

How Much Hybridity Can Translation Tolerate? Hidden Translation in Intercultural Text Transfer (In News and Advertising Agencies)

Quanto Hibridismo é Tolerável em Tradução?

Tradução Oculta no Transfer Textual Intercultural
(Em Agências Noticiosas e de Publicidade)

ANA MARIA BERNARDO*

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1. Conceptualizations of translation

Within translatology¹ and in the course of its development, from the second half of the 20th century onwards, the term translation has undergone several epistemic changes. Originally taken as a key word which asked for definition as the object of study of the new scientific field, it soon became associated with the controversial notion of equivalence, as defended by the linguistic approach (in particular Koller, 1979/2011). With the functionalistic approach

* Universidade Nova de Lisboa/Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Cultura (Universidade Católica Portuguesa).

¹ In 1972, the Canadian scholar Brian Harris first coined the term *traductologie*, for which he was urged to create the term translatology as its English equivalent (Harris, 1988). Whereas the former designation imposed itself in the French speaking academic community, translatology was superseded by Translation Studies in the Anglophone one. However, the designation Translation Studies encompasses two different usages: broadly speaking, it comprises any research on translation, whereas in its narrow sense it refers to the cultural approach, mostly confined to literary translation under the influence of cultural and postcolonial studies. Probably as a reaction to this narrowing of the research scope, supporters of the functional approach to translation took up the designation translatology (in analogy with the German designation *Translatologie*), from the 1980s onwards, and in the 21st century it was resumed by Muñoz-Martin (2010), along with its cognitive paradigm, as cognitive translatology. Translatology has in the meanwhile become a widespread designation for the discipline, being used now not just by scholars of the functional and the cognitive approaches.

to translation, both the definition of the term translation and the term equivalence were relentlessly contested and subsequently neglected as themes of discussion worth pursuing (Pym, 1995). By introducing the concepts of assumed translation and pseudotranslation into the discussion, Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury, 1995/2012) also contributed to the erosion of questions concerning both the term translation and its centrality to the field. Finally, the cultural approach, under the influence of Culture and Post-Colonial Studies, went a step further by recurrently referring to the term translation in its metaphorical meaning, thus blurring its contours as a specific activity even further.

This internal disciplinary neglect of the term translation was also corroborated by external agents coming from the language and localization industries, which shared the same prejudice against the term translation (taken as exclusively associated with equivalence, or even faithfulness) and was aimed at imposing their technological tools on the translation process, thus *reducing the translational result* to a mere product, just as the designation text (either source or target) has also been eroded (Pym, 2010, p. 121).

As a result of the confluence of the above mentioned factors, both internal and external, many other designations of the translational activity have become current in translatology in the last four decades, according to the approaches and ideological stances for which they argue (as with rewriting and hybridity) and to the contexts in which they are inserted (as in the case of transediting and transcreation).

The translational process occurs in both transediting and transcreation, although mingled with a series of other textual manipulative actions such as merging different sources, cutting and adding information, reorganizing the textual structure, changing perspective according to the ideological agenda of the news stakeholders or the commercial strategic aim of the advertising company involved. As transediting and transcreation incorporate processes of textual reorganization (including translation) and result in textual blends, both the concepts of rewriting (Lefevere, 1985; Bassnett / Lefevere, 1998) and hybridity (Bhabha, 1994), which seem to lie at a higher level of abstraction, can shed some light into the practices involved in transediting and transcreation.

