# THE REPRESENTATION OF FOREGROUND AND BACKGROUND IN FRENCH, ENGLISH, AND GERMAN TRANSLATIONS OF JORGE AMADO'S NOVEL *GABRIELA*

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**Resumo**

    *Após uma breve explanação sobre os problemas da tradução e a sua importância para a comparação entre diferentes línguas, discutiremos, nas quatro línguas analisadas, tanto a estrutura de textos narrativos assim como a expressão e a função das categorias lingüísticas de tempo, de aspecto e de „aktionsart" (caráter aspectual dos verbos). O aspecto gramatical e lexical (assim como também o tempo verbal) são essenciais para a mudança entre a „ação" e o „cenário", i.é, entre o primeiro plano da narrativa , a ação propriamente dita, e as passagens mais descritivas, que contêm a informação secundária em volta da ação. Ao analisarmos as traduções para o francês, o inglês e o alemão do romance „Gabriela, cravo e canela", de Jorge Amado, mostraremos que estas fazem uso, em larga escala, de um conjunto de recursos lingüísticos a fim de dar conta das funções da distinção aspectual em português entre o pretérito perfeito e o imperfeito. Para tanto, usaremos algumas passagens de ação e de fundo escolhidas de um capítulo deste romance. Gostaríamos de referir, no entanto, que as traduções não são nem equivalentes entre si, nem completamente equivalentes ao original.*

**Palavras-Chave:** *tradução; textos narrativos; tempo; aspecto e* aktionsart.

**Abstract**

    *After a brief discussion of the problems of translation on the one hand and its interest for the comparison of languages on the other, the structure of narrative texts as well as the expression and function of the linguistic categories of tense, aspect, and* aktionsart *(aspectual character of verbs) in the four languages involved will be dealt with. Grammatical and lexical aspect (as well as tense) are essential for shifting between foreground and background, i.e. between the forward moving skeleton of the narrative and more descriptive sections containing secondary information surrounding the foreground. It will be shown that the translators of Jorge Amado´s novel* Gabriela, cravo e canela *make use of a whole scale of linguistic resources in the target languages French, English, and German for rendering the functions of the Portuguese aspectual distinction perfective/imperfective in some foregrounded and backgrounded passages chosen from one chapter of this novel. Still, the translations are neither fully equivalent to the original nor to each other.*

**Keywords:** *translation; narrative texts; tense; aspect; and* aktionsart.

## 1 TRANSLATION – AN UTOPIAN ENDEAVOUR?

    In the very title of his famous essay *Miseria y esplendor de la traducción* (1937), Ortega y Gasset states the aporia of this "utopian endeavour". While "stressing the impossibility of translation" he does "not thereby deny the sensibleness of this activity." In a more recent paper, Borst and Motsch (1986) put forward two contrasting hypotheses claiming (1) that the specific formal means of one language are not translatable into other languages, but that a mere approximation to them can at best be reached and (2) that "a conceptual structure which can be expressed in a natural language, is also expressible in any other language" (p. 168). Whether one wants to follow the conclusion drawn by the authors that "in view of the actual state of our linguistic knowledge it is advisable ... to abandon the assumption of a universal translatability of natural languages" (p. 185) or

not, translation is necessary. It has been done and is being done when people of different mother tongues who do not possess a common language get into contact or when they want to be able to read the major literary works of another culture.

As de Saussure has taught us, languages are not *nomenclatures*. Rather, cultures differ in the way they conceptualize reality in order to express it verbally.[2] If languages do not furnish linguistic expressions for the same concepts, how then is translation from one language into another possible? Many linguists are convinced that although languages are not isomorphic, they are nevertheless functionally equivalent. This postulate seems all the more difficult to defend the more distant the cultures of source and target languages are. Thus, translating the works of Jorge Amado from Portuguese into, say Dyirbal, an Australian aboriginal language, would certainly be much more difficult than to translate them into French, German, or English. In spite of the fact that Portuguese, French, English, and German all belong to the family of Indo-European languages and are spoken by people whose cultures are closely related, they differ in important ways, not only in the lexicon, but also in their temporal and aspectual systems, with which this paper will be especially concerned. As far as the translations of Amado´s novel *Gabriela, cravo e canela* into three other ie. languages are concerned, even a cursory glance at some short passages will show that the French, English, and German translations are neither fully equivalent to the original nor to each other. To read the chronicle of Bahia in Portuguese is not the same as to read it in either one of the other three languages. By studying translations of their literary works into foreign languages, speakers of Portuguese can gain a deeper understanding of how things are expressed in their native language. As Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said: "He who has not studied foreign languages does not know anything about his mother tongue."

