

Translating Place: Linguistic Variation in Translation

Alexandra Assis Rosa

University of Lisbon
E-mail: a.assis.rosa@gmail.com

Abstract

This article aims to discuss the problem for translation posed by linguistic variation, and in particular by the relation between discourse and place, within the framework of Descriptive Translation Studies and following a communicative approach to translated fiction. For this purpose, this article discusses linguistic variation in terms of the correlation of linguistic form, communicative meaning and socio-semiotic value, considers the fictional recreation of accents and dialects, and suggests several major strategies for the translation of such literary pseudo varieties (following Brisset 1996; Chapdelaine and Lane Mercier 1994; Rosa 1999, 2001, 2003; Ramos Pinto 2009a and 2009b; Cavalheiro 2009; Rosa et al. 2011). Throughout this paper, translational patterning regarding the translation of literary pseudo varieties already identified by previous research will be discussed with the purpose of identifying and discussing the underlying translational norms.

Keywords: *translation, linguistic variation, fiction, translation strategies, translation norms*

Introduction

In the 1990s, a number of studies were published on the topic of linguistic variation and translation. Among them, cases in point are Annie Brisset's work *A Sociocritique of Translation: Theatre and Alterity in Quebec, 1968-1988*, Annick Chapdelaine and Gillian Lane Mercier's special issue of the journal *TTR* entitled *Traduire les sociolectes*, Michael Cronin's work on the growing visibility of Irish Gaelic in literary (non)translated texts, included in *Translating Ireland. Translation, Languages, Cultures*, as well as Birgitta Englund Dimitrova's study on the translation of dialect in fiction.¹ These studies, and especially Brisset, provide a socio-critical context-oriented analysis of the translation of linguistic variation, which is based on the identification of extra-linguistic value for each linguistic variety.² Such studies, consequently, take for

¹ Annie Brisset, *A Sociocritique of Translation: Theatre and Alterity in Quebec, 1968-1988*, trans. Rosalind Gill and Roger Gannon (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Annick Chapdelaine and Gillian Lane-Mercier eds., *Traduire les sociolectes, TTR-Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction*, 7/2 (1994); Michael Cronin, *Translating Ireland. Translation, Languages, Cultures* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996); Brigitta Englund Dimitrova, "Translation of Dialect in Fictional Prose - Vilhelm Moberg in Russian and English as a Case in Point," in *Norm, Variation and Change in Language. Proceedings of the Centenary Meeting of the Nyfilologiska Sällskapet Nedre Manilla 22-23 March 1996*, (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1997), 49-65.

² Among the studies wholly or partially dedicated to the topic of translating linguistic variation, one might also quote Kitty M. van Leuven-Zwart, "Translation and original: similarities and dissimilarities II," *Target* 2/1(1990): 69-95; Bärbel Czennia, *Figurenrede als Übersetzungsproblem: untersucht am*

granted that “[a] linguistic community is a market. Its vernacular and referential languages are its symbolic commodities, each with its own use value and its own exchange value. The circulation of these commodities is governed by power relations.”³

From the 1990s onwards, and following a similar approach, Portuguese researchers also published a number of studies on the topic of linguistic variation in translation. Such research has focused on the TV subtitling of *Pygmalion*, by George Bernard Shaw,⁴ on 20th century translations of Charles Dickens,⁵ or on regional and socio-cultural variation in subtitled versions of *Gone with the Wind*.⁶ It has also discussed theoretical and methodological implications of the study of translation of linguistic varieties in general, also considering the application of this research to the training of literary translators.⁷

This paper aims to build on such research to offer a reflection on the translation of linguistic variation. For this purpose, selected examples of theoretical and methodological proposals will be discussed, in terms of (i) the operative categories they offer for the study of linguistic variation as a translation problem; (ii) the implications

Romanwerk von Charles Dickens und ausgewählten deutschen Übersetzungen (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 1990); Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, *Discourse and the Translator* (London, New York: Longman, 1990); Paul Bandia, “On Translating Pidgins and Creoles in African Literature,” *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 7/2 (1994): 93-114, accessed October 14, 2012, <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/037182ar>; Roberto Mayoral-Asensio, *La traducción de la variación lingüística* (PhD diss., University of Granada, 1997); Ritva Leppihalme, “The Two Faces of Standardization: On the Translation of Regionalisms in Literary Dialogue,” *The Translator* 6/2 (2000): 247-269; Ritva Leppihalme, “Päätalo Idioms and Catchphrases in Translation,” *Erikoiskielet ja käännteoria. VAKKI:n julkisut. Vaasa 2000* (2000): 224-234. With the exception of Michael Cronin, *Translating Ireland. Translation, Languages, Cultures*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996); Brigitta Englund Dimitrova, “Translation of Dialect in Fictional Prose - Vilhelm Moberg in Russian and English as a Case in Point,” in *Norm, Variation and Change in Language. Proceedings of the Centenary Meeting of the Nyfilologiska Sällskapet Nedre Manilla 22-23 March 1996*, (Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell International, 1997), 49-65 and more explicitly Annie Brisset, *A Sociocritique of Translation: Theatre and Alterity in Quebec, 1968-1988*, they tend to focus on a micro-linguistic analysis of the translation of forms.

³ Annie Brisset, *A Sociocritique of Translation*, 169.

⁴ Alexandra Assis Rosa, “The Centre and the Edges. Linguistic Variation and Subtitling *Pygmalion* into Portuguese,” in *Translation and the (Re)Location of Meaning. Selected Papers of the CETRA Research Seminars in Translation Studies 1994-1996*, edited by Jeroen Vandaele, (Leuven: CETRA Publications: 1999), 317-338; Alexandra Assis Rosa, “Features of Oral and Written Communication in Subtitling,” in *(Multi)Media Translation. Concepts, Practices and Research*, edited by Yves Gambier and Henrik Gottlieb, (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2001), 213-221; Sara Ramos Pinto, “How important is the way you say it? A Discussion on the Translation of Linguistic Varieties,” *Target* 21/2 (2009): 289-307. Sara Ramos Pinto, *Traduzir no vazio: a problemática da variação linguística nas traduções de *Pygmalion*, de G. B. Shaw e de *My Fair Lady*, de Alan Jay Lerner (Translating into a Void: the Problem of Linguistic Variation in Portuguese Translations of Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion* and Alan Jay Lerner’s *My Fair Lady*.)* (Phd diss., University of Lisbon, 2009).

⁵ Alexandra Assis Rosa, *Tradução, Poder e Ideologia. Retórica Interpessoal no Diálogo Narrativo Dickensiano em Português (1950-1999)* (Translation, Power and Ideology. Interpersonal Rhetoric in Dickensian Fictional Dialogue Translated into Portuguese 1950-1999.) (Phd diss., University of Lisbon, 2003).

⁶ Lili Cavalheiro, “Linguistic Variation in Subtitling for Audiovisual Media in Portugal,” *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, 7(2008): 17-28.

⁷ Rosa, *Tradução, Poder e Ideologia*; Ramos Pinto, “How important is the way you say it?”; Alexandra Assis Rosa, Luísa Falcão, Raquel Mouta, Susana Valdez and Tiago Botas, “Luso-Canadian Exchanges in Translation Studies: Translating Linguistic Variation,” *Proceedings of the International Congress “From Sea to Sea - Literatura e Cultura do Canadá em Lisboa*, Special issue of *Anglo-Saxónica* 3/2 (2011): 39-68.

and contextual constraints involved in the translation of linguistic varieties; and (iii) the findings that research has made so far.

Language is Place

Linguistic Varieties and Place

Language homogeneity is a fallacy. No language is homogenous, because any language is subject to linguistic variation. Accents differ, and so do dialects (defined as vocabulary and grammatical patterning). Language changes over time, with the most apparent consequence that even different generations speak the same language in different ways. At a given moment, it also varies since speakers belonging to different regions, and social groups, involved in different professions, using language in situations ranging from the extremely formal to the most informal, will speak the same language in sometimes very different ways.

