

# **The Importance of Economic Factors in Translation Publication: an Example from Brazil**

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## **Introduction**

This paper will examine the importance of economic factors in the production of translated works in Brazil, initially concentrating on the period from 1930 to 1945, then contrasting these years with the 1945 to 1950 period, then looking at the time of the Juscelino Kubitschek presidency from 1956 to 1961, and the years following the military coup of 1964. It ends by proposing that these factors can be included in the polysystem model of Itamar Even-Zohar and the concept of norms, as proposed by Gideon Toury.

The economic area is one which has been almost totally ignored by Translation Studies scholars. In his Introduction to *Sociocultural Aspects of Translating and Interpreting* (Pym 2006), Anthony Pym laments the lack of studies in this area: “It is surprising, in this respect, to see how rarely economic factors are cited in our studies [...]” (Pym 2006: 12). A number of the papers in the volume tangentially mention economic factors. In “Translation from the point of view of the East German censorship files” (Pym 2006: 53-64), Gaby Thomson-Wohlgemuth begins to examine the importance of financial factors in translations made by East German publishers. One of the main problems in publishing translations was that they would drain much-needed foreign currency. Publishers were allocated a certain budget by the state and had to make the best use of their resources. Contracts were often favoured with foreign publishers which would publish East German titles, thus avoiding this problem. However, this is not the focus of the essay, and this point is never developed. Other articles in the same volume merely touch on financial factors: Michaela Wolf, examining “The female state of the art: Women in the translation field” (Pym 2006: 130-141), points out that “most women publishers own small publishing houses (about 95 percent)” (Pym 2006: 138) and have less economic capital, tending to work “to the point of total exhaustion” (Pym 2006: 138). Stella Linn analyses “Trends in the translation of a minority language: The Case of Dutch” (Pym 2006: 27-39) and points out that one of the main factors in deciding whether publishers will publish a Dutch work is whether funding is available. Both the Netherlands and Flanders have funding bodies which subsidize up to 70% of the translation costs.

Gideon Toury, when discussing the growth of the translation market in Hebrew following the establishment of Israel in 1947, does not touch on the importance of finance or economic policy (Toury 1980: 122-139). Neither does Even-Zohar mention economic factors as influencing translations in the literary polysystem (in Venuti 2000: 192-197).

So it seems this is something of a blind area, an aporia, in Translation Studies. I hope this study can be considered an initial step in considering this very important factor.

### **Brazil in the 1930s**

The first period I shall examine is Brazil in the 1930s and 1940s, a period of considerable social, economic and political upheaval, which saw the beginning of the transformation of Brazil from a country which depended almost exclusively on coffee as its main export into an industrial society where coffee was no longer king.

In the pre-1930 period economic policy was dominated by the “café com leite” [“coffee and milk”] policy in which the powerful states of São Paulo (coffee) and Minas Gerais (milk) dominated policy and had a gentlemen’s agreement to alternate presidents.

The whole Brazilian economy was dominated by coffee exports, which accounted for up to 80% of total exports. Coffee producers were paid a minimum price for coffee, resulting in over-production. Coffee was exported almost exclusively to Europe and North America, and Brazil imported the great majority of its industrialized goods. In order to maintain these markets open to Brazilian coffee, low tariffs were placed on industrial goods coming into Brazil. Furthermore, the Brazilian currency, the mil-réis, was maintained at an artificially high rate: Colombian and Kenyan coffee was not yet competitive, and as Brazilian industry was so limited and was not competing on international markets it did not need a low exchange rate.

Defenders of this policy believed that Brazil should remain an export-driven country; attempts at industrialization would only result in wasting resources on setting up industries with poor productivity which could never compete with their European or North American counterparts. Far better concentrate on producing coffee.

As was the case with other industrially produced goods, the book market in Brazil was dominated by books produced abroad, especially in France and Portugal (see Tables 1 and 2), which were actually cheaper and of better quality than books produced in Brazil.