The writer of the novel *Gabriela* has based himself on the whole gamut of the lexical and grammatical resources of Portuguese and has made his choices in order to fulfill the narrative function. The task of a translator does not merely consist in transferring form-content pairs of the source language to their counterparts in a specific target language on the basis of the extralinguistic *tertium comparationis* of the conceptual structure to be expressed. As is the case for the writer of the original, the translator must also choose among a set of options offered by the target language for expressing conceptual structure in a given communicative context (Seiler 1986:8f.). As I stated in Stephany (1987:2),

> the instance of translating from one language into another not only offers a particularly clear example of a user of a language, namely the translator, choosing among different linguistic techniques for expressing meaning, but at the same time, the comparison of a text in the source language with its translation into the goal language allows the linguist to gain insight into the set of techniques available in the two languages.

To quote Ortega once more: "The problem of translation, if we only pursue it a little, does indeed lead us to the innermost secrets of this wonderful phenomenon which language is." The study of translational equivalents allows one to compare the lexical and grammatical systems of languages not in the abstract as it were, but on the basis of the functional equivalence of linguistic techniques in a given communicative context. Thus, to study the particular relation which exists between an original and its translational equivalent, namely that of having a common *repraesentandum* and fulfilling common contextual functions, may serve as a heuristic device for comparing the scale of linguistic devices offered by the languages in question (Stephany 1987:2). In a comparison of an English translation of some passages of the Greek novel *Víos ke politía tu Aléksi Zorbá* [*Zorba the Greek*] by Nikos Kazantzakis, it was found that no less than 19 different types of linguistic devices were used for rendering the meanings of four Greek classes of finite verb forms, namely the perfective past (*aóristos*), imperfective past (*paratatikós*) and the perfective and imperfective subjunctive (Stephany 1987).

Since every language possesses an entire set of expressive options and the translator actively chooses among these, there will always be more than one possible translation of a given text into one and the same target language (Stephany 1987:2). Also, a translation never constitutes a duplicate of the original (Ortega 1937).

After an introduction to the main characteristics of narrative structure (§ 2), the relevant parts of the temporal and aspectual systems of Portuguese, French, English, and German will be compared (§ 3). In the main section of the paper, the French, English, and German translational equivalents of the Portuguese perfective and imperfective past will be studied (§ 4). It will be maintained that in order to understand the functional load of grammatical categories, contrastive analyses must go beyond the comparison of isolated linguistic forms and take their contextual use into consideration.

## 2 NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Translation can only be done in context. When translating of narratives, the characteristics of narrative structure have to be taken into consideration. Narratives involve a

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[2] See Slobin (1996) on "thinking for speaking".

storyteller, a topic, and an addressee (Toolan 1991:2). While in oral narratives both teller and addressee are present at the same time and in the same place, in written narratives the teller is absent. Since narratives are "essentially a way of linguistically representing past experience, whether real or imagined" (Traugott/Pratt 1980:248), the topic of narratives is distant. This narrative feature is explicitly mentioned in the subtitle of the novel *Gabriela,* "Crônica de uma cidade do interior."

According to Toolan (1991:7), a narrative may be defined as "a perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events." Narratives depend both on the storyteller for constructing the narrative in such a way that it can be perceived by an addressee as a coherent text and on the addressee who must be able and willing to perceive it as a sequence of coherent events.

