TRANSLATION ANALYSIS OF ACADEMIC TEXTS IN THE HUMAN SCIENCES: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract: With the purpose of internationalisation, present-day academic research is being largely published or translated into English. In Brazil, there are several bilingual publications in all academic fields available on SciELO Portal. In areas related to the Human Sciences, the necessity of translating cultural references tends to be more frequent than in the Natural and 'Hard' Sciences. Research in the Human Sciences focuses primarily on cultural issues such as beliefs, rituals, behaviours, habits, etc. This article presents a case study of a bilingually published research article on the History of Brazilian slavery. The analysis is based on how Brazilian cultural references are represented in English and the possible effects this may cause in the target text audience. Considering the specificities of academic texts in the Human Sciences, our theoretical framework is based on, on the one hand, Intercultural Studies and, on the other, German Functionalist Translation Theory. Results show the role of the translator in the case of texts in the Human Sciences as an active contributor concerned with his/her international audience.

Keywords: Cultural references; Human sciences; Internationalisation

ANÁLISE TRADUTÓRIA DE TEXTOS ACADÊMICOS EM CIÊNCIAS HUMANAS: UM ESTUDO DE CASO

Resumo: Com o propósito de internacionalização, a pesquisa acadêmica vem sendo amplamente traduzida e publicada para o inglês. No Brasil,



existem várias publicações bilíngues em todas as áreas acadêmicas disponíveis no Portal SciELO. Em áreas relacionadas às Ciências Humanas, a necessidade de traduzir referências culturais tende a ser mais frequente do que nas Ciências Exatas e Naturais. A pesquisa em Ciências Humanas está principalmente concentrada em questões culturais como crenças, rituais, comportamentos, hábitos, etc. Este artigo apresenta um estudo de caso de um artigo acadêmico publicado de forma bilíngue sobre a História da Escravidão Brasileira. A análise é baseada em como as referências culturais brasileiras são representadas em inglês e os possíveis efeitos que podem causar nos leitores do texto-alvo. Considerando as especificidades de textos acadêmicos nas Ciências Humanas, nosso referencial teórico está fundamentado em duas bases: de um lado, nos Estudos Interculturais e, de outro, no Funcionalismo Alemão. Os resultados mostram o(a) tradutor(a) de textos acadêmicos em Ciências Humanas em um papel de colaboração ativa e preocupação com seu público internacional acadêmico.

Palavras-Chave: Referências culturais; Ciências humanas; Internacionalização

1. Translation of sciences

Nowadays there is a great pressure to publish scientific texts in English. The translation of scientific texts originally written in other languages plays a crucial role in all academic areas, namely for two main reasons: international visibility and dialogue (Meneghini and Packer). In spite of having become a common practice, research in the field of translation of sciences still shows timid results. If journals, researchers, and scientific translators do not reflect on this issue, it may lead to dangerous consequences when transferring knowledge from one language to another.

This paper analyses the translation of a particular research article originally written in Portuguese and translated into English. With this case study, our purpose is to show the cultural and discursive translation implications of an academic text on Brazilian History. The research article that we analysed in this paper comes from the SciELO Portal (Scientific Electronic Library Online), an open access platform that includes a selection of well-ranked Latin

American journals.¹ The portal can be accessed in Portuguese, Spanish and English and research articles are accepted in several languages. There are special editions of selected research articles bilingually published on the portal. This is the case of the research article we discuss in this paper. The source text was published in Brazilian Portuguese and the target text in English. The article, published in the journal *História*, discusses African slavery during the Brazilian colony and empire and its consequences to contemporary Brazilian society.

To begin this discussion, we must understand the current roles of English and Brazilian Portuguese in local and global scientific communities. As a result, we will be able to contextualize political and ideological issues regarding institutional bilingualism (or multilingualism) such as SciELO. On the one hand, English is the lingua franca of the academic/scientific world. On the other, Portuguese assumes the role of a more 'peripheral' language for the global scientific community, being of course 'central' when it comes to Brazilian (national) communication.

Although in its time the Portuguese kingdom spread its language over Latin America, Africa and even Asia, Mazurechen (2011) sees Portuguese as an isolated language in terms of international communication. In spite of being the 7th most spoken language in the world, with 176 million native speakers and 191 million speakers in total² it is, in terms of scientific communication, a local language. Large, but local.

