A NEW LOOK UPON THE USE OF BORROWINGS IN BRAZIL: THE LINGUISTIC/CULTURAL BORDER

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The new impetus which has come to Translation Studies is the focus on culture as being linked to notions of power, asymmetries, difference and identity.
Schäffner (2000)

This article is located in the interface between a linguistic approach to translation – the use of borrowings from the English language in translated texts – and a cultural look upon such a phenomenon – the use of borrowings from the English language in the Brazilian context against the background of the so-called 'global age'. First of all, let me present what some theorists say about the validity of using such a technique in translation. Ivir (1987: 35) defines translation as "a way of establishing contact between cultures". Translators translate cultures and not languages, he says, adding that "the integration of one element into a culture and into the conceptual framework of its members and individuals cannot be said to have been achieved unless and until the linguistic expression of that element has been *integrated into* (italics mine) the language of that culture" (ibid.). Ivir (ibid.: 38) also favours the use of borrowing, saying that "it assures a very precise transmission of cultural information." It has also got the advantage that "once the expression enters the target language, it can be used freely in all the contexts and collocations in which it is used in the SL" (ibid.).

Newmark (1988) does not seem to be in favour of the use of borrowings, unless they are contextualised:

> There are plenty of words, like modal particles, jargon-words or grammatically-bound words, which for good reasons you may decide not to translate. But translate virtually by words first if they are 'technical', whether they are 'linguistic', or cultural, or referential and appear relatively context-free. Later, you have to contextualise them, and be prepared to back-track if you have opted for the wrong technical meaning (p. 47).

This search for a more appropriate term in a determined context seems to be a good solution. However, Newmark clearly states it is not an easy task, for the translator has to go testing his/her choices up to the point of finding the best option in that specific context.

Aubert (1993) says that one of the main difficulties in translating is to find means of expression of one item of the referential universe of the SL in a TL lacking such an item. A reason for this is basically the complexities which exist in the linguistic/cultural aspect of languages. A possible way to solve this matter is the use of "hybrid solutions", which can be explained by the fact that it is not always possible to show the differences between these items. In the field of technological terms, for example, it is very common to see peripheral cultures absorbing these terms and their concepts from dominant cultures. Another possibility is to combine or substitute terms from the SL and the TL: This solution is treated as a "hybrid solution" by Aubert (ibid.) when he makes reference to the mixed nature of the target text (TT), which combines vernacular and foreign expressions.

As can be seen, none of these theorists seem to have questioned values concerning power differentials in relation to the use of borrowings in translation. This questioning did not start explicitly in theoretical terms until the 1990s, when theorists like Simon (1997) and Fawcett (1997) hinted at the possibility of exploration of broader dimensions of translation in the context of cultural theory and globalisation. Simon (ibid.: 468) makes reference to the importance of "turning attention to translation as a pivotal mechanism in creating and transmitting cultural values", and questions whether translation is a "form of hospitality or rather an expression of the *law of the strongest* (italics mine)." From within linguistic approaches to translation, Fawcett (ibid.: 34) criticises the use of borrowings "for its exotic flavour" alone. He says that "retaining the source language name may be seen as cultural imperialism" (ibid.: 35). In this sense, Fawcett suggests the existence of mechanisms whereby issues of power might permeate translational relationships. Thus, both Simon and Fawcett open up space for power differential considerations previously neglected.

After this general analysis related to borrowing, I intend to broaden the scope of the discussion around such an issue in order to try to expand a bit more on the views presented here. For the purpose of analysing borrowings under a linguistic/cultural view then, my working definition for the term borrowing will be:

> An English word used in the Brazilian context and integrated (or not) into the Brazilian Portuguese language through entries in dictionaries, keeping its original word form, known or used by specific members of this community related to specific fields.

I intend to call into question the generally accepted idea concerning the use of borrowings as the "simplest" translation procedure and to investigate the extent to which this "simplicity" turns out to be a blind spot in traditional discussions on translation procedures.