2.1 Rewriting

When declaring the need to recognize the influence of power exercised on the writing of literary texts, Lefevere (1985) attributed a central role to

translation as a means to uncover the shaping force of power: “[...] translation, like other forms of rewriting, plays an analysable part in the manipulation of words and concepts which, among other things, constitute power in a culture” (p. 241). Lefevere identified three main control factors (agents, patronage and poetics) which had not been sufficiently taken into account until then, but which should now be incorporated into the literary system, endowing literary works with both a different poetics and ideology. He therefore advocated an alternative paradigm for the study of literary texts, so as to account for its dynamics and evolution throughout time. As interpretation was no longer a key concept in literary studies due to its potential infinity, Lefevere (1985) coined the term rewriting, which encompassed reading, interpretation, criticism and translation, in order to analyse the constraints under which the writing of literature operates. According to Lefevere, beyond the constraints imposed by patronage and poetics, which have a bearing on interpretation and criticism, both the universe of discourse and natural languages influence any philological endeavour. Translation is not only submitted to the four constraints mentioned above, but also to those imposed by the source text (pp. 232-234), hence the need to retranslate some literary works.² Thus, Lefevere consistently regards translation “as [...] probably the most radical form of rewriting in a literature or a culture” (p. 241).

Although originally coined to be applied to literary translation, rewriting encompasses many other forms in different text types, such as news and advertising in the globalized era.

In the latter two cases, the constraints those texts are subjected to are cultural, ideological (in line with the prevailing ideology and values in a given society), intersemiotic (the interplay between text and image must comply with the function of the ad, so that the potential consumers may feel they are being addressed), textual (text worlds in which they enter in each culture and their specific textual conventions) and pragmatic (ads and news must be appealing within the target context). All these layers must be dealt with in intercultural text transfer.

² In the United States, the translations of Brecht’s dramas produced and prepared for Broadway, from the 1940s onwards, and the constraints they have gone through (due to strategies of manipulation and domestication) illustrate the need for retranslation (Lefevere, 1998 in Bassnett / Lefevere, 1998, pp. 109-122).

2.2 Hybridity

Still another feature of contemporary text worlds is their blended character, as functional criteria are superimposed on the textual activities. As a result, most texts are blends of different text types or genres. Thus it is no wonder that still other manipulative strategies occur when translation, which implies code switching, comes into play.

In contemporary translatology, the concept of hybridity is mainly applied in two domains: machine translation³ and cultural postcolonial approaches to translation. The latter is relevant when considering transediting and transcreation, as both practices deal with international or transnational, globalized and/or localized communicative discourses, which have to be adjusted to a new audience that shares different values, expectations and interests in order to be understood and functionally accepted.

The conceptualization of hybridity undertaken by Bhabha (1994) has become most influential. Although using the term translation metaphorically and having a post-colonial setting in mind, Bhabha recognizes translation as the very texture of culture, involving discontinuity, negotiation and hybridity, and creating a Third Space of enunciation, a space beyond dichotomies where cultural differences can be discussed and located (pp. 45-56). Seen from this perspective, a translation encompasses some hybridity, as it creates a new textual representation, different from those of the source and target texts and their contexts. Bhabha deals extensively with the linguistic and cultural hybridization of postcolonial literature and that of migrant writers, but literature is not the only field in which hybridization occurs. Both by means of transediting and transcreation new hybrid texts are produced which derive from a blend of different textual strategies as to content, form, style, function and impact.

³ In translation memories, some texts are previously submitted to a pre-analysis and only then translated by the machine. These are called hybrid texts (O'Hagan, 2011, p. 50). Also in machine translation, so-called hybrid systems operate with rule-based and corpus-based technologies in order to enhance better outputs. In such systems, linguistic rules don't need to be so complex as in a rule-based system, as they will be enhanced by the corpus-based methodology (Ping, 2011, p. 167).

3. Impact of globalization on translation

Besides rewriting and hybridity as textual activities, external factors have been shaping the translation field, of which globalization is of paramount importance.

