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The Translation of Metaphorical Expressions in Modern Literature: The case of Banana Yoshimoto's *TUGUMI* into Portuguese and English

Traducción de expresiones metafóricas en la literatura moderna: el caso de TUGUMI de Banana Yoshimoto en portugués e inglés

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ABSTRACT: Metaphorical expressions arise from the experiences humans accumulate during their lifetime, inserted in a sociocultural context, and therefore vary among different cultures. This linguistic phenomenon permeates every communicative act, playing a significant role not only in the conveyance of meaning but also in stimulating cognitive response. For this reason, it is considered a valuable device for creating aesthetic effects embedded in semantic content in the making of creative writing. This study analyses the translation of metaphorical expressions in Japanese literature into English and Portuguese, with a focus on the translator's attitude seen from adjustments to the text at the semantic and cultural levels. Results show that substantial adjustments - most of which are motivated by the target culture's norms - must be performed when rendering metaphorical expressions. However, these adjustments might bring about changes to the semantic content and stylistic perception of the text.

KEYWORDS: Japanese literary translation; writing style; figure of speech; variation in metaphor; translator's attitude.

RESUMEN: Las expresiones metafóricas varían entre culturas, ya que reflejan las experiencias humanas que se producen en un contexto sociocultural concreto. Este fenómeno lingüístico permea cada acto comunicativo y juega un papel fundamental a la hora de transmitir un significado y estimular una respuesta cognitiva. Por esta razón, se considera una valiosa herramienta con la que cuenta la escritura creativa para provocar efectos estéticos localizados dentro de un contenido semántico. El presente trabajo analiza la traducción de expresiones metafóricas en la literatura japonesa al inglés y al portugués, con foco en la actitud que revela el traductor a través de los ajustes culturales y semánticos observados en el texto. Los resultados muestran que el trasvase de metáforas obliga a que se produzcan alteraciones sustanciales, la mayoría motivadas por las normas de la cultura de destino. Con todo, tales cambios podrían transformar el contenido y la percepción estilística del original.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Traducción de literatura japonesa; estilo literario; figura retórica; variaciones en metáforas; la actitud del traductor.

1. INTRODUCTION

Metaphors are defined as figures of speech in which an abstract concept is comprehended through a concrete one using comparisons between their similarities, enabling a better comprehension of the former (Deignan 2005). Although metaphors equip us with the necessary means to express how we perceive our surroundings, they are also complex in structure, likely to be regarded as ambiguous, and dependent on shared background knowledge to be properly interpreted. Background knowledge cannot be regarded as universal (Kövecses 2005), varying both cross-culturally and on a deeper level within the same culture. Consequently, the concepts which give meaning to the association of ideas in metaphors also vary and are reflected in the language we use.

Given the above, metaphorical expressions pose a challenge to the translator who must convey both semantic components and rhetorical effects in a distinct linguistic system. The objective of this study is to investigate the translation decision-making process by comparing target text (TT) to source text (ST) in order to search for the translator's interferences impressed into the TT, which can be associated with incidental changes in content and perception of textual style of the final product. I focus on Banana Yoshimoto's Japanese fictional novel TUGUMI, and analyse metaphorical expressions that have been translated in the English and Brazilian Portuguese versions. This novel is characterized by its abundance of metaphors, including complex and ambiguous original expressions, which leave much room for interpretation. These expressions are analysed quantitatively to determine if translation patterns claimed in previous studies are pertinent. Noteworthy examples are selected to be deconstruct and discussed to identify metaphorical variations that may carry traces of the translator's presence.

2. METHODS

2.1. Data

TUGUMI is Yoshimoto's third book. It was first serialized in *Marie Claire* magazine, on monthly basis from April 1988 to March 1989, when it was published as a book by *Chūōkōron-sha*. The novel was released to the English language market in 2002 by Groove Press in the United States, and in 2003 by Faber & Faber in Europe, under the title of *Goodbye Tsugumi*. Both editions used the text by the American translator Michael Emmerich. The Brazil edition, published by *Estação Liberdade*, had its title spelling altered to *Tsugumi*, to avoid mispronunciation. The novel was translated by the Japanese Brazilian translator Lica Hashimoto, only arriving in bookstores much later, in 2015, and being reprinted in 2021.