Here, the use of borrowings is analysed in the Brazilian context. Obviously, I am aware of the fact that this phenomenon of incorporating words from foreign languages happens with any language, including English. In this sense, McArthur (1992: 141-145) states that, under certain circumstances, any language borrows words from other languages, tending to absorb the exotic items or translate them into native equivalents. English, for example, has borrowed words from French, Latin, Greek, German, Italian, Spanish and other languages to varying degrees. An obvious reason for this is the "close contact in especially multilingual situations, making the mixing of elements from different languages more or less commonplace" (p. 141). He also points out the drawing of materials from another language for purposes such as education and technology, and the prestige or style associated with using words from a 'high' language.

These arguments are consistent with Faraco's (2001) comments on the historical development of languages. However, McArthur comments on "the domination of some languages by others (for cultural, economic, political, religious, or other reasons), so that material flows 'down' from those 'high' languages into 'lower' vernaculars" (ibid.: 143). Here, he seems to go beyond issues of xenophobia and mere wish for social control, which Faraco sees as underlying concerns about foreignism (see Faraco, 2001: 44-45). McArthur acknowledges the existence of power relations behind the linguistic scenario. For example, he points out the dominance of France and Ancient Rome during the period into which lexical items from such languages were integrated into English. It was in the Middle Ages, when French was the language of political and social power and the channel through which European culture reached Britain. The Renaissance was the period responsible for the 'entrance' of Latin into English. The former was the European language of religion, education, and learning.

As shown above, in different periods different linguistic items were borrowed and adapted by others. A similar process happens nowadays, English being the language of domination. This process is sometimes controlled by the language receiving these terms – only a few words are taken from English into the receiving language. In other situations, the receiving language seems to borrow terms extensively from the English language and, so, this borrowed language is diffused into a range of languages and goes on colonising linguistic environments wherever it goes. The former scenario happens in countries like Portugal and Catalonia. If these peripheral countries were here analysed, it could be seen that the naturalisaton of the use of borrowings is not as common in Catalonia or in Portugal as it is here in Brazil. Those countries seem to be concerned with their national identity and are used to translating terms related to technology and the Internet. In the site www.gemcat.es for example, a language policy to Catalan is introduced determining that "it is essential to promote the adaptation of Catalan language to the new communication needs of the present society." This means that "Catalan must be constantly provided with the necessary lexical units for naming the new objects and defining the new concepts which appear in everyday life or in more specialised discourse." The same happens in Portugal. The use of borrowing is avoided in the technological area and the tendency is towards translation or adaptation of new words to the Portuguese lexicon. From the illustration above, it seems safe to say that the phenomenon of the import of technology together with the related terminology is not 'natural': the adoption of the foreign term and its integration into the TL are not *inherent* in the process of importing technology.

After analysing the theorists' views on borrowing, I prepared a summary of those situations which might justify the use of such a technique and this summary, now in form of a composite framework, is presented below. This framework serves as support in order to speculate on why borrowings are used:

Borrowings might be used for:
1. lexical and referential gaps in the target context
2. issues of technology
3. terminological conventions
4. the choice for a "hybrid solution"
5. neologism conventions
6. precise transmission of cultural information

7. stylistic choices
8. exotic flavour
9. the “foreign is best” syndrome
10. the “law of the strongest”
11. power differentials among languages
12. inequality of languages

Table 1. Composite Framework: A tentative account for the motivation behind the use of borrowings

In order to give a more detailed idea about these categories, I present a discussion of their meaning and suggest other possibilities which could be used as alternatives to borrowings:

1. Lexical and referential gaps in the target context: ‘Gaps’ are treated here according to Ivir (1977: 36), when he affirms that both translators and theorists have recognised the existence of ‘gaps’ and have explored possible ways of filling them. He goes on to say that “emphasis is on referential (denotational) meaning rather than on the communicative value of particular cultural elements in specific acts of communication.” Available strategies besides borrowing are offered, such as definition, literal translation, substitution, lexical creation, omission and addition. However, Ivir (ibid.: 37) makes comments concerning these strategies as follows: (i) “not all of the procedures achieve cultural transfer in the sense of filling the gap, but they all serve the purpose of achieving communicative equivalence in translation;” (ii) “combinations of procedures rather than single procedures are required for optimum transmission of cultural information;” and, finally, (iii) in planing the translation strategy, the translator does not make a “one-time decision on how he will treat unmatched elements of culture”, but usually makes

"a new decision for each such element and for its each use in an act of communication."