According to Righetti (2011), Brazilian research publications remain mostly local. In 2011, it ranked thirteenth in terms of international publications. She points out that 60% of all Brazilian journals are published only in Portuguese. This situation; however, has been gradually changing as more and more journals tend to accept articles in both languages or only in English (Alcadipani, 2017).

148

¹ See http://www.scielo.org/php/index.php (accessed on 02. Jan. 2018)

² See www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/most_spoken_languages.htm (accessed on 02. Jan. 2018)

Therefore, considering English is the academic lingua franca, Meneghini and Packer (2007) state that Brazilian researchers should be encouraged to publish in both languages, Portuguese and English, for Brazilian research to dialogue with both local and global communities.

2. Human Sciences

If research in the translation of sciences in general is timid, research in the translation of the Human Sciences is virtually non-existent. Perhaps the status of Natural and Mathematical Sciences plays a role in this. In fact, translation of the Human Sciences is different and, we dare say, more challenging than texts in the hard sciences. In what follows, we discuss a few concepts of the Human Sciences and its representation in language.

Foucault (2000) relates the Human Sciences to other academic sciences. For him, the boundaries that separate different types of academic knowledge are somehow linked to the Human Sciences. Foucault explains that the mission of Human Sciences is to observe mankind as an object of study and how mankind has been historically investigated. Since each area of the Human Sciences emerged as the consequence of a problem, a need, a theoretical or practical obstacle, Foucault (2000) states that human beings as objects of study can only be studied when they live and produce. They have functions, needs, produce objects, exchange information, and organize themselves into communities. Human beings have languages, build symbolic universes, relate their lives to the past, and manage to build on previous knowledge. This is the space where there are possibilities for research in order to represent human being through language (Foucault).

Bakhtin (2011) also reflects on the representation of the Human Sciences in language, and this from a more textual perspective. A text is created out of other texts, thoughts come from other thoughts, and experiences come from other experiences. Discourse

comes originally from previous thoughts, exposures, desires, demonstrations, human expressions, and human distrusts built over time. In other words, each text is a combination of previous texts with individual features. Through the style, world view and characteristic elements, one text is distinguished from another. Texts are also intertextual as they are linked to the discursive communication processes of a cultural field. Therefore, texts are influenced by same subjects or related matters, even if contradicting each other. Hence, the representation of the human being happens through words, form, sense and discourse. It is a decryption and restitution of thoughts through senses and meanings.

Therefore, textual productions in the Human Sciences are about the textual representation of human thoughts, needs, past, accomplishments, desires, functions, organizations, beliefs, knowledge, and so on. All of these are represented through symbols of our complex human deeds and existence. Therefore, the representation of Human Sciences in language deals with profound cultural issues. Human 'culture', as we know, varies according to each cultural community and the way it is represented. That is why translating Human Sciences presents a wide field of cultural complexities, since it is the translation of a cultural representation.

3. The translation of Human Sciences and cultural references

According to Swales (1990), the genre 'scientific text' has its own specificities regarding objectivity and clarity, as well as a specific communicative function to accomplish. Scientific texts have informational contents in order to 'teach'. Moreover, academic texts may also be argumentative, since the researcher tries to convince the reader of his/her arguments.

However, as stated in the previous section, texts in the Human Sciences are full of cultural information, representing specific concepts of the field as well as regional elements from the culture under scrutiny. Unlike texts of the 'hard sciences', texts in the Human Sciences work with the human being from a social and psychological point of view, where cultural factors are directly linked to the language used by the researcher and the translator.

For that reason, our purpose here is to work with the concept of 'cultural references', widely used in the sphere of Translation Studies. Mayoral Asensio (1999) maps out the concept of 'cultural references' in translation which, under different names – such as 'culturemas', 'realia', 'specific names', and 'cultural words', etc. –, presents similar ideas.³

Nadal (2009) describes such a concept – 'culturema' in Spanish – as the close relationship between language and culture defined by studies of phraseologisms, cultural words, key-words, proverbs, allusions, songs, clichés, slogans, etc. Therefore, the study of 'cultural references' proposes a study of words, phrases or fragments in translation. Cultural references exist through a network of ideas shared by a given community. These ideas are habits, common knowledge, rituals and values that perform in a real and immediate situation. Therefore, cultural references in the source text acquaint the reader with the surroundings providing a self-understanding of how the world is.

