

# HEMINGWAY'S "THE KILLERS" IN PORTUGUESE

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## I — Introduction

MANY TRANSLATION THEORISTS AGREE THAT TRANSLATION is a complex and multifarious process inasmuch as it involves more than just competence in both source language (SL) and target language (TL). Translation seems to also comprehend ideologies (Bordenave, 1991), fidelity (Aubert, 1993), sensitivity and creativity (Cardoso, 1991).

Catford (1965:01) defines translation as "a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another." Dubois (1973 in: Bell, 1991) adds that in this process, it is important that semantic and stylistic equivalencies be preserved so that the translated text (TT) can be faithful to the original. Consequently, the translator should be a careful reader who "decodes messages transmitted in one language and re-encodes them in another" (Bell, 1990. p. 15). S/he has to be attentive to this process in order not to change the style or message of the source text (ST). Aubert (1993) observes that the translator is required to exclude himself from the TT so that she can be faithful to the ideas expressed by the author in the ST. On the other hand, Bordenave (1991) argues that this fidelity is biased since translation involves ideologies, which influence the interpretation of the ST and will be reflected in the TT. Arrojo (in: Bordenave, 1991) claims that the translation of any text will be

faithful to the translator's interpretation of the ST and this interpretation will be nearly always related to the translator's feelings, thoughts, experiences, personality and social and economic background.

Based on the assumptions made by Dubois, Bell and Aubert, this paper aims at assessing the quality of a literary translation made by Moacyr Werneck de Castro of Ernest Hemingway's *The Killers* into Portuguese. I intend to analyze problems concerning equivalence at word and sentence level. Similarly, problems concerning grammar, omission and modality will also be considered in order to verify if form and meaning have been kept and if the TT has preserved Hemingway's style.

## II. Literary Translation

The translation of any text involves some problems that need to be solved by means of the translator's competence and knowledge of both the SL and the TL. The task will be particularly difficult when the ST is a literary one since in addition to the knowledge of both languages, it will be required from the translator, creativity and sensitivity (Cardoso, 1991). Vizioli(1991) goes along with Cardoso in the sense that translation involves devotion and love to the task.

Steiner (in: Hatim & Mason, 1990) points out that reading a text is an act of translation, that is, interpretation and that these process of reinterpretation is more evident in a literary translation. Hatim & Mason observe that the ST may have several different interpretations, however the translator's interpretation will be imposed on the readers of the TT. The translator's task should be to preserve "the range of possible responses" so that the reader could have a "dynamic role"(p.11) while reading the TT.

The literary text is considered to be more difficult to translate than the scientific text since both form and content are important in prose, poetry and drama while in a scientific text content is more important.

### III. Hemingway's style

A translation is considered good when the TT carries the meaning and the form of the ST. When translating, the translator has to be aware of the style of the author so that s/he can maintain the message and the form of the original.

Antunes (1991) claims that even when we read in our native language we may have different readings, thus when reading a TT we can have access to a different reading of one text. In order to prevent different readings from happening translators should have a thorough understanding of the text they are translating.

According to Hatim & Mason (1990) style can be considered as "the result of motivated choices made by text producers"(p.10). The author intentionally creates stylistic effects and the translator ought to be aware of them in order to preserve them. They also state that if style is modified the reader is prevented from having access to the "world of the SL text"(p.9). Style is part of the ST message. The author deliberately makes specific choices of words or structures, omissions, additions and alterations in relation to his/her style or the message of the literary text. If the translator does not take into account the purpose of some choices of words s/he can, for example, transform the characters into different people.

Hemingway, who is considered to be one of the greatest american novelist and short-story writers has a particular style that "reveals a way of looking at the world and expressing an attitude of tense resignation in the face of inevitable suffering and defeat" (Weeks, 1962:16).

According to Kidd (1971), Hemingway's work has a concise style that emphasizes objectivity through simple declarative sentences. He writes in few words and sentences and there is little subordination. Moreover, his conversations are vivid and he depends heavily upon them.

His choice of words and sentences involves a small amount of words and consequently a great number of repetitions.

#### IV. The Source Text

*The Killers* is one of many short stories in which Nick Adams is the protagonist. It tells the story of a boy and the discovering of evil. Two killers go to Henry's restaurant in order to kill a regular customer. Nick, George, and the cook are in the restaurant when the killers say they have come to kill Ole Andreson. Such an announcement impresses Nick in particular.

Rovit (1970) and Gurco (1969) observe that most of Hemingway's work is about loss. Ole Andreson is ready to lose his life and Nick Adams loses his innocence.

