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Choose a short text, translate it into your own language and, with references to this experience, discuss the cultural implications for translation.

1 Introduction

Translation is an art many academics try to adapt into new concepts and theories. This exchange of information between cultures all over the world is a reality that involves professional people, the translators and a variety of features from daily life.

Hervey (1995: 8) describes translation as a process which extracts information from a specific text and re-expresses the details of the former information into another text using different forms of words, which is the activity of translators.

The text I have chosen (see Appendix 1 for ST) to translate from German into Portuguese (see Appendix II for TT) consists of an advertisement for holiday houses published in Germany and in Portugal in Travel Agencies. In this advertisement, a proposal is made to house holders to rent their houses to other families throughout Europe through the services offered by the company. The text contains many references to houses and how the business of renting houses is possible. There are many cultural issues in ST (German) to be analysed and later translated into the TT (Portuguese). Many of these cultural issues are expressed through specific words which are used in this specific business area.

This cultural aspect represents a translation problem due to the distance between source language (SL) German and target language (TL) Portuguese, plus the equivalence of the texts that has to be taken into consideration, where the semantic and stylistic characteristics should be, if possible also preserved (Bell, 1991:14).

As Bassnett (1991: 21) focuses [...] ‘translation involves the transfer of ‘meaning’ contained in one set of language signs into another set of language signs through competent use of the dictionary and grammar, the process involves a whole set of extra-linguistic criteria also’.

According to Culler (1976: 21-2 in Baker, 1992: 10) the articulation of the world and its organization is very different.

'Languages do not name existing categories, they articulate their own'.
(Culler 1976:21-2 in Baker, 1992: 10)

This assignment on translation analysis is based on the research of such cultural issues. The texts I have chosen, express certain points where the cultural aspects can cause a deep misunderstanding when translated on a word to word basis.

The translation of this German text (see Appendix I) must take readership into consideration. The solution of this translation has to suit the linguistic and situational context as well as the *expert, educated, generalist* and the *uninformed* readership. The translator must be aware of the type of reader the text is targeted to. In this particular case, this text has its expertise in house renting and is targeted to all the three main types of readership. The audience might possess a country side house or beach house they would like to rent to the foreign families who would possibly rent them for their holidays (Caldas-Coulthard 1999: Coursebook: 47).

2 Cultural items

Before I present the cultural items involved in each translation it is important to refer that words are units and structures that need to be decoded so that their meaning can be understood (Baker, 1992: 11).

According to Wardhaugh (1986: 212) the structure of a language is the mirror of the way speakers acknowledge their world. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis also expresses that the structure is a predisposition for speakers of a language in the adaptation of a very own world-view (ibid.).

Hervey, Higgins and Haywood (1995:20) suggest that:

'Any degree of cultural transposition involves, therefore, the choice of features indigenous to the TL and the target culture in preference to features rooted in the source culture'.

The result is a more accurate approach to the source language, where foreign SL-specific features are minimized (Hervey, Higgins and Haywood 1995:20).

2.1 Cultural implications in translation

First of all, I would define culture as the personal characteristic of a society where language is the main communication code, not forgetting its peculiar mimic, which is not understood by the common listener or reader from another language (Newmark 1988b: 94). According to Lotman (in Bassnett: 22):

“No language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its center, the structure of natural language”

Hatim and Mason suggest that Malinowski (in Hatim and Mason, 1990: 37) reached a very important step in translation and express that:

“ ... He believed the cultural context to be crucial in the interpretation of the message, taking in a variety of factors ranging from the ritualistic (which assumes great importance in traditional societies), to the most practical aspects of day-today existence.”

I have analyzed the cultural features present in the source text (SL German) (see Appendix I) which consist of a translation problem in the target text (TT Portuguese from Portugal). These had to be adapted in the TT due to the fact that the world is viewed in very different ways by the native speakers of the different languages, as their languages are structurally different (Whorf in Coursebook: 36).

Newmark (1988b: 95) defines different important categories for analysis: Ecology with the sub-categories Flora, fauna, winds, plains and hills; Material culture (artefacts) with the sub-categories Food, Clothes, Houses and towns and also transport; Social culture with sub-categories work and leisure; Organizations, customs, activities, procedures and concepts include the sub-categories: political and administrative, religious and artistic; and finally Gestures and Habits. It is important to refer that the role of the translator is very important, as when there is a cultural focus, translation problems occur, due to the difference in the language that underlies the culture of the SL and TL (Newmark 1988b: 95).