Mayoral Asensio (1999) analyses cases in which translators face a variety of cultural references which sometimes perform according to different or even contradictory strategies. In other words, a text may present several cultural references and the translator may use different strategies to solve the problems that arise during the translation process. The translator's decisions may influence the whole purpose of the text if strategies are not compatible with the text function. Translators must be aware of how to represent cultural references in the target culture, but also in their decisions within the text as a unit, considering if these cultural references are in accordance with the purpose of the translation.

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³ For a thorough study about these categorizations, approaches and terminology, see Mayoral Asensio, Roberto. See references.

4. Interculturality and translation

In order to analyse cultural references in texts in the Human Sciences, we refer to Hofstede (1980) and Hofstede et al (2002) for Intercultural Communication and Nord (2005) for the Functionalist Translation Theory. Intercultural Communication from the sociological perspective helps us understand cultural encounters at different levels of complexity. Functionalist Translation Theory enables us to study these cultural differences by confronting texts and analysing how the translator tries to fulfil the translation purpose and what effects the text may cause on its audience. In doing so, we can observe the 'communicative function' of each text, which focuses on whom each text has been written for.

Cross-cultural misunderstanding is a much-underestimated cause of trouble. If we inhabitants of the globe do not acquire an awareness of our mutual differences, knowledge of basic cultural variables, the skills to communicate effectively across boundaries and the will to do so, our world will be the worse for it. We need to communicate effectively with people who were raised in ways utterly unlike our own. (Hofstede et al xviii)

Hofstede (1980) analyses interculturality in terms of layers, from the most visible to the most invisible level. We adopted and adapted his categories of intercultural analysis for our study. The following illustration shows these cultural layers, from the easiest perception of a cultural manifestation – the outer layer – to the most difficult to perceive – the core.

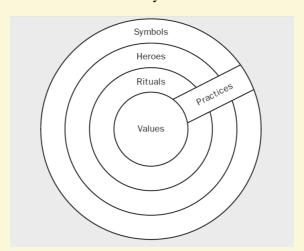


Figure 1: Hofstede's cultural layers

Source: Hofstede, Geert H. Culture Consequences: comparing values, behaviours, institutions, and organisations across nations. Sage Publications, 1980.

The first cultural layer, 'symbols', is easily perceived, copied or imitated by an outsider and the most vulnerable to outside influences. They may be words, gestures, pictures, objects with particular meanings, language in use, jargon, clothes, hairstyle, status symbols, etc.

'Heroes', is the second most observed from and vulnerable to other cultures. It includes people who represent the cultural group, serving as 'role models'. They are somehow kept in high consideration either for their physical appearance, behaviour, or intelligence. The layer 'rituals' usually requires more effort from the outsider to be noticed and is unlikely to be impacted by external influences. It concerns collective activities, socially essential within a culture, such as greetings, social and religious ceremonies, business and political meetings. 'Values', in the core, are almost impossible for the outsider to notice and to incorporate in his/her culture. These are collective tendencies, preferences and feelings which indicate what is evil or good, dangerous or safe, forbidden

or permitted, moral or immoral, ugly or beautiful, normal or abnormal, logical or illogical.

The first three layers are subsumed under 'practices'. According to Hofstede et al (2002), 'practices' are visible to outsiders, even though their cultural meanings are invisible to them. The insiders are the ones who interpret them. To adapt Hofstede's intercultural model to our research, we subcategorized each 'layer' into different cultural references, according to our findings.

Tabel 1: Categories of cultural references in the Human Science

Cultural layer	Cultural reference	Situation
Symbols	Cultural registers	Words or fragments with specific or double interpretations for the source culture.
	Key-words	Key informational concepts in the source culture to compose and understand the text.
Heroes	Characters	Well-known people in the source culture.
	Locations	Geographical regions subdivided by political or natural borders with specific historic and sociological meanings for the source culture.
Rituals	Cultural knowledge	Shared knowledge involving social, historical, political and economic issues related to the source culture.
Values	Translator's approaches	How discourse has been manipulated by the translator and what possible effects this has on the target text audience.