In fact, globalization has considerably changed our perception of the world and imposed a new conceptualization of ideas and a recasting of social relations. These changes were fostered by technological innovations, which had an enormous impact on news texts and translations (Conway / Bassnett, 2006, p. 6). One has to bear in mind that the networks which allow people from rather different parts of the world to be connected (beyond boundaries of space and time, which get compressed) is only possible through language, or rather, different languages. Therefore, translation is and will be an essential link in the information flow in which we are immersed into. The constraints imposed on this global interconnectedness – the preeminence of the global through the erosion of the local, high speed (if not real time) creating a sense of instantaneity and competition among several sources (every news service wants to be the first to report “breaking news”) – are inflicted on those professionals who work in the fields of news and advertising agencies.⁴

When looking closer at the relation between translation and globalization, several paradoxes come to the fore. Firstly, the enormous amount of information that enters communication flows is consumed more and more quickly, mostly in real time. Although this information frequently needs to be translated, translation is often taken for granted and unproblematic, in other words, it goes unnoticed, as if performed by an invisible hand. And yet without the translator’s mediation much information would not reach such large audiences. Unfortunately, the translator’s role is underestimated or even ignored.

As texts that enter the communication flow enabled by the new technological devices come from quite different cultural contexts, their translation asks either for domestication (adjustment to the new target audience, their conventions, interests and needs) or at least for localization, particularly in the cases of news and advertisements. Theoretically, both strategies would enhance local cultural and linguistic differences. However, as the translation is mainly carried out into English (even if this Newspeak has been largely decontextualized out of its original cultural background), this circumstance ends up by reinforcing

⁴ For a more comprehensive understanding of the influence of globalization on translation, see Biesla / Bassnett, 2009.

Anglo-American ethnocentrism, or rather, a new kind of imperialism, by means of which cultural and linguistic specificities of languages other than English are obliterated from global discourse.

Translation is also the field in which the tension between the global and the local inevitably shows. In news agencies, the target message can represent a rewriting of informational material gathered from several different sources, which reinforces the hybridity of translation and ultimately makes the concept of source text problematic, in as much as the piece of news presented to the readers is the result of the assemblage of chunks from different textual sources put together by the editor according to extra-textual factors (political or editorial agenda, particular group interests). In advertising, the target audience would like to receive ads in their own language. However, very often localization is not enough. Therefore, the adjustment of discourse to the new target readers (i.e. markets) also implies some kind of hybridization, as the conflicting conventions of source and target contexts lead to a recreation of the visual and textual material in order to achieve the same impact on consumers.

Embedded as we are in a globalized world, we hardly notice the tremendous impact new technological innovations have had both on translation and on news and advertising agencies, in particular. If one compares a printed newspaper or an advertisement with their online versions, the differences are obvious. And if the advantages of the latter (high speed, real-time information, huge audiences, possibility of immediate response) are also evident, one must ponder which constraints these new information vehicles have imposed upon journalistic and the advertising discourse.

When comparing a printed newspaper with its online version, constraints in both content and form are well-known.⁵ Besides the amount of information communicated and the order chosen to transmit it, there are others constraints which affect the selection of news and which are superimposed on translators by global news agencies, such as the ideological stance of the news service and the gate-keeping processing,⁶ which function as a kind of filter. On certain

⁵ In the former, there is more space to develop a story in some detail from beginning to end, inserting it within its context and choosing which page it should be inserted into, whereas in the latter only the core information is presented in an easily intelligible and concise way.

⁶ Editors in a newspaper acts as gate keepers as they ponder not only the newsworthiness of a story, but also evaluate it in as far as it is worth following up. Theoretically, translators working in a news agency could also function as gatekeepers, but they are seldom allowed so much power. Given the increasing number of fake news items, this gate-keeping

occasions, the editor of a newspaper has to ponder whether to release the news immediately or rather hold it back until a situation has been clarified.

Online global news also tends to be much more homogeneous in form and style than its printed version. The recognition of different text types (editorial, report, article) is also more complex in digital media, and the techniques of foregrounding and backgrounding are not so evident in digital media. Interviews tend to be edited, i.e., synthesized and cropped.

