

# An Analysis of the Representation of the Translator and Translation Process into Brazilian Social Networking Groups

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**Abstract**—In the digital era, in which we have an avalanche of information, it is not new that the Internet has brought new modes of communication and knowledge access. Characterized by the multiplicity of discourses, opinions, beliefs and cultures, the web is a space of political-ideological dimensions where people (who often do not know each other) interact and create representations, deconstruct stereotypes, and redefine identities. Currently, the translator needs to be able to deal with digital spaces ranging from specific software to social media, which inevitably impact on his professional life. One of the most impactful ways of being seen in cyberspace is the participation in social networking groups. In addition to its ability to disseminate information among participants, social networking groups allow a significant personal and social exposure. Such exposure is due to the visibility of each participant achieved not only on its personal profile page, but also in each comment or post the person makes in the groups. The objective of this paper is to study the representations of translators and translation process on the Internet, more specifically in publications in two Brazilian groups of great influence on the Facebook: "Translators/Interpreters" and "Translators, Interpreters and Curious". These chosen groups represent the changes the network has brought to the profession, including the way translators are seen and see themselves. The analyzed posts allowed a reading of what common sense seems to think about the translator as opposed to what the translators seem to think about themselves as a professional class. The results of the analysis lead to the conclusion that these two positions are antagonistic and sometimes represent conflict of interests: on the one hand, the society in general consider the translator's work something easy, therefore it is not necessary to be well remunerated; on the other hand, the translators who know how complex a translation process is and how much it takes to be a good professional. The results also reveal that social networking sites such as Facebook provide more visibility, but it takes a more active role from the translator to achieve a greater appreciation of the profession and more recognition of the role of the translator, especially in face of increasingly development of automatic translation programs.

**Keywords**—Facebook, social representation, translation, translator.

## I. INTRODUCTION

TRANSLATION has always been present in our lives, whether in the passage from thought to word, or in the passage from non-meaning to meaning. However, despite being of vital importance, especially nowadays in our globalized world, general understanding about translation is fairly substandard. As observed, from a common sense point

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of view, translation predominantly related to ideas focused on literality, fidelity and recovery of what the author or the text meant. These ideas, inevitably, feed the representation of the translator as an individual who knows or masters the languages involved more than any other individual and, apart from this, is seen as the one who can recover what is enshrined in the text. The translator's responsibility, therefore, is to know the languages and translation techniques that can help recover what the author or the text is saying. Consequently, if there is a recovery, there is no authorship or creativity or decisions that depend on the subject-translator, but only on the knowledge of languages. The responsibility for a given interpretation, with all that it involves (subjectivity, ideology, world knowledge, inferences, intertextuality, etc.) is left aside, as, supposedly; the translator has no interference in the text when translating. This idea is still prevalent concerning translation (both as action and as product) when we see comments in the general media and even among beginner translators or aspiring translators in groups of social networks such as Facebook. According to Adriana Pagano [1], the perceptions of what is the act of translating, what is a good translation, the role of the translator etc., affect the performance of the apprentice-translator and determine the way society in general assesses the translation as a profession and the translator as an agent of this activity. Some beliefs covered by the author are: i. Translation is an art reserved for a select few that can exercise it due to a special gift; ii. Translation is a practical activity that requires only knowledge of language and a good dictionary; iii. The translator must be a bilingual speaker or have lived in a country where the foreign language they work with is spoken; iv. One can only translate from foreign language to their native language, since they master only the latter; v. The translator is a traitor and all translations involve a certain degree of betrayal (*traduttori, traditori*).

Other beliefs not covered by Pagano, but which are also often observed in people already working in the field, concern to the text genres to be translated and the greater or lesser difficulty of the text or interference level of the translator (of its creativity, its expertise) according to such genres. Thus, translating poetry would be more difficult than translating prose; technical translation would involve more knowledge and less creativity than literary translation; to translate medicine it would be necessary to have training in the area, etc. Such beliefs are still ingrained in our society, and for a "deconstruction", or, at least, a "reimagining" of the concept of

translation and of the translator's role to happen, it is necessary to have some questioning of some theoretical arguments that characterize the area and some quick consideration about the current situation, at least in Brazil.

## II. CONSIDERATIONS ON TRANSLATION STUDIES

The study of translation, since the myth of Babel, has marked the discussion of dichotomous points, among which we can mention: literal translation x free translation; meaning x word-by-word; fidelity x infidelity; visibility x invisibility; domestication x foreignization; literary x technical; transcreation x recovery; creativity x technique etc. The "adoption" of one or another point of view about translation ends up influencing the action of the translator and, consequently, the product of their activity. More than that, the general idea of translation and the role of the translator creates representations not always positive of the profession and the professional. Such representations appear, for example, in memes and comments on social networking groups, as we shall see below. First, a contextualization of how the translation has been considered, at least in Brazilian universities, so it is possible to see how scientific knowledge often distances itself from what is propagated by common sense.