According to Gurco (1969) some symbolists have interpreted the killers as a representation of a Christian legend. Ole Andreson (son of man) stands for Christ and has accepted death while Nick Adams (Adam, the original man) tries to avoid it.

Hemingway's construction of the text shows the idea that in life everything is false or unstable. To Nick, life seems to be good, but it has an aspect of barbarity and horror in the same way that the clock reads five and twenty but it is really five. The menu has several options, however George serves just sandwiches. The lunch counter seems to be a restaurant though it was once a saloon. The woman who opens the door seems to be the landlady but she is not really the landlady (Gurco, 1969).

The killers insult everybody and create a threatening atmosphere, nonetheless George never loses his dignity or temper. Nick is young and naive and he is so impressed by the case that he decides to leave town (Gurco, 1969).

#### V. The Results

##### *Style*

On the whole, the translator attempts to maintain Hemingway's style. With a few exceptions, the TT presents little subordination,

simple declarative sentences and the conjunction *e*, and *então* in accordance to the ST link many of the coordinate clauses. However, the repetition that is many times displayed in the ST is not present in the TT due either to the fact that both SL and TT are different systems or the translator's lack of attention. For example:

1. ... one of the man said. "What do you want to eat, Al?"  
 "I don't know," said Al. "I don't know what I want to eat."

— ...disse um dos homens. Que é que você quer, Al?

— Não sei — disse Al. — Não sei o que vou comer.

2. ... They sat at the counter (...) The two men at the counter read the menu.

...indo sentar-se ao balcão. (...) Os dois homens liam o menu.

3. ...what is the idea? ...what is the idea?

... que estória é essa? ...Que diabos é isso ?

In example 1, the translator apparently changes the verb in order to avoid repetition, which is not considered elegant in the TL. The same happens in example 2 and although it alters the author's style, it seems not to affect the quality of translation. Contrary to example 2, example 1 somehow distorts the translation. According to my interpretation, the two killers seem to be like twins since they wear the same clothes, say almost the same things, have the same purposes and keep repeating their own sentences. This interpretation is only possible in the ST since some of the repetitions do not appear in the TT. In addition to this, example 3 changes the word order completely since the character who says this sentence in the TT doesn't usually use such strong language in the ST.

### *Interpretation*

The biggest problems of Moacyr Werneck de Castro's translation

of *The Killers* arise from lack of attention to the translation and the short story itself. The translator was not attentive to some details of the story and its interpretation. As a result, the readers of the TT read a text different from the original.

First of all, there are some weaknesses caused by omissions. The TT misses ten lines that are really important to the story. Seven lines of a conversation between George and one of the killers are omitted without any apparent reason. In this dialogue, Max demands that George tell the clients that the cook has not come and George asks what is going to happen with him, Nick and the cook. Max says it will depend. The part that is omitted contributes to create a frightening atmosphere. Another three sentences are omitted in the TT. One of them concerns one of Max's commentaries about George. "Just a bright boy." In fact, there are other problems in this part besides this omission.

4. "Which is yours? he asked Al.

"Don't you remember? "

"Ham and eggs."

"Just a bright boy," Max said. He leaned forward and took the ham and eggs.

— Qual é o seu? — perguntou Al

— Não se lembra?

— Ovos com tocinho — disse Max. Inclinou-se para frente e apanhou o prato.

Example number 4 shows a lack of attention by the translator towards the ST. The first question is asked by Max in the ST and by Al in the TT. Moreover, the sentence "ham and eggs", although it is difficult to know who said it in the ST, is probably told by George. Nonetheless in the TT it is answered by Max. Another difficulty arises with the phrase *ham and eggs*. Although it seems irrelevant to the story, in fact, it is not. Al had previously ordered ham and eggs and George probably fools them by saying that was

Max who ordered this dish. The sentence *Just a bright boy* seems to be ambiguous since Max could have said that because he noticed that George mixed up the order on purpose or because George remembered the order.

Another problem is the omission of swear words in the TT voiced by the killers in the ST. Words like *to hell, damn, the hell*, are omitted or translated into *ora, bolas*. On very few occasions are these words translated into offensive equivalents. The choice of these words in the ST is related to Nick's impression of the case. The killers would not seem so frightening if they said pleasant things to the boys.

Another problem related to omission appears some lines later in which two sentences concerning a conversation between Nick and Ole Andreson are absent in the TT. Nick offers to help Ole Andreson but he says that there is nothing Nick can help. This offer shows Nick's eagerness to help and prevent Ole's death.