Comparing narrative analysis to the endeavour of structuralist linguistic analysis to find "a principle of classification" for "the seemingly anarchical character of messages", Barthes (1966/1994:74f.) states: *Il y a un abîme entre l´aléatoire le plus complexe et la combinatoire la plus simple, et nul ne peut combiner (produire) un récit sans se référer à un système implicite d´unités et de règles.* It is the task of narrative theory or "the poetics of narrative" to study "the ground rules that shape all the productions" within narrative performance (Toolan 1991:9).

Already Aristotle noticed that narrative texts are distinguished from other representational texts by their temporal organization. Labov (1972:359f.) defines (personal) narratives as representing "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred." Basing himself on the conception that, in a narrative, "the clauses are characteristically ordered in temporal sequence," he defines "a *minimal narrative* as a sequence of two clauses which are *temporally ordered*: that is, a change in their order will result in a change in the temporal sequence of the original semantic interpretation" (p. 360).

Narratives corresponding to this scheme represent what Benveniste (1959/1966:238f.) has called *histoire* and belong to the level of *énonciation historique* (as opposed to the level of *discours*). In the type of *énonciation historique* "les événements sont posés comme ils se sont produits à mesure qu´ils apparaissent à l´horizon de l´histoire. Personne ne parle ici; les événements semblent se raconter eux-mêmes" (p. 241). The level of *fabula* (early Russian formalists), *histoire,* or *story* has to be distinguished from that of *sjuzhet, discours*, or *discourse* (Toolan 1991:9). The latter denote "all the techniques that authors bring to bear in their varying manner of presentation of the basic story" (Toolan 1991:10). One of them is that "the events are arranged in a sequence which can differ from the chronological sequence" (Bal 1985:7, quoted in Toolan 1991:47). This is a very important characteristic of *Gabriela*. Even a cursory look at the novel

shows that there are many *anachronies* between the assumed sequence of events in the story and their order of presentation in the text. There seem to be especially many so-called *analepses*, i.e. flashbacks or retroversions (Genette 1980; see Toolan 1991:50).

An important characteristic of narratives concerns their anchoring in context. Unlike non-narrative discourse, narratives are not anchored in the extralinguistic context in which speaker and hearer find themselves but in the surrounding linguistic context. While in non-narrative texts we find exophora, i.e. deixis to the speech situation, in narrative texts there is endophora, discourse deixis (Hickmann 1995:196). In the domain of temporality, exophoric deictic devices locate denoted situations in relation to the speech situation while endophoric uses establish links between ongoing and preceding or subsequent utterances (Hickmann 1995:197). Linguistic devices which serve to locate situations in time are the tenses of the verb and connectives like *depois/ent©o, enquanto, quando.*

According to Hickmann (1995:198), "endophoric uses are intrinsic to the construction of *discourse cohesion*, in particular when speakers must rely maximally on language use in the absence of relevant mutual background knowledge." This is typically the case in narrative texts such as novels. Halliday and Hasan (1976:4) describe "cohesion", which "refers to relations of meaning that exist within a text, and that define it as a text", as follows:

> *Cohesion occurs where the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one PRESUPPOSES the other in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded, except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into a text.*

In the absence of relevant extralinguistic context, it is especially important to distinguish between given and new information. In the domain of reference, adequate linguistic means must be chosen for referent introduction and reference maintenance or referent re-introduction. Thus, *when speakers cannot assume that their interlocutors know about a particular referent, they must first introduce this entity in discourse by means of linguistic devices that do not presuppose existence and identity* (Hickmann 1995:198).

One of the most important characteristics of narrative structure is the distinction between foreground and background, i.e. between main information in focus and secondary information. Hopper (1979:213) reminds us that *it is evidently a universal of narrative discourse that in any extended text an overt distinction is made between the language of the actual story line and the language of supportive material which does not itself narrate the main events.*

Those parts of the narrative "which relate events belonging to the skeletal structure of the discourse" – are referred to as foreground and the latter as background. According to Hickmann (1995:199)

> *utterances belonging to the foreground correspond to the skeleton of the narrative, i.e. to the chronologically ordered main events that constitute the time line and make the plot line move forward, whereas backgrounded ones need not be chronologically ordered (simultaneity or overlap) and they tend to correspond to secondary information surrounding the foreground.*

Foregrounded situations are characterized by Fleischman (1990:24) as endowed "with a certain wholeness - a figure seen against a ground." Linguistic devices for distinguishing between foreground and background are tense and aspect, subordination, word order, and voice. In this paper, I will be especially concerned with the role of temporal and aspectual categories for fulfilling the grounding function.

