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BRAZILIAN LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION*

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The paper compares and discusses the diminutive suffixes and other expressions used by the Brazilian author to those found in the German and English translations. We know that the Portuguese language is very rich in suffixal word-formation. This sometimes represents a great problem for translators, especially when the target-language doesn't have the same corresponding suffixal formations as the source-language. In this case the translator has to make use of other linguistic resources in order to give the source-language's corresponding meaning.

In Portuguese the diminutive suffix *-inho* has many different values.

Firstly, it reduces the size of an object, or person, or concept. It can also express kindness, tenderness, affection and even disdain.

It is no problem for translators when the text requires the translation of *-inho* in its basic diminutive meaning:

- P. E ali [...] debaixo da *cascatinha* já não podia acreditar que era chefe de família. (275)
- G. Und hier [...] unter dem *kleinen Wasserfall* konnte er einfach nicht mehr glauben, dass er Familienvater war. (275)
- I. And there [...] under the *little cascade* he could no longer believe that he was the head of a family. (255)

But the problems arise when the usage of *-inho* expresses affection (intimacy).

- P. Eu dava metade da vida pra ter agora um *cigarrinho* de palha. (164)
- G. Ich gäbe auf der Stelle mein halbes Leben für eine *Maistrohzigarette*. (sic!) (166)
- I. I'd give half my life for a cornhusk *cigarette* right now. (152)

Here the translators were helpless, they couldn't transfer the same meaning of the source-language into the target-languages. Other times they make mistakes.

- P. Atirar contra o Sobrado era o mesmo que atirar contra a *velhinha*. (8)
- G. Auf den Sobrado zu feuern hiess auf die *kleine alte Frau* schießen. (14)
- I. To fire against the Sobrado was the same as shooting at the *little old woman*. (7)

It doesn't mean an old woman of short stature, but a very old and kindly woman (she might even be tall). The next example expresses disdain.

- P. Quem diria, hein? Vá a gente se fiar nessas *santinhas*... (601)
- G. Wer hätte das gedacht, was? Ja, so sind sie, diese *Scheinheiligen*... (583)
- I. Who'd've said it? Hein? That's how folks can trust those *saintlylooking* ones... (553)

Santa means saint (holy); but with the suffix *-inha* it may express kindness or disdain, it depends on the context. Here it means disdain and the translators could find an equivalent term in the target-languages.

Other times, however, it is very difficult or even impossible to transfer the meaning of disdain to the target-language.

- P. Não seria de admirar que o Pe. Lara usasse o confessionário para arrancar dos habitantes do lugar informações do interesse do *chefete* de Santa Fé. (200)
- G. Es wäre nicht verwunderlich, wenn Padre Lara den Beichtstuhl benützte, um den Einwohnern Santa Fés Neuigkeiten herauszulocken, die *den Herrn* des Ortes interessierten. (201)
- I. It would not be astonishing if Padre Lara used the confessional to elicit from the inhabitants of Santa Fé bits of information of interest to *the boss* of the place.

We know that it is very important for the translators to know well the grammar, the function, the structure of the source-language as well as of the target-language. In addition we cannot separate language from literature. The translator need not to know how literary works function, but he has to know the structure and other elements of the source-language.

My own experiences have shown me that it is very interesting for students of foreign languages to work in contrastive analysis in literature.

They learn not only the foreign language, but also the habits and customs of the people. In other words, language and culture cannot be separated, especially in the area of translation.

Is it possible to transfer culture in translation? The subject that has aroused much discussion. The more regional the culture, the more difficult it will be to transfer to the target-language.

In Érico Veríssimo's book we can find several social levels, from the illiterate up to the highly educated, coming from European culture.

For example, when illiterate people speak, they make grammatical mistakes.

- P. *Me disseram* no Rio Pardo. (1)
- G. Ich habe in Rio Pardo gehört. (2)
- I. I was told in Rio Pardo. (3)
- P. *E tu vai ter ele* na rua ou numa estrabaria, como um animal? [...] *Teu pai diz* que pra ele *tu está* morta. (109)
- G. Und willst du es auf der Strasse oder im Stall aufwachsen lassen, wie das liebe Vieh? [...] Dein Vater sagt, für ihn seist du tot. (115)
- I. And you're going to have him in the street or in a stable like an animal? [...] Your father says for him you're dead. (103)

The translators didn't use vulgarisms in the target-languages, consequently they impoverished the translations.

To introduce the European culture, Érico Veríssimo used the character of Dr. Winter, a German physician. Dr. Karl Winter had emigrated from Germany in the 19th century, when the first German immigrants went to Rio Grande do Sul and brought with them the German habits and customs.

To be faithful to that period, Érico Veríssimo gave a special color reproducing exactly the "milieu" of that time by mixing the Portuguese and German languages.