Besides the significant discrepancy among the language systems targeted here, it is important to note the gender and the ethnic group to which each translator belongs. These traits are important parts of the cultural spectrum which influences perception, and may therefore appear reflected in their translation decisions.

2.2. Framework

This study's quantitative analysis involves measuring the frequency metaphoric expressions occur across the three language editions, to identify translation patterns. On the other hand, the qualitative analysis aims to explain translational phenomena that indicate traces of the translator's attitude.

There are two basic characteristics of metaphorical expressions that help us identify them: sentence structure and connotation. By recognizing these two elements, it is possible to determine what category of figure of speech they belong to and what functions they are performing.

Richards ([1936] 1965) defines the main components of a metaphor as: Tenor, what is being described; Vehicle, the concept used to describe the Tenor; and Ground, the common aspect shared by Tenor and Vehicle. In the process of interpreting metaphors, we transfer meaning from Vehicle to Tenor, characterizing a deviation from its literal meaning. In the example below, «first star» is the Tenor, while «tiny white bulb» represents its Vehicle, and «glittered brightly in the sky» accounts for the Ground. The term «looking like» is responsible for making the analogy explicit: «the first star glittered brightly in the sky, looking like a tiny white bulb» (Yoshimoto 2003, 59).

Aside from the vehicle, metaphor components may be omitted. In these cases, one must rely on both the provided textual context, and shared background knowledge (Yamanashi 2007).

Semantic figures of speech	Ideational figures of speech	
Metaphor	Oxymoron	Metaphorical Idioms
Simile	Euphemism	
Metonymy	Hyperbole	

Synecdoche	Irony	Dead Metaphors
Transferred Epithet	Antithesis	
Synaesthesia		
Personification		

Table 1. Categorization of Metaphorical Expressions by Type

The collected cases were organized into 14 categories, of which 12 are divided into two classes: semantic figures of speech are identified primarily based on metaphor component organization, namely sentence structure, while ideational figures of speech are identified primarily by how they relate to textual and extratextual (background knowledge) context. The remaining categories are metaphorical idioms and dead metaphors, which often overlap with the others, belonging to either class. These two categories are no longer perceived as figurative language, although they are essentially metaphorical expressions. The 14 categories covered here are displayed in the above table.

Vinay and Darbelnet ([1958] 1995) introduced optional strategies to adopt whenever literal translation is not possible. Bastin (2013) considers that every text requires some extent of adaptation, even if partial. Baker (1992) indicates that figurative language may be employed to translate another part of the text and compensate for paraphrasing losses. These strategies privilege bigger and smaller translation units, allowing for analysis of metaphors' translation by breaking them down.