At any given moment, language, therefore, is place, both physical and social. It expresses and creates, reinforces or changes the speaker's place, that portion of space allocated to or occupied by such a speaker, one's geographical and social place, socio-cultural allegiance, position, social station, function or role.

If linguistic variation were simply a formal matter of dealing with the fact that languages are not isomorphic, it would not be especially problematic for translation or an interesting topic for research in Translation Studies. Linguistic variation becomes a problem for translation once it is interpreted as a correlation of linguistic features, users and uses; or, in other words, as a correlation of, on the one hand, different accents and dialects; and, on the other hand, contextual features, such as time, space, socio-cultural group, situation, and individual user.

LINGUISTIC VARIABLES	CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES	TYPE OF VARIATION	LINGUISTIC VARIETIES
Phonetic and Phonological features (grouped in accents)	TIME	DIACHRONIC VS. SYNCHRONIC	STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LANGUAGE
Morphological, Syntactic, Semantic, and Lexical features (grouped in dialects)	PHYSICAL/GEOGRAPHICAL SPACE	REGIONAL	REGIONAL DIALECT or ACCENT
	SOCIAL SPACE	SOCIAL	SOCIAL DIALECT or ACCENT; SLANG; TECNOLECT
	INDIVIDUAL SPEAKER	INTERPERSONAL	IDIOLECT
	COMMUNICATIVE SITUATION	FUNCTIONAL	REGISTER

Figure 1. Linguistic Variation

By resorting to what some may call linguistic sensitivity, or actually one's knowledge of sociolinguistic stereotypes, defined as attitudes and beliefs towards language, a proficient speaker of a language is able to relate the patterning of linguistic features (defined as accents and dialects) with particular time and space coordinates (both physical and social), including a given communicative situation; and all these

features combine into a speaker's linguistic fingerprint: his or her idiolect. So a proficient speaker of a given language is able to correlate a cluster of linguistic forms with contextual meaning, i.e. time, space, and user.

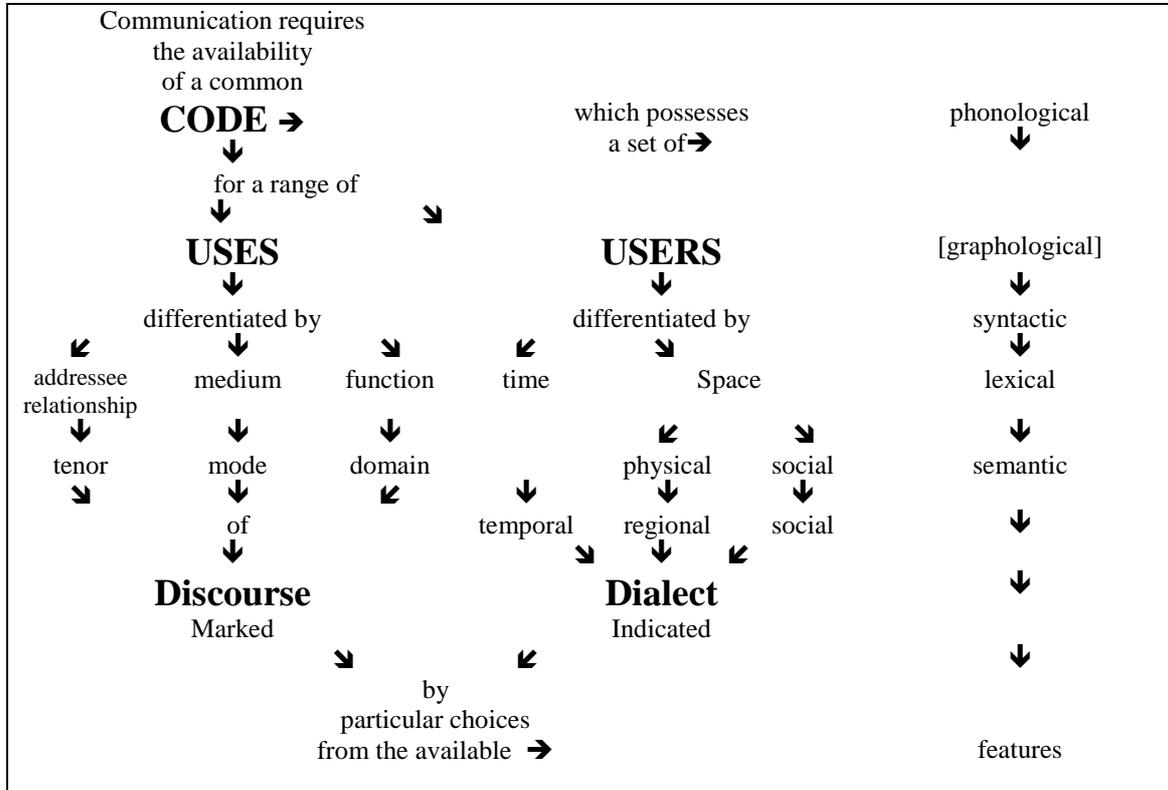


Figure 2. Linguistic variation (based on Bell's chart)

Such a correlation is also represented in Bell's flow chart depicting linguistic variation.⁸ Bell groups phonological, syntactical, lexical and semantic features into a code which is used for a broad range of uses by a variety of users, as represented in Figure 2.⁹ Particular uses and individual users will then tend to evidence a specific patterning in terms of their choice of formal features, as discourses and dialects, respectively. Resorting to Systemic Functional Grammar, Bell suggests that particular uses may be defined in terms of medium, function and interpersonal relations (mode, domain and tenor) which will be marked in discourse; users, in turn, may be defined in terms of time and space –physical and social– which will be marked by dialects. Proficient language users will tend to recognize such formal patterning based on previous experience and relate it to given uses and users.

In other words, discourse is loaded with communicative meaning and the communicative competence needed to interpret it is therefore associated with both

⁸ Roger T. Bell, *Translation and Translating* (London: Longman, 1991), 185.

⁹ In my view, this approach is lacking because (1) it does not mention morphological features as a trait of dialects; (2) it does not separate dialects from accents (a division that is particularly operative in the case of standard dialect and accent for British English); (3) it only considers group varieties and does not mention individual traits, defined as idiolects; and (4) the use of discourse (instead of register) is also arguable.

linguistic competence and extra-linguistic knowledge of the experiential context in which a given language is used. Again, by resorting to both linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge, a proficient speaker is able to relate formal linguistic patterning with contextual variables. A proficient speaker is, consequently, able to locate another speaker in time, in social and physical space, and in a given situation, just by considering the way s/he speaks.

As Basil Hatim and Ian Mason suggest, however, there are other dimensions of context to be considered in discourse. In another schematic representation of discourse, the authors mention three.¹⁰