The 1929 Wall St. crash greatly reduced the price of coffee and showed the folly of Brazil's dependence on a single product and the unconditional support of the coffee barons. In addition, in 1929 President Washington Luis nominated another São Paulo politician, Julio Prestes, as the candidate of the São Paulo Republican Party (PRP) for the 1930 national elections in order to defend the powerful coffee producing oligarchy in São Paulo. This lost him the support of the powerful Minas Republican Party, who began to plot with the gaucho military leaders from the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul. Prestes won the March election but was accused of fraud and deposed by the Rio Grande do Sul and Minas Gerais alliance, which gained the support of the majority of the military.

After the bloodless 1930 October Revolution, through which the gaucho politician Getúlio Vargas, from Rio Grande do Sul, became President as leader of the Aliança Liberal party, many of the many of the economic policies of the previous government were reversed. Protection was taken away from the coffee producers, and coffee would never regain its dominance of the Brazilian economy. The mil-réis was devalued; tariffs were placed on imported goods, including books; and priority was given to the development of national industry.

As a result, the number of publishers entering the market and the number of books printed in Brazil grew rapidly. Indeed, as can be seen in Table 1, in the 1930s, Brazil was actually exporting books to Portugal for the first time.

The government also took measures to help the book industry such as a reform of basic education which resulted in greater demand for school textbooks; the Instituto Nacional do Livro was set up by the Getúlio Vargas government to improve the distribution of books to public libraries. It reissued out-of-print classic Brazilian works and planned to publish the Enciclopédia Brasileira, a project which was based on the Italian encyclopaedia, Triccani, which had been published under the auspices of Mussolini. However, this final project never got off the ground.

Translations of successful literary works were usually a sound investment. If the work was in the public domain: royalties were zero, and the chances of the foreign work being accepted by the Brazilian public which had always looked abroad were much better than those of a book written by an unknown Brazilian author.

Furthermore, the hardening of the Vargas regime and the proclamation of the *Estado Novo* at the end of 1937, proscribing the Communist Party and toughening the censorship of books, meant translations were a safer option for many houses.

Another factor that encouraged publishers to translate foreign works was the precarious copyright situation of the period. Copyright laws were frequently infringed, thus allowing for multiple translations of the same volume, which could be aimed at different markets

High tariffs enabled Brazilian publishers to start up and flourish. But the equation is slightly more complicated. In 1918, Monteiro Lobato, when he was beginning his publishing career, criticized the Brazilian government for the low tariffs on imported books, whereby imported books were often cheaper than their Brazilian counterparts, and, through a special agreement and a need to supply the small market for technical and scientific works, all books imported from Portugal were untaxed. As a publisher, Lobato naturally wished his books to compete favourably with imported works and favoured high tariffs on imported works. However, he was at the same time in favour of low tariffs on imported paper. The fledgling Brazilian paper industry, which had a powerful lobby, needed to import expensive machinery and cellulose and did not have the techniques to produce high quality paper. So Lobato wanted cheaper and better quality imported paper but did not want the competition of cheap imported books. However, his wishes were not granted, and he had to make do with the poor quality Brazilian paper.

Adriana Pagano (Pagano 2001) details the growth of a number of important private publishing houses in both countries were established during the 1930s in both Argentina and Brazil: Editora Globo, Companhia Editora Nacional, Martins, and José Olympio in Brazil, and Sudamericana, Losada, Emecé, and Claridad in Argentina.

The period from 1930 to 1950 saw both in Brazil and Argentina a growing process of

industrialization and urbanization. The labour market was expanding, allowing for a rise in the purchasing power of those who had hitherto had little access to consumer goods. A rise in people's personal income therefore meant a rise in consumption. The changes in the educational policies adopted by the government to improve basic education and literacy already mentioned led to a rising number of literate people and hence of potential readers of books and magazines. Other sources of consumption involved new forms of mass media such as the cinema and the radio.