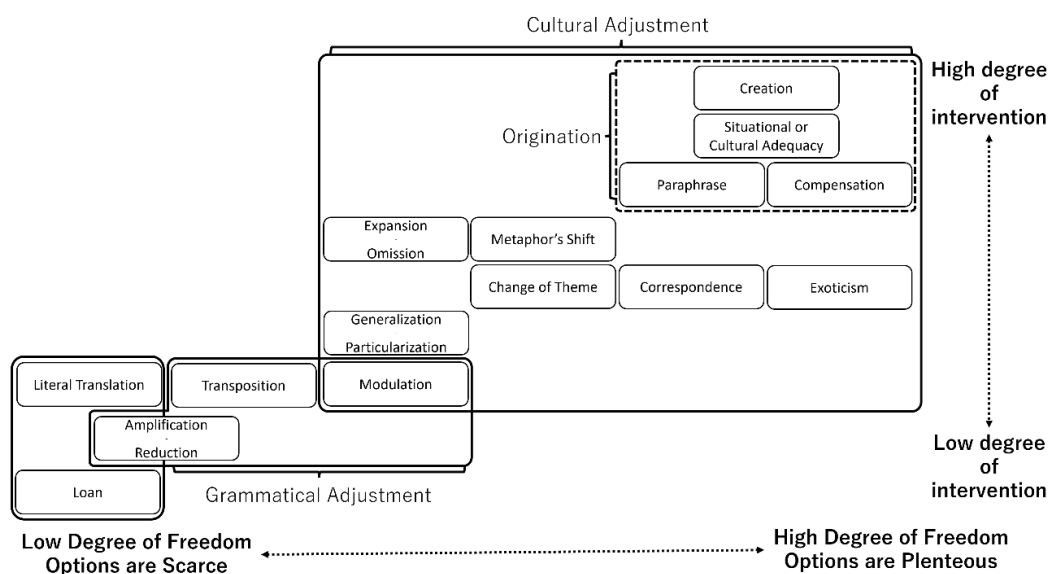


Figure 1. Metaphorical Expressions Analysis Framework

In the above diagram, textual adjustment needs are divided into grammatical and cultural categories. The items on the furthest right refer to translation strategies that allow for a wider range of potential interpretations, whereas the items on the furthest left offer limited possibilities. The items framed in the lower left box represent strategies that are adopted based on the presence of corresponding terms in the TL, and require almost no adjustment. Grammatical adjustment encompasses strategies to solve problems related to grammatical system restrictions, while cultural adjustment encompasses strategies for

handling cross-cultural elements. The items placed in intersections may be justified by either, depending on the purpose that motivates the translation decision. The origination box within the cultural adjustment frame indicates the set of strategies the translator must rely on most (interpretation and creativity to apprehend the original message and reproduce it in a new configuration). The degree of freedom of translation, displayed horizontally, is measured based on the abundance of possible outcomes the translator has at their disposal. Strategies on the left side are supposed to offer fewer options than the ones on the right side. The degree of intervention, displayed vertically, indicates the possible extent of interferences, with the strategies that imply less room for textual reformulation placed at the bottom.

3. RESULTS

In the ST, I detected 671 cases of metaphorical expressions. It is important to note here that the number of cases does not correspond to number of extracted examples, given that in a single excerpt, we may find multiple cases of metaphorical expressions. This specifically refers to the following situations: compound metaphors, in which metaphorical components are represented by another figure of speech; and expressions that fall simultaneously into multiple categories.

	JPN	ENG	PTBR
metaphor	297	299	249
simile	187	175	141
metonymy	47	24	28
synecdoche	2	1	4
transferred epithet	24	12	15
synaesthesia	15	10	8
oxymoron	4	5	3
euphemism	2	3	3
hyperbole	5	12	10
irony	2	2	1
antithesis	2	2	2
personification	25	24	20
metaphorical idioms	50	54	61
dead metaphors	9	3	16
Total	671	626	561

Table 2. Metaphorical expressions in TUGUMI, Goodbye Tsugumi and, Tsugumi

Regarding the translated versions, a total of 626 cases were detected in English, and 561 cases in Portuguese. These numbers include cases of compensation, non-figurative passages that were replaced by metaphorical expressions to compensate for the

standardized ones; and cases of correspondence, dead metaphors and idioms replacing non-metaphorical expressions. The increase and decrease of case numbers also suggest how figurative language presents itself in each culture. For example, the notorious decrease of transferred epithets and metonymies in both translations raises questions about the difficulties of retention across these two categories. Here it was observed that the transferred epithets' structure was hindered by restrictions in TL's grammatical system. While metonymies in the original text often overlapped with idioms, causing them to be replaced by target culture's corresponding ones. We can say that in this case, translation was determined by cultural adjustments.

Each case example was labelled by type and organized in parallel with its respective translations. This made it possible to number the frequency of translation patterns referred to in previous studies. Here we refer to them as retention (same category reproduction), shift (change of category), standardization (sense over rhetorical effect), and deletion (non-translation) (Van den Broeck 1981, Fujinami 2007).