## 3 TENSE, ASPECT, AND *AKTIONSART*

The grammatical categories of tense and aspect and their interaction with *aktionsart*, i.e. lexical aspect or the intrinsic aspectual semantics of the verb, are crucial for determining whether a clause appears on the time line and is therefore foregrounded or not.

While tense relates an expressed situation to some temporal point of reference, aspect and *aktionsart* serve to express the internal temporal constituency of situations. Tense "involves at least two moments in time (which may coincide wholly or in part)" (Fleischman 1990:15).[3] It is typically a deictic category relating the situation expressed to the speech event. In contrast, aspect is neither relational nor deictic: "It is not concerned with relating the *time* of a situation to any other time point, but rather with how the speaker chooses to profile the situation" (Fleischman 1990:19). Aspect and *aktionsart* differ in that the former is an abstract grammatical category, while the latter is a semantic characteristic of verbs qua lexical items. Thus, a verb typically belongs to a certain *aktionsart* but may be used with different aspectual distinctions, such as perfective/imperfective and continuous/non-continuous (progressive/non-progressive). The most important lexical aspectual oppositions are stative/dynamic, telic/atelic, and punctual/durative.

Situations are typically conceptualized as having a left and right boundary, $B_1$ and $B_2$:

$$\text{——|————————————|————>}\ t$$
$$B_1 \qquad\qquad B_2$$

Breu (1985) and Sasse (1991) make use of these boundaries for distinguishing between different kinds of *aktionsart*. Stative verbs express situations without taking into consideration any temporal boundaries. In *José sabe o que dois e dois s©o quatro* only the fact of José's knowledge is expressed without taking into consideration the points in time when he came to acquire this knowledge or when he might no longer possess it. Dynamic verbs may take one or both of the two boundaries into consideration. Durative (dynamic) verbs express situations which are conceptualized as having a left and right boundary with the distance between them being long enough to be clearly perceivable (e.g. *correr*). Punctual verbs cover situations which are considered as momentaneous so that there is no clearly perceivable distance between $B_1$ and $B_2$ and only $B_2$ is important (e.g. *chegar*). While the situations expressed by telic (durative) verbs are conceptualized as having a natural righthand boundary or as striving toward a goal (e.g. *assassinar*), atelic verbs ('action verbs') express activities or processes not possessing such a natural endpoint (e.g. *comer*). The most important boundary for classifying situations as well as verbs is the righthand boundary $B_2$. While telic verbs have a natural end point, states and activities or processes do not. Punctual verbs are not telic, but (redundantly) bounded: they are conceptualized as consisting of $B_2$ only. The classes of bounded (telic, punctual) and unbounded (stative, atelic) verbs are important for distinguishing foregrounded from backgrounded information in the passages of *Gabriela* studied. Aspect interacts with *aktionsart* to fulfill this function.

While the grammatical system of Portuguese possesses both the grammatical aspectual distinctions perfective/imperfective and continuous/non-continuous, French and English only have the grammatical oppositions perfective/imperfective and continuous/noncontinuous, respectively (Table 1). In German, the category of aspect is not grammaticized; therefore, aspectual meanings must be expressed lexically (or syntactically). While in languages such as Russian and Greek the aspectual distinction perfective/imperfective is expressed separately from tense, in Portuguese and French it is fused with tense in the simple past forms.

