the idea of equality could be translated as *aqueles de nós*, which would reinforce the idea of solidarity between the Old Major and the other animals; it seems that this is the author's intention.

Instead, the translator switches from the first to third person and, as a result of this inconsistency, this part becomes a little confusing to the reader. One certain distance is imposed between the *Major* and his *comrades*, as if the old pig were not forced to work, and this may lead the reader to a misunderstanding of the text. Since pronouns may also express power and solidarity, in this story the choices which indicate a lower degree of formality should be more appropriate in certain situations.

Examining the book in question, it is also interesting to note that the owner of the farm is addressed in two different forms from the beginning of the TT, *Sr. Jones* and simply *Jones*. In the source text the form *Mr.* is maintained throughout the first chapter, and the author only refers to this character as *Jones* after he has been defeated by the rebellion. Since in the TT *Mr. Jones* is translated simply as *Jones*, it is as if the translator has chosen to make *Mr. Jones* less powerful than he is presented in the ST. The translator's decision, conscious or not, does not appear to be the most adequate in this case. Concerning the role that forms of address have in positing social interaction, it seems that the translator has made an inadequate choice, if we consider the social distance that exists between *Mr. Jones* and the animals of his farm before the rebellion.

There is a consistency regarding the use of *Mr.* and simply *Jones* in the ST that is not maintained in the TT. For example, at the very beginning of the chapter, the English title *Mr.* is translated literally as *Sr.*:

Mr. Jones of the Manor Farm, had locked the hen-houses

for the night, but was too drunk to remember to shut the pop-holes. (p.1)

O Sr. Jones, proprietário da Granja do Solar, fechou o galinheiro à noite, mas estava bêbado demais para lembrar-se de fechar também as vigias. (p.5)

However, in other passages:

It had been agreed that they should all meet in the big barn as soon as Mr. Jones was safely out of the way. (p.5)

Haviam combinado encontrar-se no celeiro, assim que Jones se retirasse. (p.5)

And,

Unfortunately the uproar awoke Mr. Jones, who sprang out of the bed, making sure that there was a fox in the yard. (p.8)

Infelizmente, o alarido acordou Jones, que pulou da cama certo de que havia raposa no pasto. (p.15)

When the animals begin the rebellion and when the situation in the farm is still not totally out of control, the owner is still referred to as *Mr. Jones* in the ST:

It was just then that Mr. Jones woke up. The next moment he and his four men were in the store-shed with whips in their hands, lashing out in all directions. (p.12)

In the above quotations, the owner still has power. *Mr. Jones* is still in command of his farm and Orwell uses and manipulates this form of address to effectively alter the style later on. The use of 'Mr.' for situations in which the owner of the farm retains the

power and is referred to as a despotic and powerful man, reinforces the contrast with the decadent man. Then, when the situation is out of control:

Jones and his men suddenly found themselves being butted and kicked from all sides (p.12)

This use of the form *Mr.* in situations in which the owner of the farm retains his power and uses it for dictatorial purposes and the simple use of *Jones* when the man is referred as a loser is preserved in the TT:

Jones fora, no passado, um patrão duro, porém eficiente. Agora estava em decadência. (p.20)

Nesse momento, Jones acordou. Num instante, ele e seus homens estavam no depósito com os chicotes na mão, batendo a torto e a direito. (p.21)

Thus in the ST, the forms of address represent various functions which sometimes are not maintained in the BP translation. This does not produce a total loss of meaning but makes the TT less expressive than the ST.

Inconsistency was also observed throughout the text when *Squealer*, the brilliantly persuasive pig, talks to the other animals. The translator frequently opted for the more obsolete form *vós*, but in other instances for *vocês*.