As shown in the table below, more than half of cases account for retention, with 61 % of cases in English and 51 % in Portuguese. Yet, we observe a gap of 10 % between the translated texts. Shift cases account for 21 % in English and 24 % in Portuguese, being under a fourth of the total, with a 3 % gap. Standardizations' occurrences account for 18 % in English and 25 % in Portuguese, with a 7 % gap. Deletions were not detected. Regardless of the gaps, these numbers prove that both translators prioritized reproducing the text's rhetorical effect by preserving the abundance of metaphorical expressions in it.

	JPN	ENG			PTBR		
		Retent.	Shift	Stand.	Retent.	Shift	Stand.
Metaphor	297 100 %	184 62 %	43 14 %	70 24 %	150 51 %	50 17 %	97 32 %
Simile	187 100 %	128 68 %	45 24 %	14 8 %	104 56 %	58 31 %	25 13 %
Metonymy	47 100 %	19 40 %	13 28 %	15 32 %	21 45 %	8 17 %	18 38 %
Synecdoche	2 100 %	1 50 %	1 50 %	0 0 %	2 100 %	0 0 %	0 0 %
Transferred Epithet	24 100 %	5 21 %	15 63 %	0 0 %	8 33 %	12 50 %	4 17 %
Synesthesia	15 100 %	10 67 %	5 33 %	4 16 %	6 40 %	6 40 %	3 20 %
Oxymoron	4 100 %	0 0 %	1 25 %	0 0 %	0 0 %	1 25 %	3 75 %
Euphemism	2 100 %	1 50 %	1 50 %	3 75 %	1 50 %	1 50 %	0 0 %
Hyperbole	5 100 %	5 100 %	0 0 %	0 0 %	4 80 %	0 0 %	1 20 %
Irony	2 100 %	2 100 %	0 0 %	0 0 %	1 50 %	1 50 %	0 0 %
Antithesis	2 100 %	2 100 %	0 0 %	0 0 %	2 100 %	0 0 %	0 0 %

Personification	25 100 %	18 72 %	4 16 %	3 12 %	15 60 %	6 24 %	4 16 %
Total	612 100 %	375 61 %	128 21 %	109 18 %	314 51 %	143 24 %	155 25 %

Table 3. Metaphorical Expressions' Translation Pattern

The translation patterns for metaphor expressions can be explained by the frequency of certain strategies. Expansion was the most frequently used strategy in the English translation, occurring 210 times; while correspondence was the most frequent strategy in the Portuguese translation, with 174 occurrences. Expansion refers to the addition of words and explanatory sentences. This strategy allowed the retention of most of the original's metaphors by offering readers the necessary background information. Correspondence refers to the replacement of ST's elements with ones from the corresponding target culture. Employing this strategy increased shifts and standardizations.

The frequency of strategies used in each TT is displayed in the table below.

	ENG	PTBR
Loan	4	3
Literal translation	114	145
Change of theme	53	52
Paraphrase	25	59
Amplification	151	111
Reduction	3	34
Transposition	35	29
Modulation	72	71
Generalization	5	3
Particularization	6	7
Expansion	210	59
Omission	11	24
Situational or Cultural Adequacy	41	60
Correspondence	120	174
Exoticism	30	27
Compensation	65	42
Creation	50	32
Metaphor's Shift	128	143

Table 4. Translation strategies occurrence in Goodbye Tsugumi (ENG) and Tsugumi (PTBR)

4. DISCUSSION

In both TTs, most metaphorical expressions were retained, standardization accounted for approximately a quarter of the total, and deletions were not detected, proving that translators prioritized the rendering of rhetorical effects. Indicatives of cultural variation in metaphor were more evident in cases where, a) ST meaning was ambiguous leaving more room for interpretations, and b) correspondent association of ideas was lacking.

Although most interventions were motivated by the target culture's social norms, specific cases suggest the presence of values and beliefs related to the translators' cultural background.

Additions of the ground components and accessory explanations allowed the English translation to preserve most of the original's metaphors, albeit impacting the text length. Whereas, in the Portuguese text, the replacement of corresponding expressions was responsible not only for standardizations and shifts, but also for increasing metaphorical idioms and dead metaphors.

The following examples illustrate how cultural aspects may influence the translator's decisions.