Table 1 - Grammatical Aspect in Portuguese, French, English, and German

| Language\ Aspectual distinctions | Perfective/Imperfective | Continuous/ Noncontinuous |
|---|---|---|
| Portuguese | pretérito perfeito/imperfeito | *estar* + V/V |
| French | passé simple/imparfait | --- |
| English | --- | *be* + V/V |
| German | --- | --- |

According to Fleischman (1990:24), "the PFV [perfective – U.S.] aspect of the PRET [preterite – U.S.] is ide-

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[3] See also Reichenbach (1947/1966:287ff.).

ally suited to reporting experience that has been cognitively packaged into synthetic units amenable to representation as points along a time line." While the perfective past may be called an 'action' past, the imperfective past is the 'visualizing' or describing past (Fleischman 1990:28). It is therefore to be expected that, in narrative texts, the Portuguese *pretérito perfeito* as well as the French *passé simple* will be used for foregrounding while the Portuguese *pretérito imperfeito* and the French *imparfait* will serve the function of backgrounding.

# 4 TRANSLATIONAL EQUIVALENTS

The aim of the following analysis of some passages chosen from the novel *Gabriela* is to find out in which ways translators solve the problem of distinguishing foregrounded from backgrounded parts expressed by the Portuguese *pretérito perfeito* and *pretérito imperfeito* in each of the target languages French, English, and German. The passages included in the analysis are taken from the section *Da chegada do navio* of chapter 1, in which shifts between foregrounded and backgrounded information are especially important.[4]

In the four languages studied, the category of *aktionsart*, i.e. lexical aspect, plays an important role in fulfilling the grounding function irrespective of the grammatical opposition of perfective/imperfective aspect. As shown in table (2), the correspondence between *aktionsart* and foregrounding vs. backgrounding is (almost) complete for the classes of punctual, inchoative, telic, and stative verbs: While stative verbs are exclusively used for backgrounding, inchoative verbs, which conceptualize the lefthand boundary of a situation, as well as punctual and telic verbs, for which only the righthand boundary is important, only occur in foregrounded passages (with one exception for a telic verb in Portuguese). Only durative (atelic) action verbs render both backgrounded and foregrounded information, although they much more often occur in backgrounded passages.

**Table 2** - Grounding and aktionsart

| Language | FG/BG | Punctual | Inchoative | Telic | Action | Stative |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Portuguese | Foreground | 3[a] | - | 3 | 4 | - |
| | Background | - | - | 1 | 8 | 1 |
| French | Foreground | 4 | - | 7 | 3 | - |
| | Background | - | - | - | 12 | 1 |
| English | Foreground | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | - |
| | Background | - | - | - | 10 | 3 |
| German | Foreground | 4 | 2 | 6 | 5 | - |
| | Background | - | - | - | 9 | 1 |

In both Portuguese and French, which possess the grammatical distinction of perfective and imperfective aspect in the past tense, there is a perfect correspondence between foregrounding and the perfective past (Port. *pretérito perfeito*, French *passé simple*) on the one hand and between backgrounding and the imperfective past (Port. *pretérito imperfeito*, French *imparfait*) on the other (Table 3).

**Table 3** - Tense, aspect, aktionsart, and grounding

| Language | FG/BG | Aspect | Punctual | Inchoat. | Telic | Action | Stative |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Port. | Foregrnd. | Perfective | 3 | - | - | 4 | - |
| | Backgrn. | Imperfect. | - | - | 1 | 8 | 1 |
| French | Foregrnd. | Perfective | 4 | - | 7 | 3 | - |
| | Backgrnd. | Imperfect. | - | - | - | 12 | 1 |

In English and German, which lack the aspectual opposition perfective/imperfective in the past tense, the simple past occurs in both contexts (English *simple past*, German *Imperfekt*).[5] Lexical aspect (*aktionsart*) thus carries a heavier functional load for rendering the distinction between foregrounded and backgrounded information in English and German than in Portuguese and French. Due to the one-to-one correspondence between the *aktionsart* of the verb and the grounding function shown in table (2), foregrounded and backgrounded information are clearly distinguished with stative, punctual, inchoative, and telic verbs. With action verbs, which occur in both contexts, the grounding function may be unambiguously expressed by the grammatical aspectual distinction perfective/imperfective in both Portuguese and French. Since the English and German translators do not have this grammatical distinction at their disposal, they rely on other linguistic techniques, especially on lexical aspectual distinctions (*aktionsart*), for rendering backgrounded as opposed to foregrounded information. It is not surprising that, with action verbs, foregrounded and backgrounded information are not always unambiguously distinguished. While they occur in a backgrounding function most of the time, they are also quite likely to be used for foregrounding.