Source: Hofstede *et al* (2002)

The categories shown above are used for our analysis of a scientific text in the Human Sciences. We combined this adaptation of Hofstede's cultural layers to categorize cultural manifestations within the text and German Functionalism to understand how the translation fulfilled its purpose with its specific target audience.

5. The case study

We analysed the article *A dinâmica da escravidão no Brasil: Resistência, tráfico negreiro e alforrias, séculos XVII a XIX* ('The dynamics of slavery in Brazil: resistance, the slave trade and manumission in the 17th to the 19th centuries'). The article was translated by Anthony Doyle, an Irish translator who holds a degree in Literature and a master's degree in Philosophy. The text of this article was published in both Portuguese and English on the SciELO Portal in 2006 through the Brazilian journal 'Novos Estudos-CEBRAP'. The article deals with slavery in Brazil as well as its consequences for Afro-Brazilian descendants. Following Nord (2005), we analysed the textual characteristics of source and target texts. Our focus is on audience, purpose, textual function and author's and translator's assumptions.

With regard to the audience, both the source and the target texts were aimed at an academic public. The difference is that the source text audience is Brazilian and is interested in Brazilian history. The audience of target text is not Brazilian. The author's assumptions about his Brazilian academic audience are different from the translator's assumptions about his international academic audience. In the source text, the author assumes that his audience knows the general political, economic and social History of Brazil as well as Brazilian jargon, popular language, places, historical characters, etc., which often appear in texts in the Human Sciences. The translator may or may not assume that a non-Brazilian audience, which is supposedly interested in the History of Brazil, already knows some specific cultural references of the area. Also, the

translator may or may not assume that this reader is learning the History of Brazil through this research article. Maybe the target text reader is not particularly interested in the history of Brazil, but is in the history of slavery.

The purpose of the translation of the research article, from an extratextual perspective, is to spread internationally the author's research and increase the journal's visibility. From an intratextual perspective, the purpose of publishing the translation of this article is to show the author's position contending studies that defend any benefit granted for those who were enslaved as well as that slavery was not a passive phenomenon as it has been portrayed in some old history books.

For this article, we discuss an example of each cultural category previously shown in this paper. These are not the only examples found in the text, but they illustrate a method of analysis. We show excerpts, first from the source and then from the target text, highlighting where the cultural references are and then comment on them.

5.1 Symbols – cultural registers

The cultural register of this research shows that in Portuguese there are different ways to refer to a person whose ascendancy is black and white, depending on the situation:

- [...] isto é, os crioulos e, sobretudo, os **pardos**: este grupo constituiu 69% do universo de alforrias, contra apenas 31% de africanos libertados.
- [...] meaning the Creoles and, principally, the **Mulattoes** were likewise statistically privileged, accounting for 69% of manumissions against 31% for African slaves.

The first cultural reference is 'pardo'. According to the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), 'pardo' is a

person who has black ancestry mixed with other colours or race⁴. The etymology of the word '*Mulato*' is Portuguese and Spanish and indicates a person with black and white parentage⁵. In English there are no synonyms for the concept '*pardo*', which emphasizes the black side of a person with any other race – white or indigenous people, for example. The translator found the closest concept acceptable in English. While the original author tried to use the official general term for Afro-descendants in Brazil, the translator decided to be more specific.

5.2 Symbols – key-words

The next excerpt speaks about a place where runaway slaves hid from their white 'owners' and established alternative communities:

Ainda que as estimativas das fontes coevas e dos historiadores sobre o número total de habitantes divirjam bastante — [...] –, não há como negar que as comunidades palmarinas, dada a extensão territorial e a quantidade de escravos fugitivos que acolheram, tornaram-se o maior **quilombo** na história da América portuguesa.

Though population estimates by coeval sources and historians vary wildly — [...] –, there is no doubt that the Palmares communities, given their sheer territorial extension and the number of fugitive slaves they absorbed, constituted the largest 'Quilombo', or Maroon slave community, in the history of Portuguese America.

The term 'Maroon slave community' in English is used with the same purpose as the term in Portuguese: hidden places all over

 $^{^4}$ See https://ww2.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/trabalhoerendimento/pnad99/metodologia99.shtm (accessed on 27. March. 2018)

⁵ According to 'The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary'.