<p><i>kekkan no uku youna hosoi ude ya ashi wa surarito nagaku, zenshin ga kyutto chiisaku, kanojo wa marude <u>kamisama</u> ga utsukushiku koshiraeta ningyou noyouna tansei na gaiken o shiteita.</i> (Yoshimoto 1989, 12)</p>	<p>Her arms and legs were long and slim, her veins seemed to lie just beneath the surface of her skin, and her body was small and tight - her physical appearance was so trim and gorgeous you could almost believe she was a doll fashioned that way by <u>some god</u>. (Yoshimoto 2003, 6)</p> <p><i>Os braços finos eram marcados por veias visíveis e suas pernas eram esbeltas e compridas. Ela era do tipo mignon e, de tão graciosa, parecia uma linda bonequinha criada por <u>Deus</u>.</i> (Yoshimoto 2021, 15)</p>
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Table 5. Example: ideological values

The expressions in bold refer to the physical appearance of the main character, Tsugumi, described by her cousin and childhood friend Maria. In English, the first expression was translated literally, while expansion was applied to the second one, reducing vagueness. However, the choice of words led to a sexual connotation, deviating from the original's intentions. The Portuguese translation opted for a neutral standpoint, keeping it vague.

The underlined text is an example of religious belief interference. While there is a polytheist standpoint in English with the addition of the word «some» and a lowercase «g», in Portuguese we see a monotheist standpoint represented by the capital «D».

<p><i>touge ni mukau michi ni sotto, kuchihateta youni nemuru gyosen ga ikutsumo narandeita.</i> (Yoshimoto 1989, 83)</p>	<p>A line of <u>fishing boats</u> stood along the edge of the road that led up to the peak of the mountain, all of them sunk in such a profound sleep that you would think they were just rotting away. (Yoshimoto 2003, 69)</p> <p><i>Caminhamos pela estrada que levava ao cume da montanha e, durante o trajeto, passamos pelos <u>barcos de pesca</u> que dormiam</i></p>
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	<i>enfileirados como cadáveres anônimos.</i> (Yoshimoto 2021, 69)
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Table 6. Example: polysemy

The vehicle used in the ST is a polysemous word that can mean both «rot away» and «die anonymously». The metaphorical context allows for both interpretations, which caused the translator of English to opt for the former meaning, while the Portuguese translator opted for the latter.

<i>mottomo, atama ga yoku mawaranakereba aredake tayou na ijiwaru wa omoitsukenai darou.</i> (Yoshimoto 1989, 14)	And of course one has to be fairly intelligent to start with, <u>to think up</u> so many different ways of being mean. (Yoshimoto 2003, 8) <i>Convenhamos que se ela não fosse tão inteligente, não seria capaz de <u>maquinar</u> tantas maldades.</i> (Yoshimoto 2021, 17)
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Table 7. Example: standardization and compensation

Expressions deeply rooted in specific cultural concepts are most likely to be replaced by TL's correspondents or to be standardized. The latter happened to the ST's metaphorical idiom in bold. Yet, in the Portuguese TT, the underlined verb was replaced by a word that shares the same concept of «the head is a machine» with the Japanese idiom, acting to compensate for the loss in rhetorical effect.

5. CONCLUSION

Metaphorical expressions originate from associations of ideas, which are supported by background knowledge. This knowledge is shaped by cultural factors and varies both cross-culturally and within the same culture. Therefore, translating metaphors require adjustments on both grammatical and cultural levels. In this process, translators often face no other option but to intervene, filling in cultural and linguistic gaps, thereby increasing intelligibility and reducing ambiguity. However, these same actions affect the perception of textual style and lead to semantic content level changes. Furthermore, although most interferences are based on sociocultural norms, they still go through the filter of the translator's perception.

In this study, I proposed an analysis of the metaphorical expressions' translation phenomenon with a focus on the translator's attitude. As a result, I observed that traces of one's cultural background permeate TT, especially in cases of ambiguity. Thus, we may say that the translator is present in the text, given the final product results from their perception of the ST, as well as from the values and beliefs attached to their sociocultural background.

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