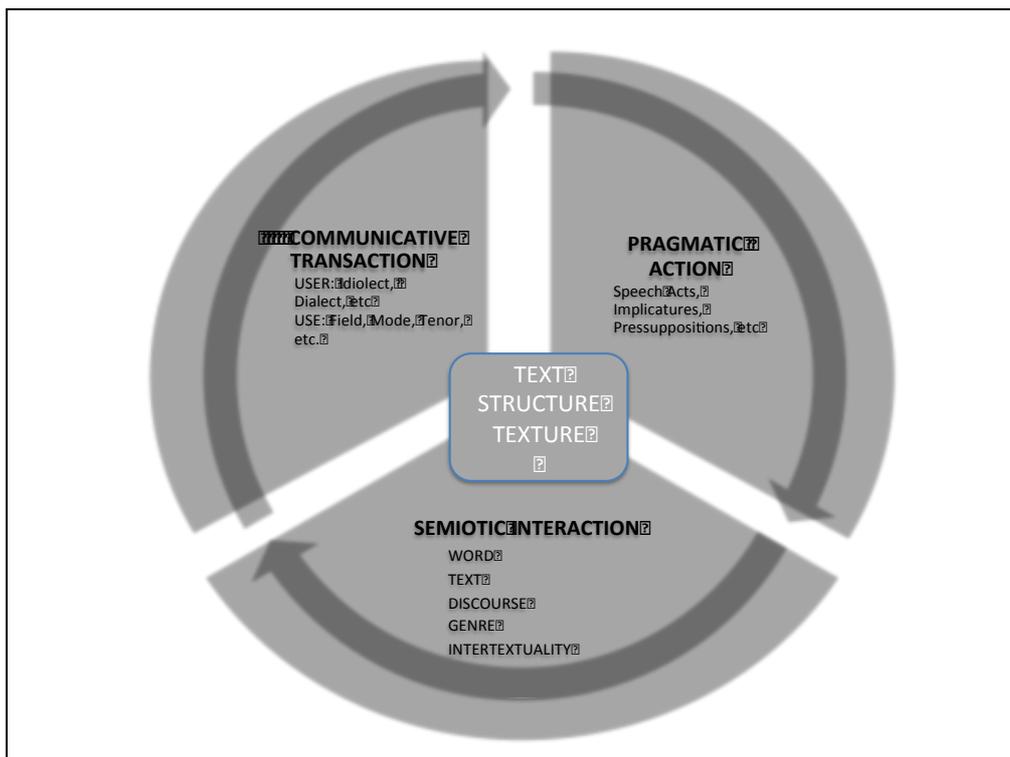


Figure 3. Three dimensions of context (based on Hatim and Mason)

As shown in Figure 3, text, structure and texture will reveal three dimensions of context. First, discourse, as communicative transaction, reveals the correlation of formal features with users and uses. Second, as pragmatic action, language is used to do things and any utterance may be interpreted e.g. in terms of speech acts, implicature, or presupposition. Third, as semiotic interaction, discourse correlates the former with socio-semiotic value thus revealing a close relationship with a given culture's values and ideology.

¹⁰ Hatim, Mason, *Discourse and the Translator*, 58.

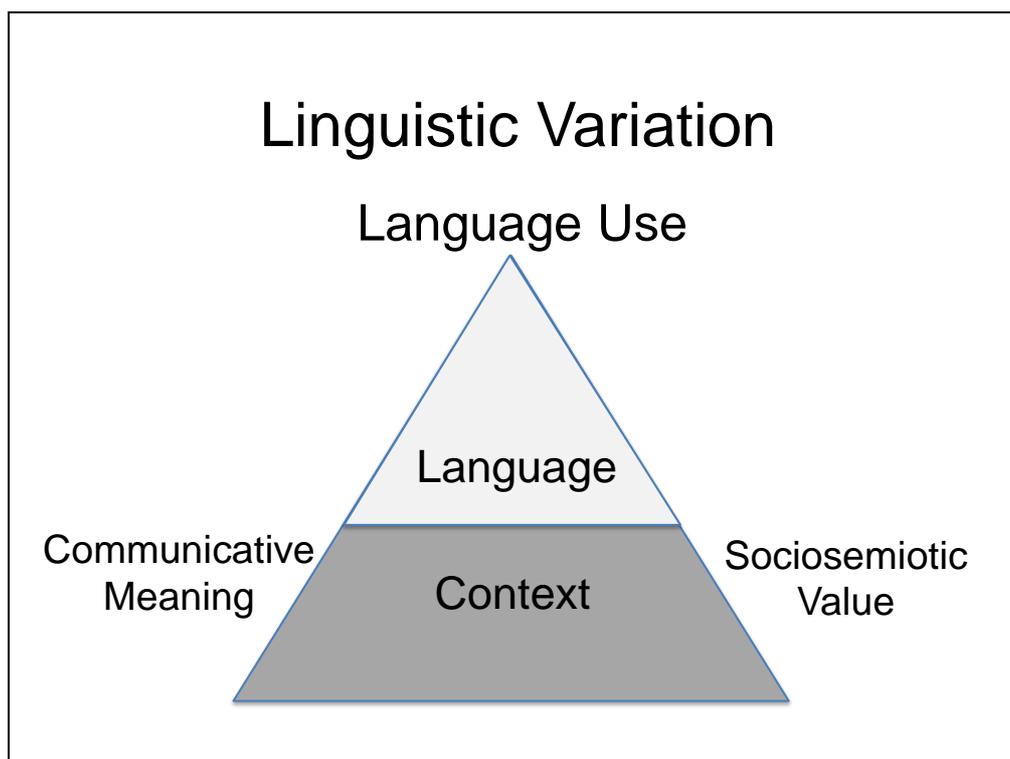


Figure 4. Discourse and context in linguistic variation

As represented in Figure 4, this paper focuses on the contention that language varieties are significant for a proficient speaker in terms of especially two of the contextual dimensions of meaning suggested by Hatim and Mason (1990). They have communicative meaning, related to user and use; and they have socio-semiotic value, related to power and prestige within a given community.

Consequently, discourse is place, in two different but related ways. First, discourse is place because it is loaded with communicative meaning. Linguistic varieties, understood formally as linguistic patterning, and defined as accents or dialects, involve a correlation of such forms with the place of a given user and use. Second, discourse is place because it is loaded with socio-semiotic value. Since the correlation of linguistic markers and communicative meaning is also associated with a certain amount of prestige, it both creates and expresses one's place within the space drawn by socio-cultural values. Certain uses are more prestigious in a given community whereas others are, on the contrary, associated with very low prestige and even socio-cultural stigma. Discourse, therefore, does not occur in an evaluative void, much to the contrary. Discourse occurs in place and it places.

Besides being able to allocate another speaker a given place within both social and physical space, any proficient speaker will also be able to relate the speaker to a scale of socio-cultural prestige and to allocate him a place in a network of power relations. This will be carried out by resorting to the interface provided by sociolinguistic stereotypes, which enable the contextual interpretation of the constellation of formal features evidenced by the speaker's use of language.

For the purpose of a descriptive study of the translation of linguistic varieties, linguistic varieties may be grouped according to their socio-semiotic value and prestige expressed by speakers' attitudes and, accordingly, allocated different places in a spatial

representation of this scale of socio-cultural value or prestige.¹¹ In Figure 5, they are divided into (1) a center of prestige occupied by the standard – and especially by the written standard, and formal, literary use— and (2) peripheries occupied by less prestigious varieties. In successive wider circles less prestigious varieties are located in a continuum ranging from orality, regional substandard dialects and accents and, as is my contention, in contemporary Portugal this continuum ends with stigmatized socio-cultural substandard accents and dialects, located in the widest circle, further away from the center of prestige.¹²