Both in Argentina and Brazil a large number of collections were issued, appealing to the new lower-middle-class reader who possessed little cultural capital, and who did not know foreign languages. The books translated and published for this new reader were generally for leisure purposes, often tie-ins with Hollywood films, in addition to feuilleton novels, translated soap opera scripts, adapted screenplays, comics and cartoons. A large number of collections were published in both countries with titles like "Grandes Novelistas" [Great Novel Writers], "Grandes Ensaístas" [Great Essayists], "Os Grandes Livros Brasileiros" [Great Brazilian Books], "Obras Primas Universais" [Universal Masterpieces], "Novelistas Americanos Contemporâneos" [Contemporary Novel Writers of the Americas], "Biblioteca de Obras Famosas" [Library of Famous Books]. Each collection often brought together a wide variety of authors. For example, the Brazilian collections "Biblioteca dos Séculos" [Library of the Centuries] or "Coleção Globo" [Globo Collection], published by Globo, and "Fogos Cruzados" [Cross-fire], published by José Olympio in Rio de Janeiro, include authors such as Montaigne, Laclos, Stendhal, Flaubert, Maupassant, Verlaine, Balzac, Plato, Shakespeare, Fielding, Emily Brontë, Dickens, Nietzsche, Tolstoy and Poe.

Such collections could be very profitable for the publishing houses, as the purchaser of the initial volume in the series was naturally induced to buy the second volume, and so on. It is also a form of introducing an assembly line Fordism into the book industry. The collection may also classify authors in a very different way to that which is conventionally used, and will plan the readers' reception and organize their expectations of the text. Once the work is translated it becomes part of the national language and culture. The collections launched in Brazil played an important role in establishing the currency of Brazil on the international intellectual market. A number of collections are devoted to Brazilian subjects: "Biblioteca Pedagógica Brasileira" [Brazilian Pedagogical Library], which includes the famous series "Brasileira" [Brazilian], "Grandes Livros do Brasil" [Great Brazilian Books], "Biblioteca

Médica Brasileira” [Brazilian Medical Library], all published by Companhia Editora Nacional, or “Os Grandes Livros Brasileiros” [Great Brazilian Books] published by José Olympio. These collections were published alongside other series made up mostly of translated texts, such as the collections “Paratodos” [Forall], “Terramarear” [Landseaandair], “Biblioteca das Moças” [Library for Young Ladies], all published by Companhia Editora Nacional. José Olympio, for example, issued the collections “Documentos Brasileiros” [Brazilian Documents] and “Os Grandes Livros Brasileiros” [Great Brazilian Books] together with other series such as “Rubáiyát, Jóias da Poesia Universal” [Rubáiyát, Gems of World Poetry] or “Fogos Cruzados” [Cross-fire], both mainly made up of translated foreign texts. Martins, for instance, launched the collections “Biblioteca Histórica Brasileira” [Brazilian Historical Library] and “Biblioteca de Literatura Brasileira” [Brazilian Literary Library] alongside a collection labelled “Excelsior”, mostly containing translated books. Indeed, Lia Wyler even calls the 1942-47 period, when Editora Globo published a large number of high-quality translations in its Biblioteca dos Séculos and Coleção Nobel series, often made outstanding literary figures such as poets Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Mário Quintana, Manuel Bandeira and critic Sérgio Milliet, as the “Golden Age” of Translation in Brazil (Wyler 2003: 129).

In this section I have focused on the relationship between government economic policy and the number of published translations. High tariff barriers resulted in expensive imported French and Portuguese books. Many new Brazilian publishing companies started up, and as seen above, a large number of translations were published. Tariff barriers protect local industry against outside competition. Such competition may in the long run be beneficial to improving the competitiveness and productivity of local industry, but, in a developing economy, high tariffs are necessary to get local industry off the ground, as was the case in Brazil in the 1930s. And publishing popular translated works is a way in which a fledgling publishing house can begin to stand on its own feet, particularly if they do not pay or have to pay royalties. I therefore propose that there is a strong relationship between high tariff barriers and the number of translations published, particularly in an incipient industrial economy. We may even consider this a translation norm: high tariff barriers will generally result in an increase in the number of domestic translations published.