The elements underlined in ST German (see Appendix I) and its translation (see appendix

2 also underlined) correspond to the following items:

2.1.1 Geographical – Europe – as mentioned, the company works with tourists in Europe and rents houses in Europe. It is a common knowledge for the reader where Europe is.

2.1.2 Material culture – **House (Haus)** and (Apartment) **Apartments** are mentioned in both ST and TT texts; nevertheless, no type of house has been referred to. The translation in this case, also did not refer to any special type of house, leading the readership to a global common understanding of what a house is. The word Apartment is also known by the common reader and it was adapted into Portuguese as – *apartamento*.

Town – **Stuhr in Bremen** – Stuhr is a town near the city of Bremen, and in this case the translation does not mention whether the town is small or big. In Portuguese the word *cidade* needs the adjective of size to indicate whether it is a village, town or city. Therefore, the reader will understand that it is a town somewhere in Germany, which is not relevant to the message of renting a house, as it is not in her/his country.

2.1.3 Social Culture – Work and Leisure – as pointed out by Newmark (p. 98) there is almost never a translation problem in this issue. The words can be transferred or translated word-to-word or can even be functionally defined, ‘Feriendomizil’ – with the translation into Portuguese - ‘*casa de férias*’. This set of words gains a positive connotation, because it includes all types of houses, and gives a certain importance to the reader who possesses such a house or apartment. It is an important social issue both in Germany and in Portugal. Traditionally, upper-class families were the only ones who had such luxury out of the town or city where they lived. The development of the country brought better conditions to many families who stepped into a different social class. These families had more money and started living a life similar to that of the upper-class. Many houses were bought in the countryside and later many apartments at the sea-side. Holiday houses are indeed a symbol of prosperity, social status and economical stability. The social life of both societies and their concept of leisure is also reflected.

The word ‘Partner’ – ‘*Empresa*’ falls clearly into the category mentioned by Newmark (p. 95) in 2.1.3 – Social Culture – **Work**. **TUI** is a well known travel agency with offices all over the world. Companies are social institutions with political and administrative rules. It is nevertheless important to point out that this issue can also be categorized under

Newmark's (p. 95) fourth category – Organizations, customs, activities, procedures and concepts. The name **TUI Wolters** cannot be translated, because it represents the trade mark it stands for. The readership will understand what company it is and what type of business they run. It is always a positive image when the company is known by the name in such a broad level and when it translates confidence and honesty.

When translating cultural specific concepts the translator must decide which method to use in order to reach a very well balanced target text in terms of language and cultural expressions. Bell (1991: 41-2), based on Hymes (1972) expresses the translator must possess a high level of communicative grammar competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (Coulthard, C. R. 1999: Coursebook page 20).

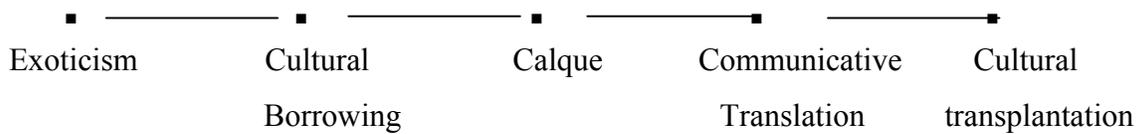
2.2 Translation Procedures

Newmark (1988b: 96) presents two opposing procedures in translation; transference which brings 'local colour' and keeps a familiar parallel to the SL by keeping names and concepts meaningful to the initiated readers. This procedure is seen by Newmark as non communicative, blocks comprehension by emphasising culture, and forgets the message. The opposite method, componential analysis maintains common components to SL and TL, excludes the culture and gives emphasis to the meaning. He claims that this method is an accurate translation procedure. He explains that:

"... the translator of a cultural word, which is always less context-bound than ordinary language, has to bear in mind both the motivation and the cultural specialist (in relation to the text's topic) and linguistic level of the readership."