America where slaves who refused to continue living under the slavery system formed independent communities. (Price xi).

According to the 'Shorter Oxford English Dictionary' 'Quilombo', is "an organised community of escaped slaves" 6. The concept of Quilombo has its own particularities for being Brazilian. In Mexico, Jamaica and the United States, such communities certainly had other specificities. That is probably why the translator specified: 'Quilombo', or Maroon slave community', situating it in a Brazilian environment.

5.3 Heroes – characters

The text presents a social type whose job it was to rescue runaway slaves in the jungle:

- [...], houve uma progressiva especificação do **capitão-do-mato** responsável legal nas diferentes localidades da América portuguesa pela captura de escravos fugitivos [...]
- [...], the functions of the **slavehunter** (the **capitão-do-mato**, or **'bush captain'**, responsible for tracking down runaway slaves in various regions of Portuguese America) underwent progressive specification, [...] (2)

'Capitão-do-mato' is used to designate a person who captures runaway slaves in the jungle. The translator decided to use two different words in English to explain who this person is: 'slavehunter' and 'bush captain'. The terms 'slavehunter' and 'slave hunter' were found in several research articles, the latter being more frequent.⁷ 'Bush captain' was also found in two research articles in English.

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⁶ Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (Fifth Edition) on CD-ROM version 2.0

⁷ We searched on Google Scholars the entry 'slave hunter'https://scholar.google.com.br/scholar?hl=pt-BR&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=%22slave+hunter%22&btnG=(accessed on 27. March. 2018)

The translator used 'slavehunter' for the rest of the text. It is possible the translator chose 'slavehunter' for being a popular term in English texts despite the fact the 'bush captain' would specify better the place where runaway slaves were hunt: the jungle.

5.3 Heroes – locations

The cultural reference of the excerpt below regards people who are from the Brazilian state of 'Bahia', one of the most representative states in terms of slavery in Brazil:

Para fins deste ensaio, interessa examinar o caso da resposta dos **baianos**, de grande relevo para a linha central de sua argumentação.

For the purposes of this essay it would be interesting to examine the response from **Bahia**, as this will prove to be central to its argument.

'Baianos' are people who are born in Bahia. As we can see, the translator presupposed that the reader was familiar with Bahia as a state and, for that reason, changed the people for a place. In the original fragment, the author states how these people reacted in respect to the demise of gold mining, whereas the translator states how Bahia responded to the same fact.

This translation strategy allowed the translator to limit the situation spatially, because the response of persons who belong to the state of Bahia is what matters to this extract. Thus, through this replacement of a word most likely to be familiar to the target text reader, the translator maintained the informative nature and argumentation of the text. However, this strategy can only work for readers who are aware of what Bahia is.

5.6 Rituals - cultural knowledge

This particular article deals with a few historical facts that constitute the whole texture of the text. Most historical facts mentioned in this article are well-known political and social events studied in Brazilian schools. Most of them, however, are only representative in a local scope.

Com efeito, entre 1807 e 1835, a Bahia viveu um período de rebeliões contínuas dos escravos africanos, cujo ápice foi a **Revolta dos Malês**, "levante de escravos urbanos mais sério ocorrido nas Américas".

From 1807 to 1835 Bahia endured a period of continuous rebellions by African slaves, the zenith being the **Malês Revolt**, "the most serious urban slave uprising ever staged in the Americas".

This revolt is textually represented with the premise that the readers are familiar with it. There is no need to dwell on the reasons and particulars involved in this revolt, organized by Muslim slaves or freedmen who wanted to fight against slavery, racial prejudice and religious discrimination. The translator supposed the same and kept the original name, translating 'revolta' as 'revolt'.

As the translator transmitted the message content the same way as the author did in the source text, he assumed that the target audience would not need further explanation, reason why he did not give any background about this revolt. He relied on the circumstances already provided by the source text. The difference for the reader who is familiar with these facts is the meaning behind its name because it goes further than a general idea of revolt.

5.7 Values: Translator's approaches

The fourth layer represents how the translator understands and represents the text in the target language. It is about the relationship between translator and target text audience.