- P. Willy olha a mata. *Verflucht!* É preciso derrubar árvores, virar a terra e antes de mais nada fazer uma casa. [...] Senta-se numa pedra e fica olhando as nuvens e achando que *Gott wird helfen*. (155)
- G. Willi betrachtet den Wald. *Verflucht!* Hier heisst es Bäume fällen, den Boden umgraben und vor allem ein Haus bauen. [...] Er setzt sich auf einen Stein, schaut in die Wolken und denkt, *Gott wird helfen*. (158)
- I. Willy looks at the forest. *Verflucht!* It is necessary to fell trees, turn the soil, and before anything else build a house. [...] He sits down on a stone and watches the clouds, thinking that somehow *Gott wird helfen*. (144)

Of course the German translator couldn't do the same, but he could have made a reference about it, in a footnote.

The translation of regionalisms is always the greatest problem for translator. Even if he knows the source-language and the target-language well, he must take care of simple words like *pica-pau*, for example.

- P. Mete a bala. É um *pica-pau*. (8)
- G. Jag ihm eine Kugel hinein. Er ist ein *Specht*. (14)
- I. Put a bullet in him. He's a *woodpecker*. (8)

If we left context aside we could say that *pica-pau* is well translated. But the translator does not work with isolated statements or words, but with the whole context, and the context comprehends not only the linguistic context but the geographical and the historical context as well (Mounin, 1967: 119).

The Brazilian reader knows that during the revolution of Rio Grande do Sul, in 1893, the revolutionaries were called *pica-paus*, but what about the English and German readers? They really won't understand what a "woodpecker" has to do with revolutions unless the translator has consulted the *Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa*, AURÉLIO, which would explain the following:

Pica-pau: RS. Alcinha que os rebeldes rio-grandenses de 1893 davam aos republicanos ou legalistas. (nickname of the republicans during the revolution of 1893 in RS.)

They are many other words, other regionalisms that cannot be found in the dictionaries. Érico Veríssimo employed a many of them. The translators became confused, so they had made use of several different resources, such as:

1. Not translating them, but including an explanation in a footnote.

P. Tinha o torso nu, manchado de sangue, seu *chiripá* estava todo rasgado. (77)

G. Sein Rumpf lag bloss, blutübersudelt, sein *chiripá* war ganz zerrissen. (83)¹

I. His torso was bare, stained with blood, and his *chiripá* was all torn. (74)²
2. Not translating them and without any additional explanation.

P. E lá dentro saiu uma bonita voz de homem cantando *modinhas*. (183)

G. Drinnen war eine klangvolle Männerstimme zu hören, die *modinhas* sang. (184)

I. And from inside the store a toneful male voice floated singing *modinhas*. (170)
3. Not translating them but giving a short definition within the translation.

P. Depois dançavam várias danças: a *meia-canha*, a *tirana*, o *tatu*, a *chimarrita*. (280)

G. Dann tanzten sie verschiedene Tänze: die *meia-canha*, den Rundtanz zu Polkamusik; die *tirana*, eine Abart des Fandango; den *Tatu* oder "Gürteltiertanz"; und die *chimarrita*, zu der gesungen wurde. (280)

I. Then they danced several dances: the *meia-canha*, a round dance to polka music; the *tirana*, a variety of the fandango; the *tatu*, or "armadillo"; and the *chimarrita*, the singing dance. (260)

4. Translating them, but completely losing the real meaning.

P. Tendo na mão a *cuia de mate* [...] e chupando lentamente na *bomba*. (138)

G. Den *mate-Krug* in der Hand, [...] und bedächtig am *Rohr* saugend. (143)

I. Holding in her hand the *mate-gourd*, [...] and taking slow pulls at the *tube*. (130)

Here the German and the English reader cannot know what a *cuia* and a *bomba* really mean. The translators haven't explained that a *cuia* is made of a special kind of gourd and that a *bomba* is a silver tube with a filter inside and a golden tip for sipping. It is very typical in Rio Grande do Sul to sip "mate-tea" (not to drink).

5. The use of paraphrase.

P. As *rosetas* lhe picavam os pés nus. (102)

G. Die *Spitzen des trockenen, dornigen Grases* stachen sie in die Füße. (108)

I. The *tips of the dry, thorny grass* pricked her bare feet. (97)

These different resources used by the translators show us how difficult it is to translate regionalisms. It is impossible to characterize the gaúcho "milieu" with only the resources of the target-language. Therefore the translator is obliged to use the regionalisms without translating them. This "foreign language" used in the target-language will remain incomprehensible for the unilingual reader.

So the translator is frequently helpless. The ideal would be if he could live the culture among the people of the source-language, making profound research to become acquainted with all the social and cultural particularities. But we know that this is difficult because of the great distances that separate countries with such different cultures as Europe and Brazil or India and Brazil.

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NOTES

1. chiripá: altes Kleidungsstück der Gauchos, bestehend aus eineinhalb Metern Tuch, das vorn und hinten an der Hüfte befestigt wurde und zwischen den Beinen durchreichte.
2. chiripá: (she-ree-pah'): Old-time gaúcho garment consisting of one-and-a-half meters of cloth fastened to the waist in front and behind, and passing between the legs.

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