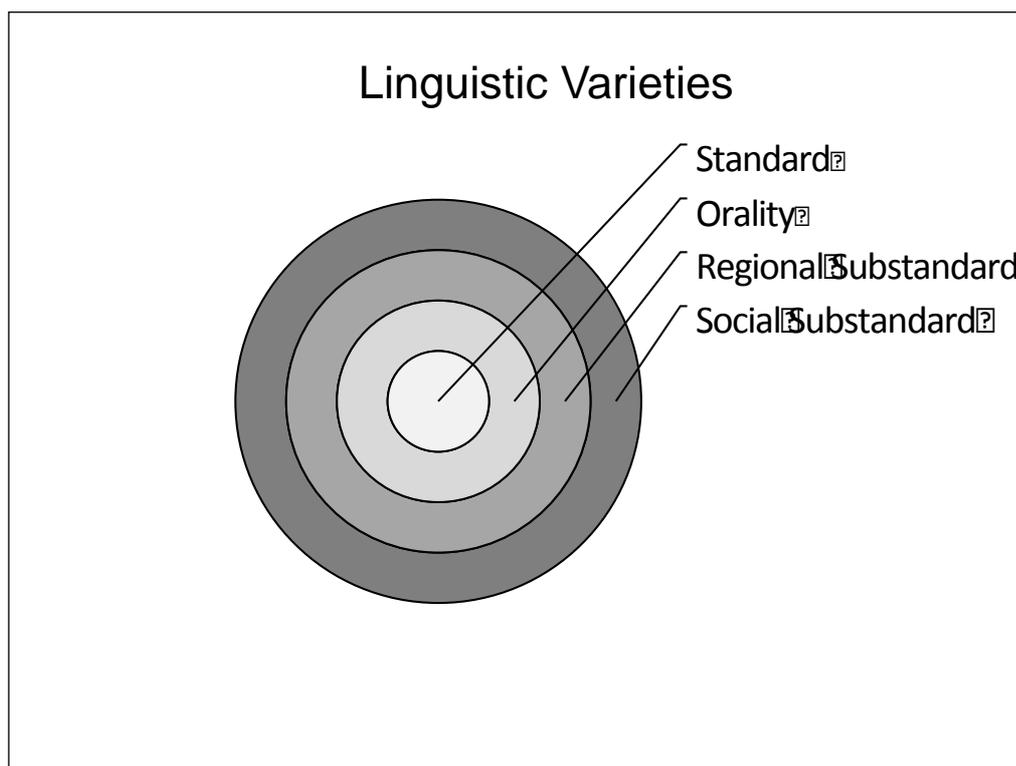


Figure 5. The place of linguistic varieties in a scale of prestige

Linguistic and cultural identities are consequently a matter of social and physical place (the communicative dimension of context, associated with user and use) as well as place in a scale of prestige (the socio-semiotic dimension of context, associated with values and power), as represented in Figure 5. Other languages and different time frames may organize such varieties differently, positioning them either closer or further away from the more prestigious place represented by the center of this diagram.¹³

¹¹ As in Rosa, “Luso-Canadian Exchanges in Translation Studies”; “The Centre and the Edges”; “Features of Oral and Written Communication in Subtitling.”

¹² In authentic use, such varieties often overlap (e.g. in socio-geographical varieties) and this schematic representation may be criticized as a simplification. Moreover, orality does not necessarily correspond to substandard. However, as also suggested by the survey carried out by Ramos Pinto, *Traduzir no vazio*, user sensitivity expressed by sociolinguistic stereotypes does organize varieties into a continuum of prestige, allocating orality a place which does not correspond to the center of prestige, which users tend to associate with the standard, formal, written, and even literary use of language.

¹³ On other organizations of linguistic varieties along a similar scale of prestige see Dimitrova and both Leppihalme’s articles.

Literary Varieties and Place

At this point, however, a *caveat* is needed: literary varieties cannot be equated with authentic language use and, as such, require further attention. As Page states, “[f]aithfulness to life, so often invoked in praise of dialogue, would be a very doubtful virtue if it were ever practiced.”¹⁴ Accordingly, a line must be drawn between authentic discourse and its recreation in fiction. Many filters apply between authentic linguistic variation and literary varieties, or pseudo dialects and accents recreated in literature and film.

The difference between authentic linguistic varieties and literary pseudo accents and dialects may be explained by considering several filters and constraints that apply to their fictional and literary configuration. First, sociolinguistic stereotypes organize the raw data of actual linguistic variation into ready made and applicable categories correlating forms, communicative meaning and socio-semiotic value. As said, these categories are strongly motivated by a structure of prestige defined by the standard and evocative of extra-linguistic value. Second, a repertoire of selective fictional markers previously used to recreate literary varieties also applies. The use of literary pseudo varieties and the association of forms and functions therefore only works against the backdrop of both socio-cultural practices and a sometimes vast intertext of previous practice generating a repertoire.¹⁵ Third, further filters may be specific functions assigned by an author, in a specific period or by an internal narrative structure.¹⁶ Finally, such a selective and filtered recreation is never free from constraints such as the need for readability, the degree of consciousness of linguistic variation in a given linguistic community, the medium, the complexity of plot, among others. Such filters and their validity are, as such, contextually motivated and, as a consequence, intricately associated with a given space and time.

For the consideration of character discourse as recreated by literary varieties, several categories and distinctions apply: characterizing vs. non-characterizing, narrator vs. character diction and groupal vs. individual characterizing discourse.

First, in fiction, character discourse is said to fall within two main categories: neutral or characterizing.¹⁷ Character discourse is purported to be neutral whenever it is equated with the standard variety. In this case, neutrality is defined against an extra-linguistic system of values that is also external to the literary text and created by the linguistic community in which the text is produced. Character discourse is also considered neutral in another sense when it does not bear markers to distinguish it from

¹⁴ Norman Page, *Speech in the English Novel* (London: Macmillan, [1973] 1988), 75.

¹⁵ As mentioned by Page, e.g. Dickens resorted to an immanent characterization of his characters which was strongly influenced by the literary tradition of the Jonsonian comedy of humors, and the novels by Smollett, not to mention the remarkable influence of his experience as a court reporter and of his devotion to acting and public readings (Page, *Speech in the English Novel*, 99, 142, 144, 153).

¹⁶ As stated by Chapman about Victorian fiction, “[a]nother convention of the novel is the assignment of standard speech to characters that would realistically speak a non-standard variety. Virtuous characters who play a major part in the story may be treated in this way, the purity of their speech reflecting the purity of their natures and their superiority to their environment.” Raymond Chapman, *Forms of Speech in Victorian Fiction* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 221. Accordingly, it is mostly secondary rogue characters, which use pseudo substandard discourse in Victorian fiction.

¹⁷ Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press), 1978.

narratorial discourse. These two subcategories of neutrality may be classified as external or internal.¹⁸ It is worth mentioning at this point that these two types of neutrality tend to coincide since in most cases narrator discourse equates with standard variety, thus, importing into the narrative structure ideological structures of the culture which generates it.¹⁹

In a socio-critical study of linguistic variation in translation, however, one should avoid the term “neutral” since identification with the standard far from being neutral is, on the contrary, loaded with socio-cultural positive value and prestige. The term non-characterizing may, therefore, be preferable for this category.

Whenever the text marks contextual features related to the speaker, discourse is deemed to be characterizing. Some authors use characterizing discourse by resorting to linguistic markers (whether signaling deviance from standard varieties or not) related to a region, social group, and profession, as well as to individuals. It must be added that characterizing discourse can also be situation related, since literary pseudo varieties may also contribute to reveal permanent or momentary traits, such as a particular state of mind, or a wide range of emotions.

Second, whenever present, characterizing discourse tends to allow for an internal distinction between character and narrator diction, since the latter tends to coincide with standard discourse. Consequently, literary varieties may also be interpreted as organized into a center of authority and prestige occupied by narrator diction (which tends to be non-characterizing and correspond to standard discourse) and peripheries of characterizing (groupal or individual) character diction expressive of the location of such characters in fictional space (both social and physical) and time.

Finally, as suggested by Page, characterizing discourse can be classified as groupal (historical, regional, social, professional, age-related) or individual. In either case it contributes to character profiling.²⁰ But it does so indirectly. Besides contributing to verisimilitude, characterizing discourse indirectly presents characters and their profiles, which are suggested by their speech and are consequently constructed by reader interpretation. This is clearly different from, and more convincing than, a direct presentation of a character carried out by a narrator.²¹

To sum up, it is this complex correlation of linguistic forms, communicative meaning and socio-semiotic value also resulting from several filters applicable in the recreation of literary varieties that poses a particularly difficult problem for translators. Again, translating forms is not especially problematic. As stated above, the difficulties

¹⁸ Rosa, *Tradução, Poder e Ideologia*.

¹⁹ Chatman (1978) defines this as neutral narrative diction, and Page mentions it as narrative style (Page *Speech in the English Novel*, 15). The centrality of the narrator’s authority tends to correspond to standard varieties. According to Traugott and Pratt (E.C., Traugott and M.L. Pratt, *Linguistics for Students of Literatures* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1980), 335-350), this norm was broken by Mark Twain in 1885, when he created Huck, a first-person narrator who uses substandard features in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Page, in turn, mentions the previous case of *Moll Flanders*, by Daniel Defoe (1722) (Page, *Speech in the English Novel*, 47-48). One of the most famous examples is probably *The Catcher in the Rye*, by J.D. Salinger (1951). Only considerably later are third-person narrators to be found who resort to substandard discourse (Traugott and Pratt, *Linguistics for Students of Literatures*, 335-350).