Newmark (1988b: 96)

According to Hervey, Higgins and Haywood (1995: 20) all and any attempt to transfer contents from a ST text into the context of a target culture is based on a medium term called **cultural transposition**. This cultural transposition requires a choice of features in the SL that are 'indigenous' to TL, and the target culture to features characteristic of the SL. The specific features of SL are strongly banned from the TT. Cultural transposition selects several points as in the following scale:



(Hervey, Higgins and Haywood 1995: 20)

According to Roman Jakobson (in Bassnett: 1991: 22) there are three times of translation:

- i) intralingual translation – rewording – ‘an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language’
- ii) interlingual translation – translation proper – ‘interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language’
- iii) intersemiotic translation – transmutation – ‘interpretation of verbal signs of nonverbal sign system’

The second item, translation proper is the transfer process between SL and TL. Jakobson points out that no translation process is capable of entirely creating a perfect equivalence of interpreted code units or messages through translation. Georges Mounin (in Bassnett: 1991: 23) presents translation as a set of operations where *significations* are the beginning and the end product plus function in the referred culture.

Popovic claims that transformations or variants represent changes which do not alter the core of meaning; they only influence the expressive form.

“In short, the invariant can be defined as that which exists in common between all existing translations of a single work”.

(Bassnett 1991: 33)

3. The ideal reader

The ideal reader is in Coulthard’s (1992) opinion the readership who will receive the knowledge of certain facts and memories of experiences; opinions, preferences and prejudices thus the level of linguistic competence (in James, Kate 2001: 5).

In this specific text the author is a tourism agency with enormous experience of the different audience levels in Europe. They express their business interest among the expert readers who will automatically know that TUI is in fact the European number one touristic agent, the educated generalist reader possesses the essential knowledge for a further interest in cooperation or not with TUI. The uninformed readership reads through the advertisement and pays attention to all details and starts showing some interest in what TUI stands for and how they work, but has, nevertheless, no idea where the company comes from, and has never heard about it. It may also be possible that this readership has never even heard about this kind of business. The translator creates therefore in TT a specific real world with real Portuguese vocabulary and grammar in order to reach this uninformed readership, which has in fact connections to many other people who also own a house or apartment in the countryside or at the seaside. In my opinion TUI develops an efficient attractive text where the essential explanations are clear for all types of readership.

4. The cultural items in the ST: from German to Portuguese

The source text (ST) (see Apendix I) has several linguistic markers which do not have the exact meaning in TT (see Apendix II) if translated in a word for word translation. The specific text was analysed and translated into the Portuguese language as follows:

SL	TT
a ¹⁾ Erfolgreich	a ¹⁾ Mais êxito
a ²⁾ Feriendomizil	a ¹⁾ casa de férias
b ¹⁾ Fair und gut	b ¹⁾ sério e efectivo
c ¹⁾ Partner	c ¹⁾ Empresa qualificada
c ²⁾ Kommen Sie jetzt zu TUI Wolters!	c ²⁾ Contacte ainda hoje a TUI Wolters!
d ¹⁾ aus Erfahrung	d ¹⁾ em virtude da experiência
d ²⁾ Feriendomizil	d ²⁾ alojamentos de férias
d ³⁾ professionellen und soliden	d ³⁾ contratante profissional e

Vermietungspartner	sério
^{e1)} Know-How	^{e1)} <i>Know-How</i>
^{e2)} zahlt sich aus:	^{e2)} tem resultado:
^{e3)} ...schenken das Vertrauen ...	^{e3)} ...hóspedes têm confiança...
^{e4)} ... Sie teilhaben sollen.	^{e4)} ...em que pode participar.
^{f1)} Wir sorgen für eine optimale Vermietung ...	^{f1)} Aspitamos a um arrendamento óptimo ...
^{f2)} Und Sie lehnen sich entspannt zurück!	^{f2)} E o proprietário pode descansar!
^{g1)} ...IN ALLER MUNDE	^{g1)} ... ANDA NAS BOCAS DO MUNDO
^{g2)} Und für Sie und Ihre Anliegen sind.... vor Ort da.	^{g2)} ... para atenderem os proprietários e os seus pedidos.
^{h1)} Fair	^{h1)} Correcto
^{h2)} begeistern	^{h2)} entusiasmar (deixar admirados)
^{h3)} Partner	^{h3)} contratantes
^{h4)} ein besonders faires Miteinander	^{h4)} uma cooperação particularmente séria
^{h5)} ... anderen Anbietern	^{h5)} outros serviços
^{h6)} zu einem fairen Mietpreis	^{h6)} com um aluguel adequado
ⁱ¹⁾ Faire zusammenarbeit	ⁱ¹⁾ Cooperação de confiança
ⁱ²⁾ Annehmlichkeiten	ⁱ²⁾ vantagens
^{j1)} Vermarktungskonzept	^{j1)} projecto profissional de comercialização
^{j2)} Wir beraten Sie gern.	^{j2)} Peça o nosso conselho.
^{j3)} ... password	^{j3)} ... <i>password</i>
^{k1)} Dann sollten wir uns kennen lernen!	^{k1)} Nesse caso, não hesite em contactar o TUI Wolters!
^{k2)} Wir freuen uns, ...	^{k2)} Ficaríamos contentes, ...