The Golden Age of translation in Brazil can be contrasted with the open door policies pursued after the downfall of Vargas in 1945, when, in the post-war period, economic policy was

reversed to please the coffee exporters once again, imported books in a number of areas received preferential tariffs, and, in many cases, were actually sold at a lower cost in Brazil than in their country of origin. Right through the 1950s imported books were sold at a preferential dollar rate which ranged from 33% to 60% of the official dollar rate, with the result that it was cheaper to import books than paper on which to print books. As translation rights had to be paid at the official dollar exchange rate, it was much cheaper to import a translation made in Portugal than to buy the rights in Brazil and to carry out the translation in Brazil. Obviously, this period slowed growth in the Brazilian publishing industry, particularly in the area of translations, and Brazilian books became too expensive in Portugal. This policy would remain in place until 1959 (Hallewell 434 *passim*).

Yet despite these disadvantageous conditions, this was a period of growth in the translation market in Brazil. The “developmentalist” programme of President Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira (1956-1961) was to “concentrate fifty years of progress in five”, with a programme of rapid industrialization and construction of infrastructure. Such a programme would require the translation and publication of a large number of manuals and technical works. From 1956 to 1968 6,615 translations were published; and from 1970 to 1980 this figure grew to 34,102 translations.

### **Brazil after the 1964 Military Coup**

The next period I shall examine in the post-1964 period, that of the Brazilian economic “miracle”, when economic growth averaged at over 10% per annum from 1968 to 1973 (Diniz Alves 2006). Brazil leapt into the league of industrial nations and has remained there, though this excessively rapid growth produced a number of problems: high inflation, a huge external debt, and unruly urban growth. This was also the time of military rule, when President João Goulart was ousted on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1964 for leaning too far to the left, allowing the economy to fall into chaos. Many feared he would then stage a left-wing coup and follow Fidel Castro’s path. He also lost the sympathy of military and was replaced by General Castelo Branco. Moderates hoped for a quick return to civilian rule after a “corrective” period, but a hardline coup in December 1968 resulted in a period of severe repression and censorship between the end of 1968 and the mid-seventies, particularly during the government of President Emílio Garrastazu Médici (1970-74). During this period the press was censored, and books on the

USSR or socialist themes could not be published. Yet it was a period during which the publishing industry developed at a rapid rate, experiencing its own “miracle”. In 1960 0.5 books per inhabitant were published; and in 1980 this had risen to two books per inhabitant, a 400% growth in the space of 20 years, a rate higher than that of the rest of the economy, which tripled in size.

In this period the book market was dominated by imports from the US. Table 3 shows that some 50% of all imported books came from the US, which had now definitely replaced France as the major cultural force in Brazil. But many books published in Brazil were translations of American originals. The MEC-SNEL-USAiD treaty for Cooperation for Technical, Scientific and Educational Publications, signed on 6 January 1967, resulted in the Brazilian publishing market being flooded with publications of American writers. In other words, the diffusion of these works now definitely became the object of the public policy of Brazilian government. According to this treaty, 51 million translations of books originally published in the US would be used in the Brazilian school system in a period of three years, beginning in 1967. While MEC (Ministry of Education and Culture) and SNEL (National Union of Book Publishers) carried out the policy, the USAiD (United States Agency for International Development) personnel kept the control of technical details of the manufacture the books, like the production, illustrations, editing and distribution, besides the supervision of the process of acquisition of copyrights. In fact, the predecessor of USAiD, USIA (United States Information Agency) already had a foot in the door in the 1950s, “helping out” the Brazilian publishing industry, which, as seen above, was going through a rough time, supplying original texts, obtaining translation rights and even supplying translations and helping towards production costs (Hallewell 434 *passim*).

Houses like McGraw Hill were particularly active, publishing translated textbooks in areas such as business, economics, medicine and engineering. With the Cold War and Cuba taking the path towards Communism, Latin America in the 1960s was a priority area for the US, and no effort or money would be spared to prevent another country in the US backyard from jumping the fence, to win hearts and minds and to inculcate an American mode of thinking into students and the technical and administrative classes in Brazil.