²⁰ Page, *Speech in the English Novel*.

²¹ Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London, New York: Routledge, 1983), 59-60.

arise when a translator tries to replicate both the form and contextual meaning (communicative and socio-semiotic) of a pseudo-accent or dialect from a literary source text in order to indirectly characterize a character in another language, for another receiver, in another culture:

If someone has the pronunciation, the vocabulary and the syntax that are characteristic of a social class, or a regional group of people, his denotative message can be normally translated into any standard language. If in a novel the speech patterns are used to evoke social and/or geographic data about the speaker, the translator faces a problem, however.²²

Additional problems arise if a translator also tries to negotiate a poetics of fiction and the values evoked by the application of several filters which are also deeply anchored in extra-linguistic value, and therefore expressive of a given time and space. The correlation of discourse and place again becomes central to understanding the difficulty of translating literary varieties intentionally used to provide extra-linguistic, contextual information about a character.

Translation is Place

The Translation of Literary Varieties and Place

In addition, translation is also discourse and as such it is also contextually motivated or constrained. When dealing with the translation of literary varieties, it must also be considered that there are contextual norms constraining or motivating translation decisions, as evidenced by translation patterning. As Annie Brisset states, “[t]ranslation, like any writing, reflects the institutional norms of a given society [...]. Thus, translation theory should concern itself as much, if not more, with contrastive analysis of social discourses as with contrastive linguistics or comparative stylistics.”²³

Translation is a fact of the target culture’s space and also of its place within a wider network of intercultural exchanges.²⁴ As a consequence, research in Translation Studies must go beyond a mere comparison of source and target languages and texts. In the case of research on the translation of literary varieties, it must also go beyond contrastive linguistics or comparative stylistics by focusing on institutional norms, on sociolinguistic stereotypes, on “contrastive analysis of social discourses”, by importing from sociological analysis, discourse analysis, semiotic analysis, in order to delve into the ideological basis for social discourses and for translation as a fact of the target culture resulting from the negotiation of at least two systems of norms: those belonging to the source and the target cultures. Moreover, in a corpus of novels or plays and their translation, any study necessarily also has to take into account literary norms and traditions in the creation of literary varieties. This becomes necessary as soon as it is acknowledged that such a corpus holds no actual, real linguistic varieties, but rather

²² HGS, “Translation,” in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics*, vol. 2, edited by T.A. Sebeok (Berlin, New York, Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter, 1986), 1110.

²³ Annie Brisset, *A Sociocritique of Translation*, 158.

²⁴ Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1995); Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2004).

pseudo varieties recreated in literary works, sifted through various literary norms and as such different from, although related to, authentic use, as already stated.

As a consequence of the above, linguistic varieties are a function of space (social and physical), among other contextual features; literary varieties are a function of space (as a result of the application of several contextually motivated filters); and the translation of literary varieties is a function of space (as a result of contextually valid translation norms and of the intercultural relations which they also reveal).

In order to solve the translation problem posed by the wide range of extra-linguistic connotations and fictional functions associated with literary varieties, the translator must opt to recreate them or not. Decisions must be made regarding translation procedures and strategies.

A Proposal for a Classification of Procedures and Strategies

Following Dimitrova, I have developed a proposal for a spatial classification of procedures and strategies applicable to the translation of literary varieties into European Portuguese.²⁵ This section presents a further stage of such a proposal to draw a socio-semiotic map of ideological, evaluative and intersubjective preferences regarding translation decisions, which are strongly motivated by sociolinguistic stereotypes.

The following main translation techniques or procedures²⁶ appear to be applicable to the translation of formal linguistic markers used to recreate less prestigious and substandard discourse:

- (1) **Omission** of linguistic markers signaling contextual meaning associated with less prestigious or substandard discourse;
- (2) **Addition** of linguistic markers signaling contextual meaning associated with less prestigious or substandard discourse;
- (3) **Maintenance** of linguistic markers signaling contextual meaning associated with less prestigious or substandard discourse;
- (4) **Change** of contextual meaning signaled by linguistic markers associated with less prestigious or substandard discourse (e. g.: social becomes regional; regional becomes oral)
 - (a) Change of a more peripheral substandard towards a less peripheral variety;
 - (b) Change of a less peripheral variety towards a more peripheral or substandard variety.

Translation procedures or techniques for characterizing less prestigious or substandard literary varieties range from omission to addition, also encompassing the attempt to maintain in the target text the contextual meaning signaled by linguistic markers in the source text. With the exception of maintenance, all other procedures

²⁵ Rosa, "Luso-Canadian Exchanges in Translation Studies"; "The Centre and the Edges"; "Features of Oral and Written Communication in Subtitling."

²⁶ Following Chesterman (Andrew Chesterman, "Problems with Strategies," in *New Trends in Translation Studies. In Honour of Kinga Klaudy*, edited by K. Károly and Ágota Fóris (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2005), 24), strategy is here defined in "its basic problem-solving sense as a plan that is implemented in a given context"; technique or procedure is used "to refer to routine, micro-level, textual procedures"; and shifts "refer to the result of a procedure [...] observable as kinds of difference between target and source."

result in a shift, defined as a difference identified by linguistic and text-oriented comparison between source and target texts; or a micro-structural level change resulting from translation techniques or procedures (applied at sentence, clause, phrase, or word level).²⁷ And shifts are the most pervasive feature in translation. As such, they deserve further attention.

Translation shifts are defined by Bakker, Koster and van Leuven-Zwart as the result from “attempts to deal with systemic differences”.²⁸ However, it is of special importance for the purpose of this paper to acknowledge that the predominant feature of translation is not a matter of obligatory shifts caused by systemic differences but rather of non-obligatory shifts, as suggested by Gideon Toury: “In fact, the occurrence of shifts has long been acknowledged as a true universal of translation. [...] [N]on-obligatory shifts [...] occur everywhere and tend to constitute the majority of shifting in any single act of human translation.”²⁹

The majority of shifts, then, are not determined by systemic, formal differences. The majority of shifts are non-obligatory, norm-governed, contextually motivated by cultural, ideological and political reasons. Shifts, therefore, are a function of place. They occur as a result of contextually motivated decisions to introduce changes. As translational phenomena they are facts of the target culture. More importantly, when consistent, the sum of micro-level shifts may be grouped into globally recognizable translation strategies, which are never devoid of consequences on the macro-level in terms of the linguistic make-up and, consequently, also in terms of the contextual (communicative and socio-semiotic) values evoked by the whole work.³⁰

I suggest interpreting the above-mentioned shifts as a result of global strategies, as depicted in the following Figures 6 and 7. In them, translation shifts are represented by arrows. The starting point of the arrow corresponds to the literary variety present in the source text ; the tip represents the target language literary variety chosen to recreate the former in the target text . When the arrows point towards the center of the diagram, the shifts they represent result from a **normalization strategy** or from a **centralization strategy**; when, on the contrary, the arrows point towards the periphery of this diagram, the shifts they represent result from a **decentralization strategy**.

²⁷ Chesterman, “Problems with Strategies”; Yves Gambier, “Translation Strategies and Tactics,” in *Handbook of Translation Studies*, ed. Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2010); 412-418.

²⁸ Matthijs Bakker, Cees Koster and Kitty M. van Leuven-Zwart, “Shifts of Translation,” in *Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker (London, New York: Routledge, 1998), 226.

²⁹ Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, 57.

³⁰ On macro-structural consequences of the patterning of micro-structural procedures and shifts see van Leuven-Zwart, “Translation and original: similarities and dissimilarities I and II”.