4. Transediting

As a first point of interest, let us consider the preferred designation of the agents involved in global news agencies, as this is telling not only about their self-image but also about the underlining concepts (and prejudices) involved in their activity. In a journalistic context, the term translation is met with suspicion and irrevocably associated with faithfulness and literal, word-for-word rendering and as such as something to be avoided.⁷ In turn, those working in news agencies prefer to be called ‘international journalists’ rather than ‘translators’ (Conway / Bassnett, 2006, pp. 5-6), thus contributing to the invisibility and seeming transparency of translation as part and parcel of news editing,

However, one has to concede that the term transediting which has imposed itself in this domain, approaches the range of activities involved in a much more appropriate and comprehensive manner. It was first put forth by Karen Stetting in 1989 as “a new term for coping with a grey area between editing and translating” (p. 371).

Although initially inserted in a context of English language learning, Stetting’s paper illuminates the translator’s mixed textual practices both as translator and as editor which are undertaken in news agencies. Stetting identifies five situations which draw on transediting:

1. Shortening of text passages for subtitling;
2. Making the text of an interviewed politician idiomatic and well-structured;

strategy has seemingly decreased, if not been abandoned altogether. See Hautanen, 2006, p. 108 and Gambier, 2006, p. 13.

⁷ The same prejudice can be felt in the advertising market, which resorts to the designations of localization, adaptation, rewriting or transcreation in order to avoid the term translation (Baker, 2011, p. 7). Along the same line of thought, in many definitions of localization the term ‘text’ is often replaced by ‘product’ (Pym, 2010, p. 121).

3. Cleaning up inadequate manuscripts;
4. Journalists drawing on material in other languages for writing their own texts;
5. Extracting information from various documents for producing promotional company material in another language.

(Stetting, 1989, pp. 373-374)

Both the needs of the target audience and the responsibility towards the original intention compel the translator to become a transeditor, that is, to make changes that are at times necessary and legitimate, according to the editorial guidelines prevalent in the news agency in question. Stetting distinguishes three specific domains in which transediting is required:

1. Adaptation to a standard of efficiency in expression: “cleaning-up transediting”
2. Adaptation to the intended function of the translated text in its new social context: “situational transediting”
4. Adaptation to the needs and conventions of the target culture: “cultural transediting.” (Stetting, 1989, p. 377)

Bearing in mind the specific constraints every transeditor is subjected too in a globalized context of news agencies, the above-mentioned domains exactly fit the tasks translators are required to perform. In fact, their tasks include rewriting of the textual material in different forms and at several stages – cutting or expanding information derived from different sources which also diverge in quality, structuring the new text according to the textual and stylistic conventions of the target text type as well as to the text function and receptors’ needs.⁸

However, the main question here is whether or not other pragmatic changes come to the fore which may alter the perlocutionary act intended by the sender of the text in this process of ameliorating a poorly written text, turning it into a semantically acceptable and understandable one. These shifts can be either fortuitous or intentional ones, according to the degree of freedom allowed the translator and the editorial guidelines of the news agency. Nowadays the reading public has become more and more aware of context and practices which are usual at a newspaper (political correctness, fake news), such that any journalist seems to be entitled to introduce such shifts in line with the editorial policy or according to marketing strategies without having to assume responsibility

⁸ For a more in-depth analysis of the press translation process see Bani, 2006, Bielsa, 2007 and Schäffner 2012.

for the contents or the consequences of the news, as the aims to entertain (infotainment) and to mould public opinion have become paramount.

5. Transcreation

Originally a blend of ‘transcendental’ and ‘creation’ to designate the first translations of classical religious works among Indian languages, the practice of transcreation pursues two aims in this context: diffusion and interpretation of ancient sacred texts for the modern contemporary reader and its aesthetic re-elaboration in a new context which demands a fluent text. This holistic approach comprises a whole array of textual techniques including commentary and alteration of the paragraph order, for instance, so as to produce a text which is both intelligible and appealing to the target reader. Gopinathan clarifies this as:

The creative translations of the ancient Sanskrit spiritual texts into modern Indian languages are generally termed ‘transcreations’. The term ‘transcreation’ [...] is applicable to the whole tradition of creative translation of great classics [...] from Sanskrit into the regional languages of India.[...] Transcreation, understood in this context as a rebirth or incarnation (avatar) of the original work, can offer a solution for the problems of culturally oriented literary texts. In a general sense, the practice can be defined as an aesthetic re-interpretation of the original work suited to a new target-language audience. The re-interpretation is done with a certain social purpose and is performed with suitable interpolations, explanations, expansions, summaries and innovations in style and technique. (Gopinathan, 2006, pp. 236-37).