2. Issues of technology: Aubert (1993) says that one of the main difficulties in translating is to find means of expression of one item of the SL in the TL, especially in the technological area. The terms from this area are generally absorbed by peripheral cultures together with the technology which generates them and the concepts to which they refer.
3. Terminological conventions: Dubuc (1999: 21) defines terminology as the work which groups together and structures the terms of a technical area or a discipline. This includes the terms which belong to the ordinary vocabulary, but have a scientific orientation. Thus, terminology is a discipline which identifies the vocabulary related to a determined speciality in a systematic way, analysing the vocabulary and, if necessary, creating and normalising it in order to attend the needs of users' expression. In this sense, the use of borrowings in this area is seen as justifiable as it guarantees the identification of specific terms related to certain domains of knowledge.
4. The choice for a "hybrid solution": This might be a possible motivation behind the use of borrowings. Aubert (1993) explains what he understands by "hybrid solution" as the absorbing of foreign items and their concepts from dominant cultures because it is not always possible to show differences between these items. In an attempt to balance the use of foreign words and other alternative in the TL, borrowings might come into the text in a more conscious and deliberate way. Thus, it is possible to say that borrowings are considered 'hybrid solutions', in the sense that there seems to be a clear association between technology and terminology.
5. Neologism conventions: Making a rigorous terminological analysis, it is possible to observe the lack of appropriate vocabulary to denominate some terms from one language to another. In this case, the terminologist ought to investigate the

morphological system of the target language to see if the new concepts are not used in this language yet. Although the terminologist is not responsible for creating new terms, he/she can create a neologism when he/she can prove that the target language does not offer a word for the term in question. Neologism refers to innovations to lexical habits of a language. Such innovations happen when there is an arbitrary association of sounds and letters, when morphological or syntactical elements start to be used, when there is a change in word meanings or when elements belonging to another linguistic system are added to this language (Dubuc, 1999: 143).

6. Precise transmission of cultural information: The previous point can also be used to illustrate this one. The former makes reference to what Ivir (1987: 35) considers to be a good "way of establishing contact between cultures", that is, the use of cultural elements from the SL integrating these elements into the TL.
7. Stylistic choices: This point is also related to points 5 and 6 above and was first cited by Vinay & Darbelnet (1958), making reference to the translator's choices and the exotic flavour associated to some uses of borrowings.
8. Exotic flavour: Fawcett (1997: 34-35) says that this exotic flavour represents "the creation of a stylistic effect", when there could be a possible translation for the term. A reason given to justify such an unnecessary use of borrowing might be the retention of the "shade of specificity" in the foreign object or institution, probably adding the translation of the term or an explanation to assist the reader. However, the theorist raises points concerning cultural imperialism, national identity, power and colonisation, when there is a tendency to consider borrowings unproblematic.
9. The 'foreign is best' syndrome: Crystal (1997: 350) affirms that sometimes it is better not to translate, mainly in the business world since "sales can benefit if a product is given a foreign

name." Some examples of such a use in the Japanese business enterprise are: (i) in the field of car names, "English is used in order to convey an impression of good quality and reliability;" (ii) in order to stress elegance, a French name is chosen; and (iii) Italian names are used for naming sports cars. The connotations of prestige embedded in these languages seem to be enough to warrant their use. Crystal (ibid.) goes on to say that the purpose of using such languages "is not to communicate ideas, but to appeal to the sensibilities of the Japanese viewer, who the manufacturers believe is much influenced by the values of modern cosmopolitan societies." I would like to take this opportunity to add that this does not seem to be particularly a Japanese view of this specific use of borrowings, but a Brazilian view as well, since the uses here illustrated are quite similar to the 'foreign is best' syndrome also present in the Brazilian context.

