Revising translations: bridge between translation and teaching

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Article info

Introduction

In general, when we translate a text - on demand or by individual initiative - we are faced with some choices that involve theoretical questions about the translation process. Such questions include translating strategies in translating the source language into the target language. How to translate a text? We translate it word for word, we translate from the general sense or from a personal understanding of the meaning proposed by the author of the original text, in other words, means translating between the lines? It will be up to the translator to seek and develop the best or most appropriate method of translating in accordance with the type of text he is translating in view of the modes of speech organization as well as the linguistic functionalities. In this sense, considering all the production of knowledge involved in translation processes, it becomes important to define the *modus traducendi* since, according to Spano (2011, p.5).

The activity of translation is a slow, artisan activity that requires not only sensitivity to the text but also great awareness of its work. The translator, in fact, is a privileged reader because his reading and interpretation are not guided solely by the personal pleasure of the discovery of the text and its author, but above all by the possibility and the responsibility of recreating the same pleasure in other readers.

Translation, however, is also an interesting game, which enters the netting of the narration, identifies the structure and reconstructs it in a new context for a new audience.

It is thus stated that the choice of the theory underlying translation is not so much a random personal choice as a personal choice determined by the scope of better transposing contents between cultures and diverse thoughts that have to meet by determinations that escape the topic that we will deal with in this text: the translation review.

Before analyzing the importance of the revision and the role of the proofreader in translated works, it is important to reaffirm the importance of the mechanisms guaranteeing textuality that must be present in the processes of production, translation and revision of a text.

The association of the term text with Latin etymology, which refers to the idea of warp and plot that makes up a fabric, ends up becoming the metaphor of the concept of text. Just as a fabric cannot be frayed and for that it is necessary that the yarns are united, just as it is necessary that the text be constructed according to principles that guarantee to him the textuality and that are constituents of the "relations that cause that a text is a text (and not a simple summation of phrases) revealing a connection between the intentions, ideas and linguistic units that compose it, through a chain of statements within the framework established by the enunciation "(KOCH, 1984, pp. 21-22 apud TRAVAGLIA, 2003, 24). The connection between the elements that make up the text is guaranteed by the

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1 L’attività del tradurre è un’attività lenta, artigiana che richiede non solo sensibilità al testo ma anche grande consapevolezza del proprio operato. Il traduttore infatti, è un lettore privilegiato in quanto la sua lettura ed interpretazione non sono guidate solo dal piacere personale della scoperta del testo e del suo autore, ma soprattutto anche dalla possibilità, e responsabilità, di ricreare lo stesso piacere in altri lettori.

La traduzione però è anche un gioco interessante, che entra nelle maglie della narrazione, ne individua la struttura e la ricostruisce in un nuovo contesto per un nuovo pubblico.

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principles of cohesion and coherence together with the pragmatic factors spoken of by Beaugrande and Dressler. In this case, the author of the text must be aware of the prescriptions that involve the production of a clear, cohesive, coherent and also grammatically correct text while not losing sight of the audience to which his work is intended.

As far as the translator is concerned, it is necessary for his work to make it possible for a text produced in one language, belonging to another culture, to adopt criteria guaranteeing textuality so that it is clear and coherent to the readers and to the culture of the target language. In this way, the translator should be aware that the text will have the same ‘ingredients’ of the text read by, say, common reader, but whether we like it or not, many of its aspects will be in evidence in the translator’s reading since the purpose of this one is not exhausted with a reading, a comment, a summary, a paraphrase or whatever is in the same language, but goes beyond: sometimes it becomes all this only in another language. For this reason, what makes the textuality of a linguistic sequence for the non-translator is, at least in some respects, different from that of the translator’s textuality. (TRAVAGLIA, 2003, p. 23).

The translated text would then be a kind of retexualization which, having intertextuality as an internal mediating element between the source text and the arrival text, would aim to produce in the translated text effects of meaning similar to those present in the original text. However, in spite of the intention implied in the translation process, it is necessary that, in the passage from text A to text B, the external mediation of the reviewer will therefore be necessary.

Every text, regardless of the language in which it is produced, must undergo a revision process in order that possible noise may be withdrawn in favor of better and clearer communication. Depending on the quality of the text, it is necessary, more than the work of revision, a work of copidesking that is even more in-depth and almost analogous to that of the essay. However, it is necessary for the reviewer to be aware that he is neither the author of the text nor a co-author, but a collaborator whose work is essential for the good final result.