k3) wenn Sie sich für einen Partnerschaft mit TUI Wolters entscheiden.	k3) ... se escolhesse uma cooperação com o TUI Woltres.
¹¹⁾ Noch Fragen?	¹¹⁾ Tem questões a colocar?
¹²⁾ Für ein unverbindliches Gespräch greifen Sie ruhig zum Telefonhörer oder schreiben Sie uns.	¹²⁾ Para um contacto sem compromisso, contacte-nos via telefónica ou escreva uma carta ou um e-mail para o nosso endereço.

The SL utilized in the ST is intended for the German readership, which has a very different cultural view of society and of the world. Germans are said to be cold and indifferent, but their communicative features are much more polite and balanced than the Portuguese, for instance.

- i) Starting the analysis with ^{a1)} where the translation ‘Mais êxito’ is more accurate than a word for word translation could express “Bem sucedido”.
- ii) In ^{a2)} I adopted the cultural feature ‘casa de ferias’ instead of “domicílio de ferias”, due to the fact that not all readers would understand this word.
- iii) In ^{b1)} “Fair und gut” was translated into Portuguese utilizing compensation, as the communicative feature in ST could cause a different meaning in TT when utilizing a word for word translation – “justo” . The word “justo” does not exactly mean fair – in the sense of being correct, but has to do with justice.
- iv) In ^{c1)} Partner – the translation is ‘Empresa qualificada’ due to the fact that “partner could mean a person, a work colleague. The culture in TT has to create the same overall effect of source culture.
- v) Cultural features of the German language are present in the expression ^{c2)}: ‘Kommen Sie jetzt zu TUI Wolters!’ – This sentence invites the householder to visit the agency in a very friendly and polite way. In TT the translation suffered alteration which caused a loss of friendliness that was present in the original message to become a detached (as expected) yet polite business

communication feature. When analysing the Portuguese culture, one would find that such a sentence with a friendly emphasis would result in a sudden run of householders to the agency. With a single purpose: pure curiosity.

- vi) The feature ^{d1)} suffered a small compensation in order to create the similar effect of ST – ‘em virtude’. TT receives a more formal context.
- vii) The same happens in ^{d2)} where the TT presents a synonym – ‘alojamento’ instead of ‘domicílio’. The second unit ‘domicílio’ represents the ‘home sweet home’ and not so much the holiday house.
- viii) ^{d3)} The translation of these units must create the real business context in Portuguese and therefore ‘soliden’ was translated into ‘sério’ and not ‘sólido’ which in fact also means a safe business, but not necessarily a honest one. Honesty is the true meaning in ST.
- ix) ^{e1)} Represents a ‘translation proper type’ where the ST unit was simply re-utilized in TT. It is also a foreign word – from the English language – which was assimilated by the Portuguese language through business people and industry. It is part of the specific educated readership from ST and TT.
- x) The translation of ^{e2)} “...zahlt sich aus:” causes a problem in translation, due to the emphasis that this sentence has in the ST, where it means: ‘the know-how brings money back’. The Portuguese translation ‘tem resultado’ is not even a equivalent feature of ST, thus a loss in the meaning and emphasis occurs. The meaning ‘it results in’ does not really mean the household will get some profit from the know-how of the company. It informs the householder that the company is an expert in the business and therefore achieves excellent results. In ^{e3)} the cultural feature “...schenken das Vertrauen” is also a translation implication due to the fact that in Portuguese the clients do not ‘offer trust’, they simply ‘trust’. Therefore the translation suffered adaptation - ‘os hóspedes têm confiança’.
- xi) ^{e4)} “Sie teilhaben sollen’ is a typical German expression where the householders are invited to participate, while in Portuguese one cannot use the same expression, due to the fact that the company would almost force the householders into a participation. The verb ‘sollen’ is a very strong verb, but it

does not always mean a ‘must’. It is also used as a polite way of asking something. The translation suffers an adaptation into TT – ‘em que pode participar’.