Another inadequacy is related to words emphasized in the ST that are not emphasized in the TT, or which are even omitted. For example:

5. "What are *you* looking at?" (author's italics) ... *You* don't have to laugh," (...) *You* don't have to laugh at all, see?"
  - Que é que você está olhando? (...) Não tem nada que rir
  - (...) Não tem que rir coisa nenhuma, está ouvindo?

The translator has to take decisions all the time. At another point in the text, Moacyr Werneck de Castro decides not to translate the name of the city — Summit — that means peak, climax, culmination. In fact, this decision does not skew the translation but makes the TT readers miss another detail that will enable them to construct their own interpretation of the text.

The translator decides to replace Ole Andreson's name, although he does not translate into Portuguese. Andreson, a Swedish name is substituted by Anderson, an English name, without any apparent reason since George (English) is not translated into Jorge (Portuguese).

Concerning equivalence at sentence level, there are some examples of mistranslation:

6. "What is the idea" Nick asked. (...) "What is the idea?" George asked. "What is the idea?"

— Que estória é essa?— perguntou Nick. (...) Que estória é essa?— perguntou George. Que diabos é isso?

7. "What do you think it's all about?"

"I don't know?"

"What do you think?"(...)

"I wouldn't say."

— Que que você pensa que quer dizer?

— Não sei.

— Mas o que você pensa?

— Não sei.

8. "Hello, George," he [a street-car motorman] said. "Can I get supper?"

"Sam's gone out," George said. "He'll be back in about half an hour."

"I'd better go up the street," the motorman said.

— Alô, George — disse. Temos jantar?

— Sam saiu — respondeu George. Voltará dentro de um quarto de hora

— Então vou esperar na rua — disse o motorneiro.

9. "You better go see Ole Andreson."

"All right."

— É melhor você ir procurar Ole Anderson

— Boa idéia

10. "George thought I better come and tell you about it,"

— George achou bom eu vir contar.

In example 6, the translation *que estória é essa ?* and *que diabos é isso?* are rather more aggressive than the original *what is the*

*idea*? Nick and George are under arrest at the moment, therefore they would not be aggressive towards the murderers.

In example 7, the sentence *I wouldn't say* was replaced by *eu não sei* which makes the translation biased since the original sentence represents George's fears concerning the consequences of this situation or his reluctance to think about what might happen. Moreover, the translation of *think* as *pensa* seems awkward in the TT giving that Portuguese speakers would say *acha* when expressing opinions or ideas.

The choice of *Então vou esperar na rua* as an equivalent sentence for *I'd better go up the street* in example 8 is completely inadequate and incoherent because the client is at a restaurant and could have decided to wait for the cook inside the restaurant. Why would he wait on the street? I would have translated this sentence into *É melhor eu procurar outro restaurante*. Another important aspect of this example is the choice of *um quarto de hora* for *half an hour*. First of all, the ST refers to thirty minutes while the TT mentions fifteen minutes. Besides that, *um quarto de hora* seems rather awkward in Portuguese, it would be better if it had been translated into *quinze minutos* or the original *meia hora*.

In example 9, *all right* was translated into *boa idéia*. It sounds reasonable, however the former refers to an agreement while the latter indicates opinion. The TT expression does not go along with Nick's characteristics. He would agree with George rather than give opinions.

Example 10 shows the translator's misinterpretation of the story. The sentence *George thought I better come and tell you about it* alludes indirectly to the choices which face Nick: whether to go and save Ole or whether to stay and let him die. The translated sentence *George achou bom eu vir contar* does not denote the seriousness of the situation.

### *Grammar*

According to Baker (1992), differences in the grammatical con-

structions of the SL and TL may give rise to some problems concerning content and message during the process of translation. One of the grammatical problems is related to the presence of an article. The killers insist on calling George and Nick the bright boys. Every time one of the murderers talks to the boys, he uses this nickname, however later they start using this expression as a name, mainly with George, who does not seem so frightened by them. In the ST they are named *bright boy* and although the author does not use a capital letter, the absence of the article *the* makes it clear that it is a name. In the TT, bright boy is translated as *espertinho*, however many times there is the article *o*. It is represented as a quality rather than a name.

There are other grammatical problems that come from lack of attention to the ST. For example:

11. "All right, nigger. You stand right there," Al said.  
Sam, the nigger, standing in his apron, looked at the two men sitting at the counter. "Yes, sir," he said.  
— Bem, negro. Fique aí mesmo. Sam, o preto, de avental, fitava os dois homens sentados ao balcão.