In Brazil, the decade of 1990 was marked by the publishing of post-structuralist studies, characterized by the approach of the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida made by Arrojo, Ottoni, Rajagopalan, Coracini, among others. In 1992 and 1993, with the publishing of "O signo desconstruído" [2] and "Tradução, Desconstrução and Psicanálise" [3], Arrojo puts the country at the forefront of the deconstructivist approach to translation, that is, it is mainly through the texts of this author that Jacques Derrida is introduced in academic field of translation. According to Siscar [4], more than in other countries, in Brazil the deconstruction had a greater effect and range in the academic field of translation, as opposed to other areas.

In the words of Arrojo [5]: "From a demystification of the 'original' and of traditional concepts of authorship and reading, and the resulting acceptance that translating is inevitably interfering and producing meanings, in a context in which they begin to reassess relations traditionally established between theory and practice and when abandoning the innocuous pursuit of reading unrelated history and its circumstances the thoughts about translation leave a secondary position on the studies of linguistics, literature and philosophy, which always sought the repetition of the same and the infallible perfect translation algorithm and assume a prominent place in the contemporary thought of the Postmodernity."

In some works, Derrida shows more clearly the question of languages and translation, as in "Des Tours de Babel" [6], and "Letter to a Japanese Friend" [7], but the concepts related to translation (action and product) are "spread" throughout his work. Some that are worth remembering, as they help in the understanding of the importance and the responsibility of the translator are: *différance* [8]; double bind [9]; *greffe*; *trace*;

hospitality, as we have covered previously [10].

Even those who do not agree with the deconstruction can see their positive points. To Paulo Henriques Britto [11], for instance, "The great merit of deconstruction is, therefore, raising discussions that made us all – regardless of the position that we adopt - more aware of the difference between what should be the goals of translating activity and what in fact can be required of a real translation. Nowadays, for example, to assert that a particular translation of a given text is the only correct or the only possible one is a demonstration of absolute theoretical ingenuity." In this context, it is possible to observe two main aspects: on the one hand, translation studies are becoming increasingly more complex and more interconnected with different areas (from areas mostly associated with Linguistics, such as lexicology, corpus linguistics, cognitive linguistics, to areas such as philosophy, anthropology, ethnography, psychoanalysis, sociology, etc.); on the other hand, there are issues related to the future of the profession, supposedly threatened by technological advancement, more specifically, by automatic translation software. Currently, there is an increasing interference of translation software on the daily life of the translator, who practically cannot work anymore without the aid of said software. Companies, for example, require the use of translation memory programs, which leads to discussions not only about the value (decreased) of the translation because of the number of 100% matches that occurred, but also about the very notion of authorship, both of the translation and of the translation memories (made by the translator, with the aid of the machine, and not the other way around). We need to consider, however, that the translation memories are usually limited to translation professionals while the automatic translation programs are accessible to all users of the network - what brings up again the concept of translation as a passage from one language to another with no interference of a subject. This way, ancient quarrels eventually come back to haunt us again, reinforcing the idea that the translator is only a connoisseur of languages. That is to say that, even though the area today seems to be booming, both in quantity and in variety of works translated, we still note that the translator remains socially under-recognized and under-valued.

## III. ANALYSIS OF SOME POSTS

In research conducted in two groups of social networks in Brazil, one can observe that the belief that knowing a foreign language is sufficient to be a translator or the belief that translating is an extra activity – but not a profession – are still very much rooted in society. In the group "Translator, Interpreters e Curious" [12], these are some frequent questions: I am fluent in English, how can I start translating? It is possible to live off only from translation? Is a college degree necessary to be a translator?

In the group "Translators/Interpreters" [13], a translator made a parody of a meme famous in Brazil, bringing a few of these representations about the profession:

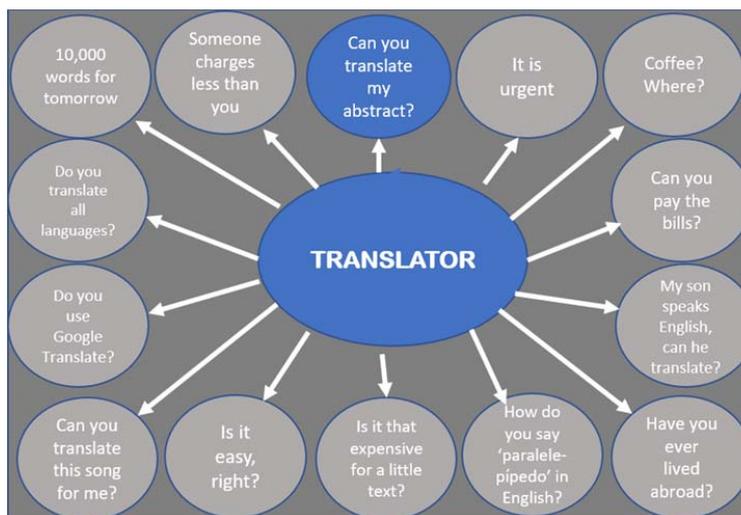


Fig. 1 Image (in Portuguese) developed by Airton Almeida, available on the Group Translators/ Interpreters (my translation)

Fig. 1 features [14], at the center, the word "translator", and several arrows pointing at it statements that poke fun at the way society and common sense view the translator. The image presents 10 questions, two statements about deadlines, and one statement about values and a request (implicitly free) of a translation. The fact that this image reproduces something commonly disclosed in the media and on the Internet suggests that everything is up to the translator (or everything is the translator's fault, if we take the intertextuality to its maximum).