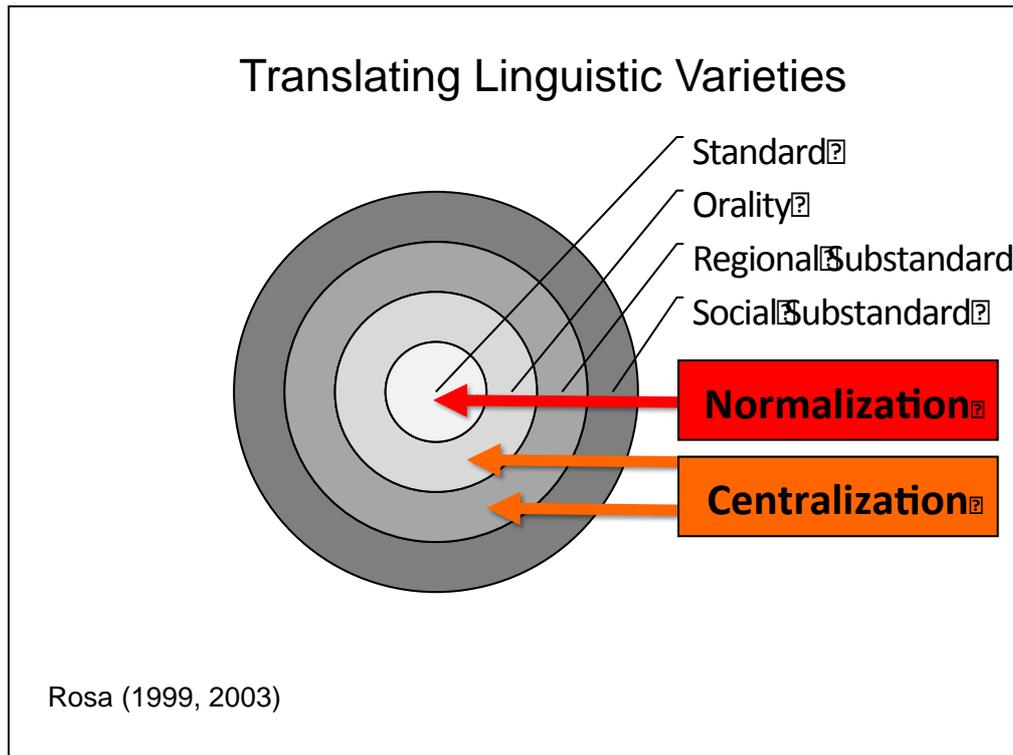


Figure 6. *Translating Linguistic Varieties: Normalization and Centralization*

Normalization Strategy

The most pervasive strategy is for translation to bring into the center occupied by the standard all less prestigious varieties located in the periphery of the circle and present in the source text. Such shifts, when consistent, correspond to a normalizing or standardizing translation strategy. They entail a corresponding change from source text stigmatized or less prestigious literary varieties to the most prestigious variety in the target text: the standard.

Research into literary translation often diagnoses this trend. Bassnett and Lefevere³¹ identify translation into English with a considerable standardization of foreign or exotic features (and of socio-culturally marginal ones too). Hatim and Mason,³² following Venuti,³³ state that the last three centuries of translation into English have revealed a normalizing and neutralizing tendency to silence the voices of the source text producers. This tendency to normalize appears to be so widespread that House³⁴ or Lane-Mercier³⁵ even pronounce the use of literary varieties to constitute a case of non-translatability. Berman³⁶ concludes that translation is a powerful

³¹ Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, "Introduction: Where are we in Translation Studies?" in *Constructing Cultures*, ed. Susan Bassnett (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), 4.

³² Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, *Discourse and the Translator* (London, New York: Longman, 1990), 145.

³³ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995).

³⁴ Juliane House, "Of the Limits of Translatability," *Babel* 4/3 (1973): 167.

³⁵ Gillian Lane-Mercier, "Translating the Untranslatable: The Translator's Aesthetic, Ideological and Political Responsibility," *Target* 9/1(1997): 43.

³⁶ Antoine Berman, "Foreword" to *A Sociocritique of Translation: Theatre and Alterity in Quebec, 1968-1988*, by Annie Brisset, transl. Rosalind Gill and Roger Gannon (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press 1996), xviii.

centralizing anti-dialectal agent. Leppihalme³⁷ also identifies a tendency to normalize regionally marked idioms, in two studies dedicated to the translation into English and Swedish of Finnish novels. Rosa³⁸ and Cavalheiro³⁹ describe the normalization of substandard Cockney and African American Vernacular English in Portuguese versions of *Pygmalion* and *Gone with the Wind* subtitled by the public TV channel RTP. This tendency bears evidence that especially in the Portuguese public channels subtitling is identified as instrumental for the promotion of literacy⁴⁰. Ramos Pinto⁴¹ identifies normalization in Portuguese translations of *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady* published (for the page and the stage) before 1974 and also in those aired by public TV channels.

This trend to normalize is so often identified that it has even been described as the law of growing standardization in the following way⁴²:

in translation, source text textemes tend to be converted into target-language (or target-culture) repertoires. [...] Textual relations obtained in the original are often modified, sometimes to the point of being totally ignored, in favour of habitual options offered by a target repertoire.

As suggested, textual relations in the original tend to be replaced in the target text by positive-value options already available in the target-culture's repertoire. In the case of less prestigious or substandard literary varieties, more than their textual relations, it is their status as repertoires that radically changes: the negative value of less prestigious or substandard literary varieties tends to be changed into the positive value of the standard varieties. This tendency is so widespread that it has even been described as a translation universal of normalization.⁴³ As a consequence of normalization, "the representation of spoken language in the source text is adjusted towards the norms of written prose creating a text which is more readable, more idiomatic, more familiar and more coherently organized than the original."⁴⁴

Normalization therefore involves a change of any linguistic markers associated with low-prestige or negative socio-semiotic value into those associated with high prestige and socio-semiotic value. There is a leveling of characterizing discourse which becomes non-characterizing. Externally, the sometimes wide range of source text heteroglossia is reduced in the target text to the monoglossia of the target language standard varieties. Internally, character diction and narrator diction coincide, and narrative functions associated with this distinction are no longer identifiable.

³⁷ Ritva Leppihalme, "The Two Faces of Standardization" and "Pääntalo Idioms and Catchphrases in Translation."

³⁸ Rosa, "The Centre and the Edges."

³⁹ Cavalheiro, "Linguistic Variation."

⁴⁰ Maria José Alves Veiga, "Subtitling Reading Practices," in *Translation Studies at the Interface of Cultures*, ed. João Ferreira Duarte, Alexandra Assis Rosa and Teresa Seruya, (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2006), 161-168.

⁴¹ Ramos Pinto, *Traduzir no vazio: a problemática da variação*, 13.

⁴² Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, 268.

⁴³ On translation universals, see Anna Mauranen and Pekka Kujamäki. *Translation Universals: Do they Exist?* (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004).

⁴⁴ Sarah Laviosa-Braithwaite, "Universals of Translation," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker (London, New York: Routledge, 1998), 290.

Against this backdrop of normalization, Brisset,⁴⁵ however, mentions the breakthrough use of jòal (a very low prestige Quebec working class dialect of the Montreal area) as a result of maintenance procedures of source text low prestige varieties in 1968 productions by Michel Tremblay for the Centaur Theatre in Montreal. Once in the repertoire, the use of fictional jòal made it easier to also maintain the low prestige of some literary varieties present in source texts: it became an available resource for translations into Canadian French.

The study of translations of novels by Charles Dickens published in Portugal after the 1974 revolution also finds a similar attempt to apply maintenance procedures to some of the substandard literary varieties present in the source text as a means of indirectly characterizing characters both in terms of their regional and social background and in terms of their importance in narrative (since only secondary rogue characters use substandard discourse in Victorian fiction). However, this strategy of maintenance of substandard literary varieties (in terms of communicative and socio-semiotic value) is still observed against the backdrop of a predominant tendency to change and thereby normalize substandard varieties.⁴⁶ Cavalheiro also describes the attempt by a private TV channel to recreate the substandard nature of African American Vernacular English by replacing it with Portuguese Afro-negro dialect from Brazil in subtitled versions of *Gone with the Wind*.⁴⁷ Ramos Pinto also describes this tendency in Portuguese translations of *Pygmalion* and of *My Fair Lady*, but more noticeably in all translations for the stage, in all print translations but especially in those published after 1974 and also in the subtitled versions aired by a private Portuguese TV channel.⁴⁸ Chiaro mentions⁴⁹ the overall tendency to omit sociolinguistic markers from screen translations, in what is labeled a homogenizing convention, with the exception of comedies, whose characters are sometimes dubbed with stereotypical accents; cases of sociolinguistic markers included in screen translations of what are labeled “serious” genres are mentioned as occurring only rarely.