In English, one possibility for distinguishing between foregrounded and backgrounded predications containing action verbs is offered by the aspectual distinction continuous/noncontinuous. Being a continuous form, the progressive past offers itself for descriptive purposes and thus for rendering backgrounded information. Only two of the ten action verb tokens rendering backgrounded information are in the past continuous form in the English translation; they are translational equivalents of a finite past imperfective form

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(example 1) and a present participle construction (example 2), respectively.

(1) ENGL The ship´s engines <u>were straining</u> without success.
PORT As máquinas do navio <u>roncavam</u> sem sucesso.

(2) ENGL On the captain´s bridge a well-dressed young man ... <u>was trying</u> to identify friends on the shore.
PORT Na parte de comando surgiu um homem ainda jovem, bem vestido, ... <u>buscando</u> reconhecer amigos entre os espectadores.

In order to see how the translators solve the problem of distinguishing between foregrounded and backgrounded information in the respective languages, we will study in detail two passages in which the interplay between the imperfective and perfective aspect in the Portuguese original is especially revealing and the task of translating them into English and German is accordingly demanding. The first of these (example 3p[ortuguese]) describes the difficulties in which the ship finds herself when arriving in the harbour. Here Amado uses the imperfective past to depict what the people having gathered on the shore can see. The second predication, which is in the pluperfect, signals background information for the state of affairs being referred to. Passage (3p), which follows about half a page further down, furnishes background information to passage (4p), which is about the moment when the boat finally succeeds in breaking free of the sand. Here, one event follows the other and the writer uses the perfective past to move the plot line of the narrative forward. There is simultaneity only between the jerking of the ship and the passengers getting frightened, expressed by a present participle.

(3p) *POR: o navio sacudia-se,
*POR: o casco arrastava-se sôbre a areia,
*POR: os motores gemiam,
*POR: o prático gritava ordens.

(4p) *POR: o navio balançou violentamente,
*POR: assustando os passageiros,
*POR: a mulher soltou um pequeno grito,
*POR: o fundo desprendeu-se da areia,
*POR: um clamor alegre elevou-se de terra e de bordo.

The French translation closely corresponds to the Portuguese original formally: while passage (3p) is exclusively rendered by the *imparfait* (3f[rench]], the French version of passage (4p) is entirely in the *passé simple*. The translator even represents the passengers getting frightened as

subsequent to the jerking of the ship. This does not seem entirely wrong since the passengers' anguish is really a consequence of the sudden violent movement of the ship.

(3f) *FRE: le bateau tressaillait,
*FRE: sa coque traînait sur le sable,
*FRE: ses moteurs gémissaient,
*FRE: le pilote criait des ordres.

(4f) *FRE: le bateau roula violemment,
*FRE: les passagers prirent peur,
*FRE: la femme lâcha un petit cri,
*FRE: le fond de la coque se dégagea du sable,
*FRE: une clameur joyeuse s'éleva du rivage et du bord.

If the English versions of the two passages are considered in isolation, it is difficult to recognize that (3e[nglish]) is meant to represent backgrounded information. As far as the grammatical verb forms are concerned, this is at best hinted at by the present participle *dragging*. All the other verb forms are in the simple past, the same grammatical category which is used throughout in the foregrounded passage (4e). In these two passages the reader therefore has to rely on the intrinsic aspectual character of the verbs chosen in order to recognize that (3e) represents backgrounded and (4e) foregrounded information: While the verbs in (3e) may be taken as action verbs, those of (4e) are punctual. Use of the present participle *dragging* describing a durative atelic situation in (3e) helps the reader to interpret the entire sequence of predications as backgrounded, while the coordinate construction in (4e) points to the fact that it denotes a sequence of events and is foregrounded.

(3e) *ENG: the ship shuddered,
*ENG: dragging on the bottom,
*ENG: the engines roared,
*ENG: the pilot shouted orders.

(4e) *ENG: the ship jerked violently,
*ENG: the passengers looked frightened,
*ENG: the blond uttered a little cry,
*ENG: and the ship broke free of the mud.
*ENG: a joyful clamor arose on shore and on board.