- xii) ^{f1)} is another typical German expression ‘Wir sorgen für eine optimale Vermietung’ which was translated into Portuguese as ‘Aspiramos a um arrendamento óptimo...’. According to the meaning of verb in ST, TT should keep the same meaning and emphasis, therefore the use of the same Portuguese verb ‘providenciamos’ could not be the choice as it is very long, and would reflect old Portuguese. There would be a greater loss. The solution for the readership was ‘Aspiramos...’ causing a special effect of deep interest on the company’s behalf.
- xiii) ^{g1)} is a very refreshing expression, which could not be translated as word for word because it would not sound at all Portuguese. The translation suffered a loss and adaptation: ‘E o proprietário pode descansar!’. The householder will not ‘lean on his comfortable chair’ in Portuguese, because it is not so culturally used to have a lean chair in the garden. This cultural image is a must in almost every garden in Germany, while it is not so in Portugal. ^{g1)} this feature is expressive and easy to understand, but in the translation it suffered nevertheless an adaptation: ‘anda nas bocas do mundo’; addition of the verb ‘*anda*’ [walk, go/also is].
- xiv) ^{g2)} ‘Und für Sie und Ihre Anliegen sind ... vor Ort da...’ translates the immediate and accurate service TUI Wolters offers all householders who cooperate with them. In the translation into Portuguese this expression had to be adapted and a new verb with the real meaning was utilized: ‘atenderem’ verb atender in the plural, which means to speak and serve the client.
- xv) ^{h1)} ‘Fair’ as already seen was adapted by the unit ‘correcto’ instead of ‘justo’, and the meaning of honesty is still present in TT.
- xvi) ^{h2)} This verb ‘begeistern’ has different meanings: to fall in love with, to be excited about something, to be admired. From all these meanings I adopted the one that most expresses the SL meaning in TT: ‘entusiasmar’ what is the expression of calling the attention of householders about TUI Wolters.

- xvii) ^{h3)} ‘Partner’ is here no longer the company TUI Wolters, but the householders that cooperate with the company, therefore the translation is: ‘contratantes’.
- xviii) ^{h4)} this expression in German has a very emphatic meaning; ‘Miteinander’ means *with each other* and in TT it is translated as ‘cooperação’ as in Portuguese there is no unit that is equivalent or has the same emphatic meaning.
- xix) ^{h5)} these units were differently adapted in TT by the Portuguese units ‘outros serviços’. The translation expresses other services existing out of TUI Wolters, while in German the reader understands immediately that the subject is other touristic agencies. The emphasis is different and clearer in ST.
- xx) ^{h6)} The unit ‘fair’ in German appears once more, but with the emphasis on the meaning correct, while in Portuguese the unit was adapted to ‘adequado’. As this unit expresses a quantity of money that will be agreed upon for the rent of the household to tourists, adequate is the unit that in Portuguese has the same meaning as in ST.
- xxi) ⁱ¹⁾ ‘Faire Zusammenarbeit’ means in English a – fair cooperation between both parts – as in Portuguese it is difficult to encounter a unit that emphasises the same as in German, the translation suffered an adaptation to ‘cooperação de confiança’. This sentence expresses a trust in TUI Wolters and therefore a more successful understanding of the meaning for the Portuguese reader. It is important to say that the educated reader will understand exactly the message, if she/he understands German.
- xxii) ⁱ²⁾ This unit ‘Annehmlichkeiten’ was translated as ‘vantagens’ which expresses in a larger level what householders gain or profit from the cooperation.
- xxiii) ^{j1)} This word is a gathering of two words: Vermaktung (commercialization) and Konzept. The translation results in a set of three words with an adaptation of the word Konzept into ‘projecto’. The word for word translation would utilize the unit ‘*conceito*’ which would not be wrong, but ‘projecto’ is a more precise word.