Centralization Strategy

Research on the translation of linguistic variation has also come across some examples of an attempt to recreate the substandard varieties in the source text that neither fit into maintenance, addition or omission nor entail a shift to the central, most prestigious, standard varieties. Besides the widespread tendency to normalize, Dimitrova’s research identifies a further trend: the use of colloquialisms to translate source text’s characterizing regional and social substandard.⁵⁰ Robyns also mentions the tendency to use “standard argot” to substitute the less prestigious regionally marked slang, in French translations of popular Anglo-American detective fiction in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵¹ In other cases, the attempt to recreate for instance Cockney in Portuguese also results in this type of shift because a mainly socially stigmatized dialect and accent is translated

⁴⁵ Brisset, *A Sociocritique of Translation*, 187.

⁴⁶ Rosa, *Tradução, Poder e Ideologia*.

⁴⁷ Cavalheiro, “Linguistic Variation in Subtitling,” 23.

⁴⁸ Ramos Pinto, “How important is the way you say it?,” 14.

⁴⁹ Delia Chiaro, “Issues in Audiovisual Translation,” in *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. Jeremy Munday (London, New York: Routledge, 2009), 159.

⁵⁰ Dimitrova, “Translation of Dialect in Fictional Prose.”

⁵¹ Clem Robyns, “Towards a Sociosemiotics of Translation,” *Romanistische Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte - Cahiers d’Histoire des Littératures Romanes* 1/2 (1992): 224-225.

for Portuguese printed versions as regional features of Beira or Minho⁵² and translated for Portuguese subtitled versions of *Pygmalion* also by resorting to oral features of characterizing discourse.⁵³

These procedures have correspondingly been associated with a strategy of centralization, which differs from normalization because although the target text shows a shift toward varieties that are not as negatively evaluated as those depicted in the source text, the target text still includes some form associated with a less prestigious variety.⁵⁴

Additionally, source text regional varieties prove to be a very interesting case when the transfer of contextual meanings and values is aimed at in translation. In some cases, such an attempt to recreate peripheral regional varieties may produce an incongruous target text. This incongruity results from the clash of spatial/regional values evoked by literary varieties and actual references to a specific context corresponding to the specific time and space coordinates of a character (which becomes even more apparent in the case of audiovisual translation or in the case of translation for the stage).⁵⁵

⁵² The accents of these two regions of continental Portugal appear to be easily identifiable.

⁵³ Rosa, “The Centre and the Edges” and “Features of Oral and Written Communication in Subtitling”; Ramos Pinto, “How important is the way you say it?” and “Traduzir no vazio”.

⁵⁴ Rosa, “The Centre and the Edges”, “Features of Oral and Written Communication in Subtitling”; *Tradução, Poder e Ideologia* and Rosa et al., “Luso-Canadian Exchanges in Translation Studies: Translating Linguistic Variation.”

⁵⁵ In such cases, a strategy of translocalization or relocation may be considered, and the whole plot may travel through translation, whereby a source text country and region is transformed into another target text country and region where the target language is spoken (on specific subcategories of possible space and time changes, see Rosa, *Tradução, Poder e Ideologia*; Ramos Pinto “How important is the way you say it?”). However, questions regarding the categorization of these techniques and strategies as resulting in a translation or an adaptation tend to arise. Another interesting case in point is the recreation of a character’s peripheral foreignness in a source text. Such cases may involve the recreation of that foreignness in the target language, which is not problematic provided the linguistic foreignness depicted in the source text does not coincide with the target language. On the recreation of foreignness in translation see Rosa et al., “Luso-Canadian Exchanges in Translation Studies” and Chiaro, “Issues in Audiovisual Translation,” 159.

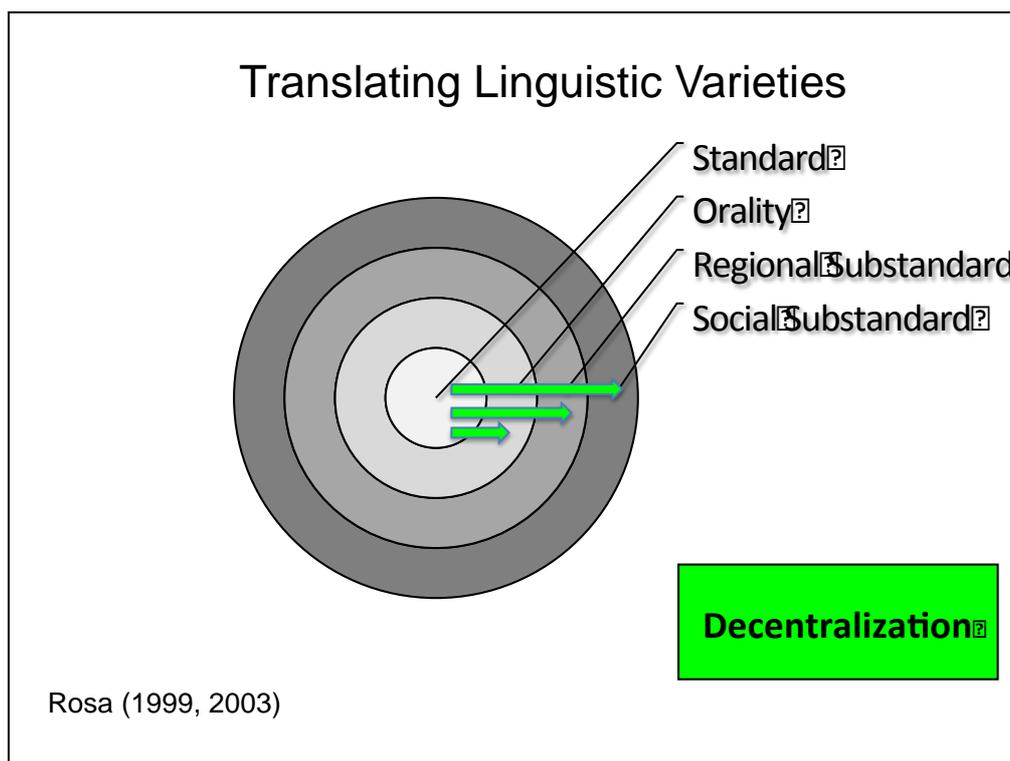


Figure 7: Translating Linguistic Varieties: Decentralization

Decentralization Strategy

Following Cronin, Brisset and Rosa, in certain historical moments, the socio-cultural, ideological and political context in which a translation is produced may result in the interference of translation norms regarding the otherwise widespread patterning defined as the universal of normalization. Such norms may determine both the maintenance of extra-linguistic negative value or the more radical replacement of extra-linguistic positive-value items by their opposite, motivating the inclusion of less prestigious or even substandard literary varieties in translated texts.

Against the above mentioned predominant strategy to normalize and centralize substandard literary varieties in translation, a most interesting strategy is mentioned in Brisset's study: in 1978 Michel Garneau translated *Macbeth*, by William Shakespeare, into Québécois or Quebec French, a less prestigious dialect of French and also by using joul, the Quebec French working-class dialect of the Montreal area.⁵⁶ This is ideologically interpreted by Brisset as "an attempt to legitimize Québécois by elevating it from its status as a dialect" (Brisset 1990, 167).⁵⁷ The canonized status of both source text and author was instrumental in the elevation of Québécois, the Canadian-French dialect used in the translation. These consistent shifts from standard source text language to Québécois or Quebec French were far from obligatory. They expressed an intentional global strategy and resulted from contextual motivations related to the defense of Quebec French, in response to a political and ideological atmosphere of nationalist aspirations. The language conflict underlying this translation strategy bears

⁵⁶ Daniel Fischlin, "Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project," University of Guelph, 2004, Accessed November 20, 2009, <http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca>.