The enormous growth in the publishing industry in Brazil during the “Miracle” years was similar to that of Brazilian industry in general and was not hampered by the prohibition on



publishing left-wing works. This was fuelled by the support from USAiD, with its very clear political agenda, supporting a large number of translations of American works. Here then, we find the political influencing the economic.

Yet during the very same years, a large number of translations of American poets were published. These were basically from two groups: firstly the American modernists: Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound; and the Beat poets, Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Gregory Corso, also Charles Bukowski. Pound's innovations and the importance he gave translation were inspirational to Haroldo and Augusto de Campos; and the Beats provided an outlet for the muted protest possible in Brazil. As Itamar Even-Zohar pointed out (in Venuti 2000: 192-197), translations mainly perform a conservative role in the literary polysystem but may also take on a radical and reforming role. This is a good example.

Again, in this second example we see that the growth of the book industry accompanying that of the Brazilian economy in general, even exceeding it. Translation plays a major role in this growth and is particularly influenced by the USAiD programme

## **Conclusions**

This paper has made a number of proposals that would need to be confirmed by further studies. I have suggested a close link between high tariff barriers in a recently industrialized economy and a sharp increase in the publication of translations. The link between these factors in countries other than Brazil should be compared with my findings on Brazil. As seen above, Adriana Pagano linked the 1930s and 1940s growth in publishing in Brazil and Argentina. Due to considerable censorship in Franco's Spain, its weak economy, and the growth of the Argentine economy and its relatively more liberal regimes, the centre of publishing in the Hispanic world moved to Buenos Aires in this period. A more detailed study examining publishing trends and translations would be of great interest.

Another project would be a closer examination of the economic factors which restricted the publication of translations in the old Soviet block, developing the points which Gaby Thomson-Wohlgemuth introduces. In fact I know of no study on the economic factors of publishing translations within specific publishing houses.

The USAiD programme in Brazil has been criticized by José Oliveira Arapiraca in *A USAID e a educação brasileira: um estudo a partir de uma abordagem crítica da teoria do capital humano* (1982); Ted Goertzel in his essay “MEC-USAID: ideologia de desenvolvimento americano aplicado à educação superior brasileira” (1967), and Márcio Moreira Alves in *O beabá dos MEC-USAID* (1968), but none of these studies analyse specific translations carried out inside the programme. And did the USAiD programme influence translations in other countries? I pointed to the fact that the USAiD programme subsidized the translation and publication of a large number of academic textbooks in Brazil. The study of the translation and adaptation of academic textbooks is another aporia in Translation Studies. The article by Akiko Uchiyama in *Agents of Translation* (forthcoming) examines the geography textbook, *Sekai kunizukushi* (1869) [Nations around the world], which was translated and adapted from a number of British and American textbooks in Japan in the Meiji period by the well-known journalist, Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901). *Sekai kunizukushi*, which was extremely popular with over a million copies printed and was a set school textbook, had a strong slant emphasizing Japanese superiority over their Asian neighbours, China and Korea. The book involves representation of the civilized West and uncivilized others, presenting Western civilization as Japan’s goal, on the one hand, whilst containing references such as “despotic China” and “savage Africa”, on the other. Uchiyama stresses the influence this textbook had on generations of Japanese schoolchildren. More studies would be very welcome.

Finally, it would be of great interest to take another look at the groundbreaking work carried out by Even-Zohar and Toury from the economic point of view. Toury refers to the increase in translations from English in the post Second World War period (Toury 1980: 138). To what extent what was this the result of financial support from international Jewish organizations, especially from the US? Are there certain similarities between the situation in Brazil in the 1930s which I described and that in Israel: a country developing its industrial economy, of which the publishing is part. Even-Zohar and Toury both emphasize the important role of translations in many areas of the Hebrew literary polysystem. Above I pointed to a possible norm in that tariff barriers in a protected growing economy will result in an increase in the number of translations published. I suggest that this make also be the case of the post Second World War Israeli economy.