There is no clear information on its being backgrounded in the German translation of (3p) either. Quite on the contrary, the singular subject of the first predication *durch das Schiff ging <u>eine Erschütterung</u>* ´through the ship went a vibration´ even leads the reader to infer that it is foregrounded.[6] As in the English version of this passage, the other three predications *sich durch den sand schieben* ´to drag through the sand´, *stöhnen* ´to groan´ (as opposed

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[6] A plural subject (*durch das Schiff gingen Erschütterungen*) would have shown that a durative situation was being described.

to the punctual verb *aufstöhnen*), *brüllen* ´shout´ lend themselves to a durative interpretation. This opposes them to the punctual verbs occurring in (4g[erman]) which suggest that the passage is foregrounded. The verbs *erzittern* ´to tremble´, *erschrecken* ´to startle´, *ertönen* ´to ring out´, and *aufschreien* ´to cry out´ are marked as punctual and are partly turned into inchoative verbs by the derivational prefixes *er-* and *auf-*. The translator stresses the punctuality of the event expressed by the reflexive verb *sich lösen* by adding the adverb *plötzlich* ,suddenly' which is absent from the Portuguese original. It seems that in the German translation, passages not explicitly marked as foregrounded by lexical means should be taken to be backgrounded.

(3g) *GER:  durch das schiff ging eine erschütterung,
    *GER:   der schiffsrumpf schob sich durch den sand,
    *GER:   die maschinen stöhnten,
    *GER:   der lotse brüllte kommandos.

(4g) *GER:  das schiff erzitterte.
    *GER:   einige passagiere erschraken.
    *GER:   die blonde frau schrie leise auf.
    *GER:   plötzlich löste sich der kiel von der sandbank.
    *GER:   freudige rufe ertönten an bord und an land.

Table 4 presents a summary of the main linguistic techniques used by the translators in the French, English, and German versions of the passages of the novel *Gabriela* studied in this paper to render the Portuguese verb forms of the *pretérito perfeito* and *pretérito imperfeito*, signaling foregrounded and backgrounded information of the narrative, respectively. The table is based on ten past perfective and eleven past imperfective verb forms of the Portuguese original.

**Table 4** - Translational equivalents of the Port. pretérito perfeito and imperfeito

| Language | Foreground | Background |
|---|---|---|
| Portuguese | *pretérito perfeito* | *pretérito imperfeito* |
| French | *passé simple* | *Imparfait* |
| English | simple past | Simple past |
|  |  | Progressive past |
|  |  | Pluperfect |
|  |  | *Stood* + present participle |
|  | punctual, telic verbs | Action, stative verbs |
| German | *Imperfekt* | *Imperfekt* |
|  |  | Pluperfect |
|  | derivational verbs |  |
|  | punctual, telic verbs | Action verbs |
|  | punctual adverbials | *Stand und* V:Imperfekt |

While the French translator draws upon the opposition of the two synthetic past forms of the *passé simple* and *imparfait* to render the Portuguese aspectual distinction, both the English and German translators mainly use the only simple past form at their disposal to render both Portuguese past forms, namely the English *simple past* and the German *Imperfekt*. In their attempt to distinguish foregrounded from backgrounded information, they have recourse to inflectional, derivational, lexical as well as syntactic techniques. Inflectional techniques used are the past progressive in English and the pluperfect in both English and German.

By deriving inchoative verbs from action verbs in German, the former become inchoative, punctual, or telic and thus especially suitable for expressing foregrounded information (examples 5).

(5)   GER   *auf-heulen*  ←  *heulen*   (punctual/durative)
      ´to start roaring´      ´to roar´

      *er-zittern*       ←  *zittern*   (punctual/durative)
      ´to start shivering´  ´to shiver´

      *ein-laufen*       ←  *laufen*   (telic/atelic)

Both the English and German translators prefer verbs of the punctual and telic *aktionsart* in foregrounded passages but durative action or stative verbs in backgrounded ones. A syntactic technique used in both English and German is to combine an infinite form of the main verb with the durative, atelic verbs *to stand* or *stehen* in backgrounded predications (examples 6).