In general, the reviewer has to be attentive to questions of a grammatical and textual nature. This implies understanding that his/her knowledge moves through the balance between what is grammatically correct and textually relevant. In other words, it is up to the reviewer to adjust the content of the message to the standard language standard - in our case the Portuguese language - and to the principles of textuality as cohesion and coherence, for example. In this sense, according to Leite and Magalhães (2014, page 228), what is expected of the reviewer is that he “is capable of detecting and correcting as many errors as possible, as well as being able to identify inadequacies and, if it is proposing improvements in the revised text”.

According to Santos (2000), who argues as necessary the balance in this process of mediation between the author and the reader, the proofreader is not a critic, an analyst, a censor or a ‘good writing’ guardian. [He] is actually a facilitator of communication between the sender and receiver of the message. [...]. In other words, the function of the reviewer is to note and point out the problems which, in terms of language and communication, inhibit clarity, cohesion, coherence and, therefore, objectivity and effective communication of the text.

In the case of a translated text, the mediation of the reviewer becomes somewhat more complex because it involves the translator whose presence presents a fundamental question, which implies determining if, in addition to a good formation in the target language, there is a need for knowledge of the language of departure.

In the particular case of teaching, where the process of revision of translations can function as an additional tool for the acquisition of the new language, it is fundamental to establish the processes of mediation in view of the possible cultural and socioeconomic heterogeneity present in the Brazilian classrooms, especially when it is necessary to introduce basic vocabulary for the development of skills such as listening and reading and considering that there is no linearity in the process of learning a foreign language.

According to the website of University of Texas at Austin, “There was a time when language acquisition was thought to progress in a linear manner. Level of proficiency was based on the number of years devoted to the study. In more recent decades, there came a shift to understand that language acquisition proceeds cumulatively, and should be based on one’s functional ability and not the number of years of study”. Starting from the concept of cumulative learning, we can establish that the translation as an application has much to contribute to the content fixation by allowing the student to buy between different linguistic systems.

It is known that there is some resistance to the use of translation as a tool for the teaching of foreign languages. We believe that such resistance is due to a possible preoccupation with technological or methodological modernities that simply abolish old practices even though they have shown some degree of effectiveness.

However, using the translation as a work to be done in the classroom adds value to the practice of teaching and learning process of a good number of foreign languages, attracting in the student both the interest in the language

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3 “os mesmos ‘ingredientes’ do texto lido pelo, digamos assim, leitor comum, mas, que quebramos ou não, muitos de seus aspectos não estar em evidência na leitura feita pelo tradutor uma vez que o objetivo deste não se esgota com uma leitura, um comentário, um resumo, uma paráfrase ou o que seja na mesma língua, mas vai além: às vezes chega a ser tudo isto só que em outra língua. Por esta razão, o que faz a textualidade de uma sequência linguística para o leitor não tradutor será, pelo menos em alguns aspectos, diferente do que faz a textualidade para o tradutor.” (TRAVAGLIA, 2003, p. 23).

4 “seja capaz de detectar e corrigir o maior número possível de erros, bem como consiga identificar inadequações e, se for o caso, propor melhorias no texto revisado”.

5 “o revisor de textos não é um crítico, um analista, um censor ou um guardião do ‘bem escrever’. [Ele] é, na verdade, um facilitador da comunicação entre o emissor e o receptor da mensagem. [...]. Em outras palavras, a função do revisor é anotar e apontar os problemas que, no plano da língua e da comunicação, inibem a clareza, a coerência e, por conseguinte, a objetividade e a comunicação efetiva do texto.”

studied and developing in it the ability to establish comparisons and enhance reflective capacity over practice.

Tzu-Yi Lee, when discussing the incorporation of the potential of translation within a language classroom and the effects that such incorporation can bring on students, cites several articles produced by researchers whose papers and researches help to situate work with translation as an efficient practice for foreign language teaching.

Despite the concrete possibility of using translation as a methodology for foreign language teaching, it is necessary to establish differences between the lessons of a translation course and the classes in an undergraduate course, for example, scopes are well defined and distinct of each other.

In his words, Lee states that The assessment, different from the one language teachers usually use to score student translations, focuses on both accuracy and students’ L1 expression which is important for the researcher in analyzing students’ reading comprehension. It is expected that the use of professional assessment could provide useful teaching implications for language teachers. But the use of professional assessment is not the only aim of the study.

More importantly, we attempt to investigate whether the use of translation could have any effects on student language learning, particularly on their reading comprehension competence. (p.4).