The excerpt below shows how the translator interfered with the author's discourse by making subtle changes to represent the History of Brazil in relation to Western History:

Os membros e acionistas da Companhia das Índias Ocidentais holandesa (WIC), contudo, na época em que comandaram a invasão das regiões produtoras de açúcar no Brasil, **desconheciam por completo** os segredos da produção do artigo, que **se resumiam basicamente a três aspectos**: as técnicas de processamento da cana-de-açúcar, as técnicas de administração dos escravos e a organização do tráfico negreiro transatlântico.

However, the members and shareholders of the Dutch West India Company (WIC), which commanded the invasions of the Brazilian sugar producing regions at the time, **did not possess a thorough knowledge** of the secrets behind the commodity's production, which **boiled down to three basic necessities**: techniques for processing sugar cane; techniques for administrating slaves and the ability to organize a transatlantic slave trade.

In the source text, the author states that the Dutch "desconheciam por completo" (they were totally unaware) of the secrets of sugar cane production. The translation, however, says the Dutch 'did not possess a thorough knowledge' about it, which suggests they had some knowledge, perhaps not enough. The translator softened the lack of knowledge of the Dutch as suggested by the author in the source text. By softening the author's statement, the target text is non-committal if it were to be challenged by another researcher who finds evidence to the contrary.

Taking this into account, to what extent did the translator 'protect' the text from attacks by peers and did the translator change the author's speech? Apparently, the knowledge and values of the translator prevailed over his 'fidelity'.

In the second segment in bold, the translator again subtly imposes his own view. Both texts indicate that there were three requirements regarding sugar cane production and transportation in Brazil. However, the way the author and translator express these three requirements is different.

In the source text, the extract underlined states that these requirements 'se resumiam basicamente a três aspectos' (basically boiled down to three aspects). However, the translation states that these necessities 'boiled down to three basic necessities'. The adjective 'basic' is positioned before 'necessities' and not before the verb 'boiled down' as an adverb. The translator turned the necessities into 'basic' necessities. The author does not claim that these requirements were basic, but rather that these were limited in number.

Here we pose the same question we asked about the previous fragment of the same paragraph: to what extent did the translator consciously interfere in the translator's discourse? To what extent did the translator actually notice this interference?

6. Final remarks

When a scientific paper is initially written for a local audience, a translator may have to adapt it to an ideal 'world audience', as in the case of the research article analysed here. Potential readers of such translation belong to the academic sphere, but have no knowledge of Portuguese. Moreover, the translator also has no way of knowing if these potential readers had any contact with other texts dealing with Brazilian topics. When writing the original text, the author knows what Brazilian readers already know. The translator, on the other hand, is not able to presuppose the same for his/her audience.

Therefore, the translator is in a delicate position. If s/he assumes that the target text reader is an experienced scholar in Brazilian Human Sciences, s/he might overestimate the reader. In this case, the inexperienced reader in this field can get partly or totally lost. The target text would not fulfil its informative function. On the other hand, if the translator presupposes that the target text reader has scarce knowledge about Brazil, s/he can be more explicative. However, in this case, s/he may deceive more experienced readers.

Therefore, translators need to find a position for the target text. Perhaps journals can help them to describe an idealized target audience in accordance with the author's and the journal's expectations. We believe that the translator must interfere and explain when dealing with cultural references in academic texts. Even if this underestimates some readers, at least the target text has more chance to meet with its textual function: be informative and argumentative. The case studied in this article shows that most of the time the translator was concerned with readers unfamiliar with Brazilian history, but not always.

With regard to the author's discourse, translators may interfere in the text information as we saw in this paper. This interference depends on several variables: the translator's own knowledge of the subject, how the translator believes that a piece of information should be represented in the target text or, in worse cases, the translator's attempt to be 'faithful' to the text – and perhaps betray his/her reader.

Interferences such as the ones analysed in the last section also lead us to question if the translator actually wanted to avoid taking the responsibility for strong statements, as he might have not really believed in them. Our position on this attitude is that interfering can be legitimate as long as the original author is aware of these changes. As these texts are often translated soon after their publication in the original language, translator and author can discuss the text. Some issues may be important for the translator during the translation process, others can be crucial for the author's discourse. Hence, translators are potential peer-reviewers, especially those who are

academics themselves, such as the translator of the text we studied in this article.

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165