⁵⁷ Brisset, *A Sociocritique of Translation*, 167.

very close ties with the “demand for territorial and political autonomy”⁵⁸ and as such reveals the intricate connections between discourse, identity and, again, place. In the words of Brisset, “Translation becomes an act of reclaiming, of recentring of the identity, a re-territorializing operation.”⁵⁹

The radical strategy consisting of the exact opposite of the dominant ones of centralization or normalization of substandard dialects has to be considered as it is both theoretically and data-motivated. This strategy lacked an operative label and the corresponding conceptualization. This has been labeled a decentralization strategy, whereby the source text prestigious standard is translated into a target language less prestigious variety or into target language substandard, as represented in Figure 6.

The abovementioned strategies are not only related to the procedure of change. Characterizing less prestigious or substandard discourse may also be submitted to two further radical shifts in translation: omission and addition. The former has already been here equated with a predominant normalization strategy that eradicates deviant characterizing discourse from target texts, thus contributing to the target text’s monoglossia. The latter radical change has also been here associated with a decentralization strategy that creates, strengthens, enriches, or diversifies the target text’s heteroglossia by adding characterizing less prestigious or substandard discourse.

The following table systematizes the procedures and strategies this paper suggests are applicable to describing the translation of literary varieties.

Procedures	Strategies	Result
(1) Omission: linguistic markers signaling characterizing less prestigious or substandard discourse in the source text are not recreated in the target text.	Normalization	Monoglossia
(2) Addition: linguistic markers signaling characterizing less prestigious or substandard discourse are added to the target text (the source text had none).	Decentralization	Heteroglossia
(3) Maintenance: linguistic markers signaling characterizing less prestigious or substandard discourse in the source text are recreated in the target text; communicative and socio-semiotic dimensions of context are maintained.	--	Heteroglossia
(4) a) Change of a more peripheral substandard towards a less peripheral variety: linguistic markers for a more peripheral or even stigmatized literary variety present in the source text are recreated by those for a less peripheral literary variety in the target text	Centralization	Heteroglossia
(4) b) Change of a less peripheral variety towards a more peripheral or substandard variety: linguistic markers for a less peripheral literary variety present in the source text are recreated by those for a more peripheral or stigmatized literary variety in the target text.	Decentralization	Heteroglossia

Figure 8: Procedures and strategies for the translation of literary varieties

⁵⁸ Brisset, *A Sociocritique of Translation*, 168.

⁵⁹ Brisset, *A Sociocritique of Translation*, 165.

If not only procedures and strategies are considered but also their result in translating literary less prestigious or substandard varieties, normalization by omission of less prestigious or substandard varieties from the target text results in monoglossia. The whole work is translated into the most prestigious target language linguistic variety as a consequence of standardization and normalization laws and universals. An identification of narrator diction with character diction ensues and all the narrative functions associated with characterizing discourse are radically changed or erased. In view of the table above, all other procedures and strategies, however, result in the target text's heteroglossia, by maintenance, change or the most radical procedure of addition. In this light, also maintenance procedures deserve our attention as a possible tool to counter the most predominant translational decision for normalization.

Final Remarks

The choice not to recreate characterizing less prestigious or substandard literary varieties, i.e. to normalize them and thus create a monoglossic target text, is probably subject to a wide range of motivations or constraints. Among them, the following are worth mentioning:

- (1) explicit editorial guidelines contained in the translator's brief;
- (2) a necessary prioritization of the textual components to be translated which apparently tends to favor denotative or referential and communicative features (in detriment of interpersonal and informative features);
- (3) an ideological context favoring normative behavior and the corresponding translation norms in force in the target culture;
- (4) the intended readership and the speculative anticipation of its expectations;
- (5) the importance attributed to literary varieties in the source text and the functions they perform;
- (6) the difficulty in establishing an acceptable target text equivalent unit for the correlation of source language forms and values, also determined by different poetics of fiction;
- (7) avoiding unintended effects caused by the recreation of literary varieties;
- (8) the lack of time, low pay and reduced tools available for the translator to recreate in the target text the source text's literary varieties, extra-linguistic connotations and functions.

Among these, it is worth stressing the influence of the intercultural relation associating source and target cultures, i.e. their relative place and status; as well as the relation associating source text author and target text translator, i.e. their relative place and status. In some cases, the standard is considered the only acceptable option to recreate a highly prestigious or canonized source text, author and culture.

The predominant decision not to transfer source text literary varieties into the target text is not devoid of consequences, either. As Hatim and Mason state, "[r]endering ST dialect by TL standard has the disadvantage of losing the special effect intended in the ST, while rendering dialect by dialect runs the risk of creating unintended effects."⁶⁰ One of such effects may be a naturalization or domestication of

⁶⁰ Hatim and Mason, *Discourse and the Translator*, 41.

the story, transferred from the source culture into the target culture, as mentioned by Dimitrova;⁶¹ or the change of interpersonal relations at discourse and plot level, as suggested by van Leuven-Zwart;⁶² or the leveling of all voices which are rendered in very close resemblance to non-characterizing narrator diction.

However, this paper focused on the ideological, political and social implications, both motivations and consequences, of the recreation of literary pseudo-varieties mentioned by several socio-critical studies. As stated, translation tends to normalize or centralize characterizing less prestigious or substandard literary varieties, by resorting to the prestigious standard (associated with the official language, the language of education and culture), in a possible attempt to associate the translator and the translated text with the prestige of the standard and the positive socio-cultural values it evokes. Against this tendency, any attempt to include in translations (either systematically or not) the range of less prestigious or substandard varieties used in local and spontaneous interaction assumes a special meaning. It becomes an act of contestation with the express purpose of subverting an established dynamics of power, thereby revealing the ideological visibility of the translator and of his/her “‘violent’ meaning producing aesthetic”.⁶³ This may also expose a given translator’s privileged place and status both within the target culture and within the intercultural relation expressed and created by such a translation.

In the words of Theo Hermans, “[t]ranslation is of interest because it offers first-hand evidence of the prejudice of perception. Cultures, communities and groups construe their sense of self in relation to others and by regulating the channels of contact with the outside world.”⁶⁴ In a nutshell, translation offers evidence of the intricate connections between the sense of one’s self and the sense of otherness. Translation reveals one’s (intra- and intercultural) definition of place.

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⁶¹ Dimitrova, “Translation of Dialect in Fictional Prose,” 63-54.

⁶² van Leuven-Zwart, “Translation and Original: Similarities and Dissimilarities I” and “Translation and Original: Similarities and Dissimilarities II”.

⁶³ Lane-Mercier, Gillian. “Translating the Untranslatable,” 45.

⁶⁴ Theo Hermans, *Translation in Systems. Descriptive and System-oriented Approaches Explained* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1999), 95.

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Traducerea spațiului: variația lingvistică în traducere

Articolul discută problema traducerii din punctul de vedere al variației lingvistice și în particular al relației dintre discurs și spațiu, în cadrul studiilor de traducere descriptive și folosindu-ne de abordarea comunicativă la ficțiunea tradusă.

Cu acest scop, articolul discută variația lingvistică în termenii corelației formei lingvistice, a înțelesului comunicării și a valorii socio-semiotice, consideră recreația de accente și dialecte, și sugerează câteva strategii majore pentru traducerea unor asemenea pseudo varietăți (prin referirea la Brisset 1996; Chapdelaine și Lane Mercier 1994; Rosa 1999, 2001, 2003; Ramos Pinto 2009a și 2009b; Cavalheiro 2009; Rosa et al. 2011). Șablonarea traducerii varietăților pseudoliterare, care a fost deja identificată de cercetările anterioare, va fi discutată cu scopul de a identifica și de a discuta normele de bază ale traducerii.