'Comrades!' he cried . 'You do not imagine, I hope, that we pigs are doing this in a spirit of selfishness and privilege? (...) Day and night we are watching over your welfare. It is for your sake that we drink milk and eat those apples. Do you know what would happen if we pigs failed in our duty? (p.23)

— *Camaradas!* — gritou — *Não imaginais, suponho, que*

nós, os porcos, fazemos isso por espírito de egoísmo e privilégio. (...) Dia e noite velamos por vosso bem estar. É por vossa causa que bebemos aquele leite e comemos aquelas maçãs. Sabeis o que se sucederia se os porcos falhassem em sua missão? (p.37)

In this passage, the use of this more distant and formal form seems to me more comprehensible. The translator's intention could have been to ironise the tyranny and despotism of the pigs over the other animals. However, what is not convincing is the fact that this choice is not consistent, since we find examples throughout the narrative when the same character, addressing the same audience and in a similar situation uses the more informal form, *vocês*.

'You have heard, then comrades', he said, 'that we pigs now sleep in the beds of the farmhouse? And why not? You did not suppose, surely, that there was ever a ruling against beds? (...) You would not rob us of our repose, would you comrades? You would not have us too tired to carry out our duties? (p.46)

— Com que então vocês, camaradas, ouviram dizer que nós, os porcos, agora dormimos nas camas da casa? E por que não? Vocês não supunham, por certo, que houvesse uma lei contra armas, não é? (...) Vocês não seriam capazes de negar-nos o repouso, camaradas, seriam? Vocês não desejariam ver-nos tão cansados que não pudéssemos cumprir nossa missão, não?" (p.69)

It is also interesting to note that the translator makes another option for the form *Mr.* in the following passage:

Some of the animals talked of the duty of loyalty to Mr. Jones, whom they referred to as "Master", or made elementary remarks such as "Mr. Jones feeds us. If he were gone we should starve to death". (p.10)

Alguns animais mencionaram o dever de lealdade para com Jones a quem se referiam com o "Dono" ou fizeram comentários elementares do tipo: "Seu Jones nos alimenta. Se ele fosse embora, nós morreríamos de fome. (p.18)

In this case the more usual forms which become functionally closer to the source language is used. According to Garcez (1992), *Seu* is the most appropriate form of *Mr.*, since the literal translation of titles, i.e., *Mr.* = *Sr.* is not equivalent to BP titles used to characterise power or social distance.

Another interesting choice is found at the very beginning of the book. The proprietor's wife is addressed in the source text as *Mrs. Jones* :

...Where Mrs. Jones was already snoring. (p.1)

However, in the translated text the title was avoided and *Mrs. Jones* was translated as *sua mulher*

...onde sua mulher já ressonava. (p.5)

In the above example, when the form *sua mulher* was chosen rather than *senhora* ou *dona*, one could state that the translator's intention was to emphasise *Jones'* power, since with the form *sua mulher*, the idea of absolutism and authoritarianism imposed by the owner of the land is stated more clearly. The result of this change appears effective, it seems to enhance the TT.

Likewise, in the TT the expression "*a mulher de Jones*," is another option which signals possession and attributes more power to *Mr. Jones* than in the ST. Then we have:

Mrs. Jones looked out of the bedroom window, saw what was happening, hurriedly flung a few possessions into a carpet bag and slipped out of the farm by another way. (p.12)

A mulher de Jones, olhou pela janela do quarto, viu o que acontecia, reuniu às pressas alguns haveres dentro de uma bolsa de pano e escapuliu da granja por outro caminho.
(p.21)

Conclusion

The above examples attempt to illustrate briefly, what has been highlighted about the problem of translating forms of address and pronouns. It is true that the forms of address in the Brazilian system are much more complex than they are in the English system, so the translator's task needs to be meticulous. It is not easy for the translator to express the message in other contexts through other equivalents which cause the same reactions in the reader. Consequently, a very deep interpretation of the content is necessary for applying the form which best conveys the whole meaning.

Finally, despite the fact that some choices regarding forms of address do not seem the best alternatives available for the translator, the TT as a whole may be considered loyal to the original, preserving the ironical tone of the story and conveying Orwell's meaning and intention.

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