12. "You got a lot of luck."  
"That's truth," Max said. "you ought to play the races, bright boy"  
— Você tem sorte.  
— É verdade, devias jogar nas corridas — acrescentou Max.

13. "Is Ole Andreson here?"  
"Do you want to see him?"  
— Ole Anderson está?  
— Querem vê-lo.

14. Ole Andreson looked at the wall and did not say anything. (...) "I don't want to know what they were like," Ole Andreson said. He looked at the wall.(...) He looked at the wall.

Ole Anderson fixou a parede sem proferir uma palavra.(...)  
 — Não quero saber como eram — disse Ole, Olhou para a  
 parede. (...) Ole Anderson olhou a parede.

15. "It's somebody to see you, Mr. Anderson," the woman  
 said.

"It's Nick Adams."

— Alguém quer vê-lo, Mr. Anderson — disse a mulher.

— Nick Adams.

In example 11, *the nigger, standing in his apron, looked at the two men sitting at the corner* was mistranslated into *o prêto, de avental, fitava os dois homens sentados ao balcão*. Sam had recently arrived in the room and looked at the men because one of them talked to him. The translated word *fitava* shows the translator's misinterpretation since it turns Sam into a daring person and changes his personality. Actually, he just looked at the men in order to answer their question, showing his humility.

The other example(12) *you should*, translated into *devias* does not fit in the rest of the story due firstly to the fact that throughout the TT the translator opts for third person *você* and this is the first time the second person *tu* is used. Secondly, this form of the verb is hardly used since Portuguese speakers would commonly use *devia* even when using second person *tu*.

Example 13 shows lack of attention to coherence as *Do you want to see him* is translated into *Querem vê-lo*. Nick is the only one that wants to see Ole Anderson. Therefore, there is an error in number in this sentence. Moreover, the source sentence is a question while the translated sentence is not. This sentence does not make sense in the TT since there is only one person to see Ole Anderson and Mrs. Bell does not answer the question properly.

In example 14, the verb *looked at* was translated into *olhou*. The translated word would be adequate if the TL had just this equivalent to the source word, nevertheless there are two other possibilities: *olhou* that is past and *olhava* that conveys continuity. The second possibility would fit better in the TT since Ole Anderson

is most of the time turned to the wall and looking at the wall. The ST shows this continuity by the repetition of the verb, the TL has a verb form to this device and it could have been used.

The last example, 15, in grammatical terms, shows that the omission of *It's* makes the sentence loose in the text. In the ST, Nick introduces himself by saying *it's Nick Adams* while in the TT it's difficult to say who said Nick Adams since there is no signal. It could be Ole Andreson, the woman, or Nick himself.

### *Formality*

According to Bell (1991) formality measures the amount of attention the writer gives to the structuring of a message. The ST misses this formality since a) Hemingway writes in a very concise and simple way and b) the story is about two criminals and two boys. The TT is rather more formal than the ST. Moreover, some grammatical mistakes made by the killers that are actually marks of spoken language, were not preserved in the translation. These are some examples of formality and substitution of the mistakes for formal language:

15. "He comes here to eat every night, don't he?"

"Sometimes he comes here."

"He comes here at six o'clock, don't he?"

— Êle vem jantar aqui tôda a noite, não?

— Às vêzes vem.

— Aparece aqui às seis horas, não?

16. "He never had a chance to do anything to us. He never even seen us"

— Nunca pode nos fazer mal nenhum. Nunca nos viu.

17. "No," said Max. "it ain't that. Bright boy is nice. He's a nice boy..."

— Não — disse Max. Nada disso. O espertinho é bonzinho.

É um bom menino...

18. "They eat the dinner," his friend said. "They all come here and eat the big dinner.

"Êles comem o jantar — disse o amigo. — Vem todos aqui e comem o lauto jantar.

19. ... that a man wanted to take with him.

... que o freguês levou consigo.

20. "Come on, Al," said Max. "We better go. He's not coming"

— Vamos embora, Al — disse Max. Convém irmos andando. Êle não chega.

21. The cook felt the corners of his mouth with his thumbs.

O cozinheiro apalpou com os polegares as commissuras dos lábios.

Examples 15,16 and 17 show some mistakes that are present in the ST but absent in the TT. These mistakes help to characterize the criminals' language. They speak vulgar and incorrect language while the boys speak 'correct' language.