Table 1: Commerce of Books between Brazil and Portugal. Adapted from Hallewell p.296-297

Year	Imported from Portugal			Exported to Portugal		
	Volume kg	Value US\$	%	Volume kg	Value US\$	%
1927	131,398	\$113,148	16.7	-	-	-
1928	154,367	\$131,601	17.3	3,935	\$2,994	27.9
1929	145,972	\$145,972	14.3	441	\$443	6.0
1930	96,638	\$53,965	11.1	2,134	\$969	15.5
1931	72,202	\$53,416	14.5	1,010	\$1,114	31.8
1932	41,685	\$28,239	11.1	4,221	\$1,187	22.0
1933	67,191	\$62,182	20.6	16,280	\$6,375	72.6
1934	80,032	63,864	18.7	29,424	\$9,263	79.3

Table 2: Importation of books from France. Adapted from Hallewell, pp. 328-329

Year	Volume	Value US\$	% of all imports – weight	% of all imports - value
1910	457,732	\$404,856	52.4	53.7
1915	268,223	\$236,026	36.2	46.1
1920	324,901	\$251,533	36.2	34.5
1925	335,801	\$202,032	44.8	36.7
1930	210,048	\$147,099	31.3	29.6
1932	97,779	\$91,042	19.8	33.9
1935	38,689	\$70,903	9.5	25.0
1939	36,123	\$47,131	7.9	11.6
1940	6,46	\$7,545	1.5	1.8
1943	0	0	0	0
1945	0	0	0	0
1946	48,441	\$95,383	5.9	5.2
1949	82,260	\$151,502	9.1	11.1
1950	162,957	\$282,290	17.5	21.2
1955	370,134	\$1,463,299	18.6	20.1
1960	131,223	\$507,416	8.5	9.3
1965	91,847	\$467,341	7.5	8.2
1970	112,560	\$546,540	4.6	5.9
1975	152,278	\$1,166,123	3.2	5.3
1980	67,983	\$1,082,820	1.4	3.2

Table 3: Imports of books from UK and US. Adapted from Hallewell, pp. 400-403

1915	UK 44.44t US 80.36t	6.8% 12.3%	\$24,326 \$39,657	4.8% 7.7%
1920	UK 33.38t US 245.14t	3.7% 27.3%	\$51,465 \$235,312	7.1% 31.3%
1925	UK 40.31t US 126.55t	5.4% 16.9%	\$49,268 \$108,998	9.0% 20.0%
1930	UK 30.43t US 111.80t	4.5% 16.7%	\$40,915 \$85,691	8.5% 17.2%
1935	UK 23.96t US 85.73t	5.9% 21.1%	\$33,690 \$70,878	11.9% 25%
1940	UK 31.60t US 109.00t	7.5% 25.9%	\$42,457 \$142,792	10.1% 34.0%
1945	UK 26.14t US 294.26t	3.6% 40.4%	\$88,139 \$580,644	5.5% 36.4%
1950	UK 51.21t US 309.82t	5.5% 33.3%	\$65,041 \$415,718	4.9% 31.2%
1955	UK 92.71t US 423.00t	4.7% 21.2%	\$271,796 \$1,463,299	3.7% 25.6%
1961	UK 76.15t US 344.89t	3.7% 18.8%	\$289,747 \$1,667,255	5.6% 32%
1965	UK 53.99t US 446.27t	4.4% 36.6%	\$250,266 \$2,957,396	4.4% 52.0%
1970	UK 92.43t US 4,606,872t	3.8% 37.6%	\$397,522 \$4,605,872	3.8% 49.8%
1975	UK 251.09t US 1,744,28t	5.2% 36.1%	\$1,855,994 \$6,717,365	8.4% 30.6%
1979	UK 314,517t US 1,571,631t	5.6% 27.8%	\$3,282,162 \$14,373,455	9.0% 39.2%

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