The impact of the image above and its use as a meme regarding translators confirms the affirmation of Raquel Recuero [15] that "the presence of memes is related to social capital, as the motivation for users to spread them is, directly or indirectly, associated to the value of a group". In the form of questions that translators are used to hearing, we see a dissemination of socially anchored representations of the translator that need to be deconstructed. The anchorage is part of the four concepts developed by Serge Moscovici [16] who supports the idea of social representation as beliefs, knowledge and opinions of a group that reflects the construction of ideologies and values within this group. In this context, there is a crystallization of ideas on a given topic, which the author calls objectification; then there is the anchorage, consisting of the dissemination of this idea, making it common. This way, the knowledge becomes part of a consensual universe – based on common sense – which is opposed to scientific knowledge – based on reification –, whose concepts are more difficult to become collective. Thus, the representations, as defined by Moscovici, govern our relationship with others and ultimately guide our behavior and the construction of personal and social identities. They may even direct behaviors, establish relationships with paradigms, stereotypes and perceptions that we already have in our memory and that are shared, whether in personal or virtually.

If, on the one hand, we have the crystallization of representations, on the other, they can evolve, change and adapt to new images created socially, through the construction

of another speech, leading to other representations or, at least, to the questioning of these representations. Both the questioning and the negation of what the meme express are forms of changing in social representation. Questioning the lame jokes, responding consciously and critically to questions of spectators who believe one do not need translating skills to become a translator, and creating other memes that provide a greater understanding of the profession are all possible ways to fight for the appreciation expected by those who identify themselves as professional translators. In addition, greater visibility also makes possible that other anchorages to take place avoiding unappealing conclusions related to translators, such as: the fact that one does not need a degree in the related area; the lack of a minimum curriculum for the courses; the issue of non-regulation of the profession; the troubles related to including the profession in the Brazilian tax system, among other obstacles that result from the lack of recognition. In this sense, some images are representative of the attempt to mock and, at the same time, to question what is said about the profession. A post that exemplifies this, and that has been reproduced and shared for more than two years, was made by translator Julia Debase using 19 famous images of Saint Jerome, the patron saint of translation, containing common phrases used by translators, by customers, and by society in general. In the first case, there is, for example: "the cat tool has crashed"; "0 Matches"; "7000 words by 8:00 pm? I can do it!". In the second case, among other captions, we find: "0.04 per word? Don't insult me"; "My nephew studies English. He translates and then you just take a quick look at it!"; "But isn't it bad for you, now that we have Google Translate?" (Fig. 2) Therefore, we observe that there are two antagonistic positions: on the one hand, the clients and society in general view the work of translators as something easy and thus not worthy of a good remuneration; on the other hand, the translators, who know how complex the translating process is and how it goes far beyond the knowledge of languages.

Another important point in the post is the "presence" of the translator in the network, seen as one of the strengths of the

two groups, because, besides the fact of giving voice to translators, the groups also shine light over the profession's need for more appreciation. There is a "self-declaration" of being a translator and an attention to showing that the professionals do not only know how to translate, but also know how to discuss and defend their profession.



Fig. 2 Image collage and subtitles by Julia Debasse, available on the Group Translators / Interpreters

#### IV. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The fact that the Internet brought new modes of communication and access to information is not new. Characterized by the multiplicity of discourses, opinions, beliefs and cultures, the web is a space of ideological and political dimensions in which, through technological, linguistic and semiotic resources, people who often do not know each other, except virtually, interact and create representations, (de)construct stereotypes, and (re)define identities. One of the most impactful ways to be seen in cyberspace is by participating in social networking groups, because, besides its capacity for dissemination of information among the participants, the groups allow a quite significant personal and social display, since the visibility of each social participant [17] is achieved not only on the personal profile, but also in every comment or post made in groups to which the individual belongs. There is, inevitably, a performative representation of each social actor, which creates an identity for themselves and for the Other based on what is shared on the network.

In these social networking groups, there is in addition to increased visibility, an amplification of values such as reputation, popularity, and authority or influence that relate to the social capital which, within the notion presented by Bourdieu, is connected to the belonging to a group and to the knowledge and mutual recognition among the participants [18]. For the translator, this new environment requires

continuous improvement and an ability to handle a variety of digital spaces, ranging from specific software to social media, which will inevitably affect the translator's professional life. In this sense, the network can be seen as a place where identities are constructed and influences are magnified and propagated, either through individual profiles or through participation in groups with people of similar interests. The same occurs with the social representations: they are created from, as the name implies, representations. This representing causes the meanings to be constructed each and every time, therefore, a reading that helps with the deconstruction of the meanings is necessary where we no longer identify ourselves.

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