10. The "law of the strongest", 11. Power differentials among languages and 12. Inequality of languages: As these three points are related to power, I choose to group them together is this discussion. Simon (1997) shows the importance of texts from other cultures to "be made to speak English" (Spivak, 1993: 182). The issues of power differentials and the inequality of languages are mentioned by Wolf (1995: 125), when she reminds us that, when colonising, Western societies not only subjugated non-Western societies economically and politically, but also linguistically. This leads me to say that borrowings can be used as a form of perpetuating the dominance of the "centre" over the "periphery". Moreover, Snell-Hornby (1997) adds the idea that:

> In the case of newly formed nations after independence from colonial rule, the former dominant language is usually established either as a lingua franca or even as the official language. At the same time however the new communities

> see their indigenous language as a means of expressing their individual cultural identity, an essential factor one cannot overlook as a natural reaction to any form of foreign domination. (…) So beside the psychological need for national or cultural identity as expressed through language, there is also the pragmatic necessity for international and supra-cultural communication in a world which is growing ever smaller. And here, as has just been implied, English has assumed a hitherto unparalleled role as international lingua franca and world language (pp. 28-29).

This passage shows the conflict between the need to live in a world in which different cultures are brought closer and the unattainable need to keep the origins and language of a people *intact*, as if this were possible. Languages change and so do people and their needs. Following this idea, it seems that the conflict lies exactly in how to deal with the evolution and the tradition mainly in peripheral countries. In order to illustrate the position of English as central opposing to peripheral in relation to countries like Brazil, let me show Snell-Hornby's (ibid.) point for the fact that English is called the world language of the 21st century: (i) the English language former role as dominant language of the British Empire; (ii) the world-wide domination of American technology and culture besides the adoption of English as the lingua franca of science and commerce; and, finally, (iii) the fact that the basic English vocabulary and grammar seem to be relatively easily acquired for everyday conversation as needed for superficial communication by speakers of other languages all over the world. As the aim here is to address the use of borrowings in the context of translation in Brazil, the phenomenon of the English language in the world today should be viewed from three different perspectives: (i) the lingua franca, "a reduced standardised form made to serve the specific purpose of supra-cultural communication;" (ii) "the individual variety of English as an expression of cultural identity with its idioms, metaphors and culture-specific allusions;" and, then, (iii) the hybrid forms.

Globalisation, Cultural Identity and Translation

As a result of globalisation, says Robertson (1992: 05), "boundaries between societies have become more porous because they are more subject to interference and constraints from outside." Drawing on this view, it is possible to say that the general idea concerning globalisation is that it tends to transform the world in a single whole; or, in Robertson's (ibid.: 08) words, "compressing the world and intensifying consciousness of it as a whole". Whatever good effects might result from this phenomenon, some questions remain: Is there any space in the globalised domain where differences in identity and culture can be discussed? On what grounds can this "whole world" be considered homogeneous anyway? There must be a consensus on what aspects make part of this globalised world and what is left out of this limb. As this issue of globalisation is complex, it has attracted attention of different academic areas, such as communication, translation and cultural studies.

In the specific context of TS, Pym (2000: 220) defines globalisation as "a cultural phenomenon ensuing from an economic process with a beginning somewhere around the fifteenth century and an apogee somewhere in a future we shall hopefully never reach." In order to support his idea, he goes on to say that globalisation goes beyond the separation of production and consumption, operating now within production processes themselves. The mobility of cultural products has increased thanks to the development of transport and communications technology. This process has made people and their product cross borders "with little resistance from material distance." This brings us to the role of translation: the 'pairing' of mobility and technology promotes rewritings and translation among different cultures even more. Pym (ibid.: 222) remarks that, in the field of technology, software programmes, for example, "are developed within the professional culture of information technology, mostly in programming notation and (American) English." However, all documentation is adjusted to the receiver's language, cultural conventions, and regulatory requirements[1] . So, it is possible to conclude that the idea here is to respect rather than disregard boundaries between individual territorial cultures. In this sense, there is no reason to think of globalisation as giving us a world of dispersed or abolished cultural frontiers. As information is exposed much faster nowadays, "rewriting becomes a constant activity; there are no singular ST and no definitive TT; globalisation has effectively blown apart most of the models we use to think about translation and indeed communication" (ibid.: 221). As can be observed, globalisation has interfered in, basically, all areas of modern life, including translation.