Under the influence of a post-colonialistic stance, transcreation of literary texts underwent a revival in the 20th century by Indian scholars and was taken up once again in Brazil by the brothers Haroldo and Augusto de Campos in the 1970s.

Nowadays, the world of advertising has grasped the term transcreation to apply it to pragmatic text types such as advertisements as an innovative translational strategy, or more precisely, a service to be provided to clients who wish to sell their products or services in one or more target contexts.

Publicity agencies which promote transcreation (included in a strategic marketing project) tend to emphasize the organizational aspects involved in this specific type of communication, above all the creative component

embedded in the workflow. The final aim is that the ad should produce the same cultural and commercial impact in the target market. Therefore, project management has to be negotiated among the different agencies (creative agency of the original advertising campaign, production agency and translation agency) this involves.

In order to achieve the same goal in the target context as regards the commercial, marketing value of the products to be sold, the transcreator must be extremely aware of target culture specifics, as a high level of sensitivity is required so as to adjust the message and possibly the layout of the ad to meet the demands of the new audience. Linguistic reproduction is often not successful and even a functional translation (by means of which the translated ad may function as if originally written in the target language) does not necessarily ensure a similar pragmatic impact in the target ad. The transcreator has to take many more aspects into consideration such as, for instance, rhymes whose sounds may evoke unexpected negative resonances, specific connotations of colours or animals in different regions of the globe, alliterations that are not catchy in the target market, semantic and pragmatic discrepancies in different cultures that share the same language (French in Canada, Spanish in Latin America and Portuguese in Brazil), specific registers associated with the target consumers and taglines that are too dull or inexpressive, among other pertinent cases.⁹ As such, transcreation sets even higher demands on the translator/transcreator than mere localization, as it very often involves not a mere reproduction of the source ad but the creation of a new message which can make the product or service accepted as an efficient brand in the target culture.

6. Concluding remarks

Despite all the different modes translation may assume in the course of globalization, as in transediting and transcreation, several conclusions can be advanced. First and foremost, translation is needed in global communication and should be recognized as a specific skill that asks for an array of competences (cultural, linguistic, textual, pragmatic and intersemiotic) and as such should be professionally and socially recognized.

⁹ See Humphrie et al. (2011) for more examples of less successful translations and more successful transcreations.

Localization, domestication and hybridization are strategies that derive from that overall competence the translator activates in news and advertising agencies, leading to specific options according to the context at stake and in association with other agents involved in these areas (journalists, editors, project managers, ad producers, clients), bearing in mind the differences between informative (news) and appellative text types (ads), even in cases of reciprocal contamination.

As a result of the blended textual practices in news agencies, the ideological agenda of each corporation gets merged into the news which is going to be broadcast. Moreover, the fact that in many news agencies the information flow occurs in the *lingua franca* English leads to, a new text type arising, a kind of global discourse which tends to impregnate a specific world view to quite different kinds of reality and which is becoming more and more standardized across the world, leaving some specific cultural characteristics aside, or letting them appear as marginal, as these do not fit the standardized Anglo-Saxon pattern. This also means that English becomes more and more influential, whereas other languages become more and more peripheral in the course of globalization. What is more, journalistic rules (relevance, mainstream trends, their role as opinion makers) impose themselves on the treatment of the reported subject matters.

In both cases, textual hybridity reinforces hegemonic (instead of liberating) manipulation as purposes, content and function can be changed in order to fit a globalized pattern of opinion and consumption. By creating new designations – transediting, transcreation – and incorporating translation into other textual and semiotic processes, the contours of translation are blurred, its limits become fuzzy, its technical specificity and cultural importance downgraded and consequently underpaid. The social status of translators is more and more reduced, as society does not acknowledge their role in intercultural transfer practices.