The use of translation allows the researcher to lead students to the realization that translating requires a degree of competence in at least two languages. The accuracy of classroom work allows the teacher and the student to go beyond the translation work word for word and always departing from the mother tongue.

Finally, in our work as a teacher, reviser of texts and translator, we always seek to unite these three aspects in order to make the students realize the importance of this practice that involves the translation, review and learning triad for their academic and professional training. We always start from theory allied to practice so that we can provide students with concrete contributions to their training.

Translation as a challenge: a personal experience

The revision of a translated text is quite different from the revision of an original text, although the general principles as regards textuality to be observed are practically the same. The translated text may also be the revision made by the translator himself, which, in this case, precedes that made by a reviewer.

When the translator revises his own text, there should be a comparison between the translation and the original text. However, when the reviewer is another - independent or hired by a publisher - there will not always be a query to the translator or the original text since it will not always be a requirement.

According to our personal experience both in the (older) revision and in the (recent) revision, it is always good that the reviewer knows the starting language of the translated work to better play its mediating role.

Knowing the text of the source language is not a sine qua non condition for reviewing a translated work. However, considering that the market does not always excel at the choice of truly qualified professionals, it is necessary to know at least some details of the source language. To settle this certainty is our personal experience as the third reviewer of a book translated from Italian whose right had been acquired by a publisher.

The invitation to make the last revision came from the fact of our professional work as a reviewer, an Italian language teacher in the undergraduate and the specialization course in translation and freelance translator. Theoretically, we would do the last reading only to validate what had been done previously and correct what had happened through the eyes of the other reviewers and without contact with the original. However, as we began to read the text, we noticed a strange alternation between the use of the pronouns tu and vocé, as well as other constructions that caused a lack of understanding. We decided to ask for the original and when we received it we verified that it was a story that prevailed for the informal use of language and that used you all the time. In Portuguese it would be more natural to use the pronoun você, which is usually the option in most of Brazil, but what happened was a pronominal confusion that, along with others that implied a change of direction, went unnoticed by the previous reviewers. Although not a function of the third reviewer, we flagged the problems and asked the publisher to contact the translator who would be the only one who could change the translation.

Currently, as an assistant editor of a bilingual academic journal, we are attentive to the translation and revision of the translation whose processes we follow, sometimes translating or revising, with the scope of guaranteeing the quality of the publication.

The practice of this revision became also a teaching practice, as it allowed us to approach and analyze in the classroom aspects of a theoretical and practical nature regarding what concerns the morphosyntactic structures of the Italian and Portuguese language.

Conclusion

It is known that the presuppositions of textuality are - or must be - present both at the time of the production of the original text and in the production of the translated text. It is also known that, taking as a point of reference the fact that translation can be considered as retexualization from which the translator seeks to bring to the readers of the translated work emotions and sensations similar to those produced in the original readers, it is possible to establish that the reviewer occupies a primordial place that the one of intercession in the sense of being a kind of mediator between two worlds or two universes, that is, the world of the author and the world of the translator and also of the reader.

In general, the reviewer is not required to know anything other than the knowledge of the standard modality and the variations of his language. This implies that the reviewer is not required to know any foreign language at any level of

7 In Brazilian Portuguese, there are two personal second-person pronouns: you and you. The first is the personal pronoun par excellence; the second became in personal pronoun by the constant and abbreviated use of a pronoun of treatment.
proficiency. In theory, it is enough to know the rules that govern your language as well as the principles of textuality to do a job well done.

However, in spite of the existence or non-existence of such a requirement, we consider - from our own experience - that it is of the utmost importance that the reviewer is at least one reader fluent in the language present in the source text.

If an analogy is allowed, we would say that it is possible to travel as clandestine to various countries. However, the passport gives us the necessary security for smooth movement. Similarly, the translated text may be published without revision or be given to a reviewer who does not know the source language, but its quality would be limited. If, on the contrary, a translator who knows the source language is handed over to him, his collaboration could undoubtedly provide the free circulation of ideas without the jolts which in a text can be represented by a lack of textuality.

Reading, revising and translating texts in foreign language classes has been shown to be an efficient means of teaching and learning the foreign language, as well as allowing better fixing of the morphosyntactic contents of the two languages compared, especially as regards the teaching of reading skills and the production of texts written according to the parameters of textuality.

This paper aims to demonstrate - and I believe I have demonstrated - that translation plays an important role in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Of course we are aware that translation can not be the only method or methodology within a classroom. However, its value is undeniable, especially for the consolidation of reading and writing skills.

References