The discussion carried out so far suggests that globalisation in relation to TS is not simply a matter of "porous boundaries" as Robertson (1992) says, but rather the fact that these boundaries do exist, as stated by Pym (2000). What seems to become "porous", then, is how translators deal with translation and the influence of more powerful languages over peripheral ones, besides how they deal with this when thinking of translating, translation teaching and translation analysis.

According to Venuti (1998a: 158), in the globalised world, translation has been "compulsory in many developing countries," first because of the introduction of colonial languages among regional vernaculars and then, because of "the need to traffic in the hegemonic lingua franca[2] to preserve political autonomy and promote economic growth." The author goes on to say that "translation is a cultural practice that is deeply implicated in relations of domination and dependence, equally capable of maintaining or disrupting them." Bearing this idea in mind and focussing on the point of dominance and dependence, it is possible to say that there is a tendency to translate more in peripheral countries because they need to keep up with what goes on in the central countries. This makes these central countries keep a certain degree of control over the peripheries, offering them what is considered new and most advanced in, for example, technology and communication, and dictating the rules of what is good and modern and what is old-fashioned and discarded. In developing countries, translation fashions images of the hegemonic others which can "solicit submission, collaboration or resistance." This can generate an assimilation of the dominant values, approving or critically revising them "to create domestic self-images" which oppose to their views. The result is that developing countries will tend to incorporate dominant values, either approving or revising them critically. I would say that, unfortunately, the tendency in Brazil seems to be basically to approve such values with little analysis or criticism. Adopting this behaviour, we take the risk of leaving important aspects of our identity apart and, consequently, rejecting important features of our own culture to surrender to the dominant foreign culture.

Cultural Identity and its relation to Translation

Turning now to the cultural aspects of translation, I would like to start with Stuart Hall's (1986: 26, quoted in Robertson 1992: 47) view of culture as "the actual, grounded terrain of *practices, languages and customs* of any specific historical society" (italics mine). Translation is certainly one of such practices, embedded as it necessarily is in specific historical societies, at specific historical moments. In fact, translation has been classified as "an activity of cultural creation and exchange" (Simon, 1997: 463). From this perspective, issues now addressed in TS have moved past a traditional view – which focused on linguistics alone – to a redefinition of the object of study, "the text embedded within its network for both source and target cultural signs" (Bassnet & Lefevere, 1990: 11).

The point related to culture brings out another important aspect intrinsically related to it: cultural or national identity. Concerning the latter, Hall (2001) says that the notion of national identities tends to overlap with other forms of cultural identification. In view of this overlapping, the idea of national identity and the idea of cultural identification are somewhat mixed in people's self-representation. This mixture becomes evident, for example, in situations in which one community tends to accept a specific type of cultural representation instead of another one, discarding aspects which used to make part of rooted-traditions of this people in the past. This can generate the feeling of rejection of old self-conceptualisation and a questioning of who the new individual in the community which has new characteristics is. In this sense, Hall (ibid.) goes on to say that globalisation is one of the reasons for this deviation of national cultural identities in the 21st century. The author relates three forms in which globalisation can impact upon cultural identities: (i) national identities tend to disintegrate under the cultural homogenisation growth; (ii) national and local identities tend to resist globalisation; and, finally, (iii) while national identities decline, new hybrid identities take over. Drawing a parallel between these ideas with the use of borrowings, it is possible to make the following points: (i) the aspect of disintegration of national identities seems to account for the exaggerated use of borrowings in our country; (ii) resistance to this uncontrolled practice is also evident when so many complaints come up against the use of borrowings. From these, a question arises: Given the inevitable cultural exposure to external influences, is the tendency towards the adoption of a hybrid solution a way out?