However, a crucial difference between transediting and transcreation must be emphasized: whereas in transcreation hybridity serves a legitimate purpose so that the target text has an analogous impact on the target market, in transediting news tend to be highly standardized and uniform (if not wholly manipulated, as in the case of fake news), with a probable obliteration of every type of discourse which does not fit the main stream ideological line, thus establishing a kind of segregation.

Instead of ensuing the Third Space of emancipatory impact as argued for by Bhabha, translation (as it is nowadays practiced in news agencies and advertising campaigns) reinforces main-stream hegemonic, corporative, monopolistic

thinking, leaving no space for any other kind of oppositional representation. Translators in news and advertising agencies are thus mostly deprived of the potential cultural and political capital which translation could introduce into the heterogeneous social communities to which news and ads are addressed. Moreover, translation faces a paradoxical situation in the context of globalization: the greater amounts of texts which are translated, mainly into English (which makes this language an information-rich one), the more and more superfluous translation into other languages becomes. As a consequence, so-called minority languages lose their power as a symbolic cohesive force in their local communities and translation gets deprived of its resistance (and economic) potential.

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TÍTULO: Quanto Híbrido é Tolerável em Tradução?

Tradução Oculta no Transfer Textual Intercultural (Em Agências Noticiosas e de Publicidade)

RESUMO: Num mundo marcado por um constante e avassalador intercâmbio comunicativo, no qual as especificidades linguísticas e culturais tendem a ser substituídas por tipos de discurso globalizado, torna-se imperioso perscrutar as alterações a que a tradução se submeteu, com particular relevância para as áreas das agências noticiosas e publicitárias internacionais, nas quais assumem particular importância questões de poder e de manipulação e onde o papel do tradutor sofreu profundas alterações. Estas não podem ser cabalmente compreendidas em termos de dicotomias bem definidas (domesticação vs. estranhamento, globalização vs. localização). Trata-se antes de mesclas, formas mistas de hibridização (a transedição nas agências noticiosas internacionais e a transcrição em agências publicitárias). Nas primeiras, os jornalistas realizam diversas intervenções nos textos a que se dá o nome de transedição. Nas segundas, de acordo com o princípio do marketing estratégico, o objectivo é o de proceder à adaptação cultural do anúncio a diferentes contextos, mantendo o mesmo impacto, estilo e tom do original.

Em ambos os casos, a tradução constitui uma parte substancial das intervenções textuais, embora permaneça oculta e seja considerada como negligenciável. Este artigo tenta clarificar algumas das implicações destes dois tipos de reescrita que revelam um grau apreciável de híbridismo.

TITLE: How Much Hybridity Can Translation Tolerate?

Hidden Translation in Intercultural Text Transfer (In News and Advertising Agencies)

ABSTRACT: In a world of swift and overwhelming communication exchanges, in which linguistic and cultural specificities tend to be replaced by globalized types of discourse, it is crucial to scrutinize the subtle changes undergone by translation. This is particularly significant in the areas of international news and advertising agencies in which questions of power and manipulation come to the fore and the translator's role has undergone substantial changes. These cannot be appropriately understood in terms of clear-cut dichotomies such as domestication vs. foreignization or globalization vs. localization. There is rather a confrontation involving blends, mixed forms of hybridization (transediting in international news agencies and transcreation in advertising). In news agencies journalists perform multilayered interventions on texts known as transediting. In advertising agencies, according to the principle of strategic marketing, the goal is the cultural adapting of the ad to different contexts, by keeping the same impact, style and tone.

In both cases, translation forms a considerable part of the textual interventions, although it remains hidden and is often taken for granted and considered as insignificant. This paper aims at clarifying some of the implications entailed by the two kinds of rewriting, which show a considerable degree of hybridity.