Example 18,19,20 and 21 illustrate informal words translated into formal ones. Words like *lauto*, *comissuras*, *consigo* and *convém* are very formal in the TL and do not go along with Hemingway's style and the characterization of the characters. Actually, the whole text is formal since the translator opted for a text that is grammatically correct, changing even the killer's language to one that is correct and grammar based. The TL presented in this translation is rather different from the one used by common speakers of this language. Examples:

22. ... Que é que êle *thes* fez the mal. (...) Nunca nos viu.

(...)

... Por que é que vocês vão matá-lo, então?

... George ficou a espíá-los pela janela.(...) (my underlining)

### Modality

In general modals are really important to the text since they help the writer to say what s/he wants to say without being direct and too precise. If s/he is not sure of an issue, a modal can save his/her face. In the translation process, the translator ought to pay special attention to the modals since omission, substitution or misinterpretation of these modals can alter the whole text and the way it reads. In the case of Castro's translation of *The Killers*, he was, for the most part of the time careful in translating the modals and mainly the adverbs, which were translated into equivalent forms in the TL. However, some problems remained. For example:

23. "The only thing is," he said, talking toward the wall, "I just can't make up my mind to go out. I been in here all day."

— O que há — disse, falando de costas para Nick — é que eu não posso me resolver a sair. Fiquei hoje aqui o dia inteiro.

24. "Better go back and see George," Nick said.

— Vou voltar para onde está George — Disse Nick

In example 23, *can't* that either means permission or ability in the SL may be translated into *poder* or *conseguir* in the TL. The translator chose the first option despite the fact that the second option, which involves internal aspect, would be more adequate in the context. Permission conveys the idea of external forces preventing him from deciding to go out while in fact, he is not able to decide about going out because he is afraid of dying.

Example 24 shows that Nick's attempts to leave the room using an excuse are translated into a decision about going away in the ST. Nick seems to be an insecure person and his excuse reveals this insecurity. However, the translator misinterpreted it and translated his sentence into a decision.

*Equivalence at word level*

Although I decided not to deal with equivalence at word level there are some problems that should be pointed out.

25. The door of Henry's lunch-room opened(...) Henry's had been made over from a saloon into a lunch-counter, (...) I was up at Henry's ,(...) and two fellows came in(..) along the car-tracks to Henry's eating-house.

Abriu-se a Porta do restaurante de Henry(...) A casa de Henry era um antigo salão transformado em restaurante-expresso.(...) Eu estava no restaurante de Henry (...) quando entraram dois homens (...) e depois até a casa de Henry.

26. "I can give you any kind of sandwiches," George said. "You can have ham and eggs, bacon and eggs, liver and bacon, or a steak."

— Sanduíches de tôdas as qualidades — disse George. E mais ovos com tocinho, ovos com presunto, fígado com tocinho ou um bife.

Example 25 shows the translator's confusion with the term *Henry's* since it is translated into *casa* and *restaurante*. *Henry's* seems to be the restaurant's name therefore it should not be translated into neither *casa* nor *restaurante* but just *Henry's*. As this term would not fit perfectly in the TL the translator could have opted for the equivalent *restaurante Henry* and kept it throughout the text.

In example 26, the mistranslation concerns the word *bacon*. The TL borrowed the word *bacon* from English (SL) and uses it for the same product. However, we can observe that the translation presents another product *tocinho*, a word that in fact represents a totally different food.

## Conclusion

In general, the translated text presents many inadequate choices made by the translator in *Os bandidos*. Through the analysis, we can observe that these choices can modify the readers' interpretation of the story and the construction of the characters.

There are some limitations to this analysis that have to be taken into account. First, this translation was done in 1963 and perhaps some words and expression were chosen according to the language used at that time. Second, the analysis presents some constraints due to the commentator's limited knowledge of some aspects of this time and the time the writer wrote the short-story. According to Bordenave (1991) the act of writing a story and translating it involves ideologies and I wonder if the analysis could have grasped those ideologies.

The purpose of this paper was to analyze the translation of *The killers* into Portuguese, in order not to conclude if it was a good or bad translation but to verify whether the translator was faithful to the ST as regards preserving the author's style and the main characteristics of the story.

It is important to point out that it is the translator's responsibility to pay attention to the story and its interpretation so that the readers have access to the 'original' text. Moacyr Werneck de Castro's translation has some good points, such as the tendency to preserve Hemingway's style however, there are numerous problems concerning lack of attention and misinterpretation of the ST and omission.

The translator has an important role in the process of making a good text available to people who can not read its original therefore its important that the reader have access to the original idea or get as close to it as possible. This job requires much attention and responsibility .

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