Translation, culture and language are related to each other in complex ways and none can be left out of the discussion related to borrowings. The acknowledgement of this fact has brought translation to the realms of ethnography and history and sociology thus deepening "the methods of analysing what happens to texts in the process of what we might call 'intercultural transfer', or translation" (Bassnet & Lefevere, 1990: 132). Moreover, the focus on culture has helped to situate translation within the context of the power relations which inform contemporary cultural exchange (Simon, 1997: 463). So, the "cultural turn" in TS in the 1990s brought about the process of examining the ways in which translation is “nourished by – and contributes to – the dynamics of cultural representation” (ibid.).

Moving now to the point of resistance to the globalisation process on the part of some peripheral peoples, it can be said that such a resistance is a consequence of the idea that the global will, in some way, weaken the local. This generates internal conflicts linked to national identity and to definitions of the Self. Stuart Hall (in Bassnet & Lefevere, 1990) says that “identity is about defining oneself against what one is not”:

> To be English is to know yourself in relation to the French, and the hot-blooded Mediterraneans, and the passionate traumatized Russian soul. You go round the entire globe: when you know what everybody else is, then you are what they are not. (Hall, 1991).

Playing on the words of the quote above, we might say that, in this day and age, to be Brazilian is to know yourself in relation to the American. Go round the entire globe, try the language, the habits, the food of individual peoples already ‘globalised’ by the inevitable movement of globalisation. When you know what everybody else is, then you are what they are not. The quote and its parody can be used to represent the tension which occurs in Brazil. Some people and authorities in the country believe that the use of borrowings will make Brazilians neglect their traditions and origins and prioritise what comes from foreign origins, ‘mixing’ the Brazilian identity with other identities which do not in fact represent it. So, the discussion related to borrowings shows this search for what Brazilians are and how different we are from the Americans, the Europeans, and so on. It is a search for identity, for the Self. There is a part of the population which likes the idea of being similar to central cultures and so they start using a similar discourse and cultural representations of these cultures, but there are also the ones who resist it. What seems to be neglected, though, is the need to try to find a balance between local and global discourses. It is at this point that questions of power relations and textual production are at stake. As Bassnet & Lefevere (ibid.: 135) point out, "the idea that texts might exist outside a network of power relations is becoming increasingly difficult to accept, as we learn more about those forces that controlled the world in which our predecessors lived." The authors go on to say that:

> Both cultural studies and translation studies practitioners recognise the importance of understanding the manipulatory processes that are involved in textual production. A writer does not just write in a vacuum [a translator does not translate in a vacuum either]: he or she is the product of a particular culture, of a particular moment in time, and the writing reflects those factors such as race, gender, age, class, and birthplace as well as the stylistic, idiosyncratic features of the individual. Moreover, the material conditions in which the text is produced, sold, marketed and read also have a crucial role to play (ibid.: 136).

An important point which cannot be forgotten is made above: language is not isolated from other factors which can influence it or use it to influence other aspects in life. Of course languages cannot be destroyed by the contact with other languages, but they can surely act strongly to manipulate people in some aspects related to political, social and economic matters.

Notes

1. This point is related to the issue of software localization, defined as "a process that includes the translation, adaptation and acculturation of software or web sites

into the language and customs of a specific country or region. The term Localization, also known by the acronym "L10N", replaces all the old forms that were used to name the process, among these: translation of software, linguistic adaptation of software, etc,"

2. I would like to make a distinction between a 'dominant' language and a 'lingua franca', following Snell-Hornby's (1997: 28) idea: "a dominant language is one forced on the subjugated people along with the foreign world-view and culture; a lingua franca is one more or less freely accepted or chosen as a system of communication for mutual understanding.

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