- xxiv) ^{j2)} This feature means in German that TUI Wolters will advise the householders about all the processes and services. In the Portuguese text (TT) the adaptation turned the meaning in the opposite direction, having the householders asking for information. This adaptation and transformation expresses a better reality of the Portuguese culture. While in Germany the company goes to the client, in Portugal the client has to go to the company if she/he desires any kind of contact or information.
- xxv) ^{j3)} Translation proper type is what happened with this unit. Password is a unit known by computer users all over the world and has been also adapted into the Portuguese language, where it covers now-a-days a major area of subjects. This unit was just copied and written in TT as the major readership is in contact with it several times a day in newspapers and other texts. The understanding is correct and meaningful.
- xxvi) A typical German expression that does not cope with the Portuguese culture. It could lead the readership into another subject that would be out of the emphasis of ST. The adaptation extinguishes this danger by turning the meaning around and asking the reader to contact the company.
- xxvii) ^{k2)} ‘Wir freuen uns’ a polite way to invite the client, was translated into Portuguese as: ‘Ficariamos contentes’ what results in a polite invitation from TUI Wolters to the householders, but it is nevertheless not as emphatic as the German one, which shows in fact a little feeling of joy in between the lines.
- xxviii) ^{k3)} in this feature, an invitation is present for self householder decision in cooperating with TUI. In TT the meaning was kept, but the verb was changed and adapted to ‘escolhesse’ which means ‘choose’ and not ‘decide’. It is a polite way to invite the client.
- xxix) ^{l1)} The manner in which German works culture works with units and cultural images, is easy and friendly, which facilitates the communicative ambiance between parties. The Portuguese TT presents a translation with word adaptation where the question is not so friendly, but more business directed: ‘Tem questões a colocar?’ Which is in a way a cold expression.

xxx) ¹²⁾ Here is another German communicative feature that does not have any similar possibility in Portuguese, because the readership would immediately see that the text is no Portuguese reproduction. The translation has to create reality through unit change: ‘Para um contacto sem compromisso, contacte-nos via telefónica ou escreva uma carta ou um e-mail para o nosso endereço.’ TT presents also some units which were added to the text in order to offer one more opportunity of contact (e-mail).

5. Conclusion

The implications for translation analyzed in this assignment show a clear impossibility to use a word by word translation. It would implicate a very confusing text for the reader, whether it is her/his area of expertise or not, due to existing background information in SL that would never be reached by the reader of the TT. The words with cultural specific concepts must suffer a transfer in order to suit the TT purpose and express the real meaning or linguistic and situational context.

As a translator I have adapted specific concepts in the Portuguese text and situational order to present the real world to the Portuguese readership; and have utilized equivalences to re-create the German cultural background in the Portuguese way-of-life context. According to Bell (1991 : 15) the translator is a “...*bilingual mediating agent between monolingual communication participants in two different language communities*” this explains the decoding of the SL message in German to a re-encoding of the same into Portuguese.

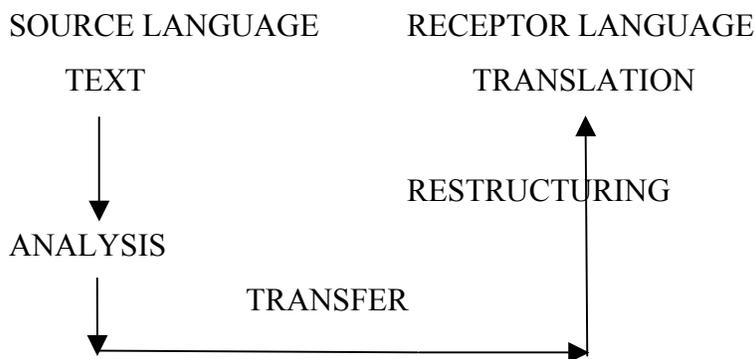
Baker (1992 : 22) explains that SL and TL have different distinctions in word meanings. What is seen as an important distinction in meaning in German may not be so in Portuguese. As an example the word ‘*fair*’ in German (see Appendix I) means the same as in English – something that is right or correct – but loses the meaning in the Portuguese language when translated. The translator cannot translate the word with ‘*justo*’ (this would be the word-to-word translation) as what is meant here is the honest

behaviour and not the fact that something is just correct. In this case the appropriate word would be ‘*sério*’, which expresses the German real context in SL.

Hatim and Mason (1990: 65) point out that:

“The translator, in addition to being a competent processor of intentions in any SL text, must be in a position to make judgements about the likely effect of the translation on TL reader/hearers.”

Nida’s model (in Bassnett 1991: 23) explains all of the stages involved in translation:



Lotman (in Bassnett 1991: 22) explains, on the other hand, that:

‘... describes literature and art in general as secondary modelling systems, as an indication of the fact that they are derived from the primary modelling system of language, and declares as firmly as Sapir or Whorf that...’ language and culture are bound to each other in a micro cosmos.

Language exists and therefore culture is real.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Source Text in German page 20

Appendix 2

Target Text in Portuguese page 21