(6) POR Um homem escuro e magérrimo, cigarro na bôca, ao lado de Mundinho <u>olhava </u>indiferente.

ENG A dark, extremely thin man, with a cigarette in his mouth, <u>stood</u> next to Mundinho <u>looking</u> without interest at the prospect of the town.

GER Ein spindeldürrer, dunkelhäutiger Mann <u>stand</u>, die Zigarette im Mund, neben Mundinho <u>und betrachtete</u> gleichgültig das Schauspiel.

## 5 CONCLUSION

From the foregoing comparison of the three tanslations with their Portuguese original it has become clear that adequate translations can only be achieved if the textual functions of the linguistic devices occurring in the original are taken into consideration. Also, the translator must try to render these functions according to the grammatical and lexical possibilities offered by the target language. Only when source and target languages possess similar grammatical categories it will be possible to render the original text in a more or less isomorphic way. This is the case with the perfective/imperfective distinction in Portuguese and French past forms. As far as the German and English versions of

the text are concerned, translators had recourse to quite diverse linguistic techniques, including inflexion, derivation, lexical choice, and syntax, in order to render the Portuguese grammaticalized aspectual distinction perfective/imperfective.

While the analysis of the grounding functions of tense, aspect, and *aktionsart* conducted in the present paper has demonstrated the feasibility of translation, it has at the same time pointed to some difficulties of furnishing adequate translations of literary works. As far as the contrastive analysis of languages is concerned, we hope to have shown that it should not be limited to a comparison of systems of linguistic forms but should be based on the use of linguistic techniques in texts and take their communicative functions into consideration. In this way, it becomes possible to take account of the whole range of linguistic devices striving to fulfill equivalent functions.

## APPENDIX

## 1 Portuguese text

@Begin
@Participants: POR original of *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*
@Text: *Gabriela* by Jorge Amado, pp. 66ff. *Obras de Jorge Amado* XIV, São Paulo, Livraria Martins, 28a ed. brasileira
@Coding: Ursula Stephany
@g:      1
*POR: apesar da hora matinal um pequena multidão acompanhava os penosos trabalhos de desencalhe do navio.
%mor: V:ACT|acompanhar:PAST:IMPF:BG
*POR: pegara fundo na barra parecia ali ancorado para sempre.
%mor: V:TEL|pegar:PLPF V:STAT|parecer:PAST:IMPF:BG V:TEL|ancorar:PP
*POR: da ponto do morro do Unhão os curiosos viam o comandante e o prático afobados dando ordens,
%mor: V:ACT|ver:PAST:IMPF:BG V:TEL|afobar:PP V:TEL|dar:PRESPT:BG
*POR: marinheiros correndo,
%mor: V:ACT|correr:PRESPT:BG
*POR: oficiais passando apressados.
%mor: V:ACT|passar:PRESPT:BG ADJ|apressados
*POR: pequenos botes vindos do Pontal rondavam o navio. [...]
%mor: V:TEL|vir:PP V:ACT|rondar:PAST:IMPF:BG
@g:      2
*POR: Nacib esqueceu por um momento suas preocupações
%mor: V:PUNC|esquecer:PAST:PFV:FG
*POR: as máquinas do navio roncavam sem sucesso. [...]
%mor: V:ACT|roncar:PAST:IMPF:BG
@g:      3

*POR: o navio sacudia-se,
%mor: V:ACT|sacudir-se:PAST:IMPF:BG
*POR: o casco arrastava-se sôbre a areia,
%mor: V:TEL|arrastar:PLPF
*POR: os motores gemiam,
%mor: V:ACT|gemer:PAST:IMPF:BG
*POR: o prático gritava ordens.
%mor: V:ACT|gritar:PAST:IMPF:BG
*POR: na ponte de comando surgiu um homem ainda jovem, bem vestido, as mãos sobre os olhos,
%mor: V:PUNC|surgir:PAST:PFV:FG
*POR: buscando reconhecer amigos entre os espectadores. [...]
%mor: V:ACT|buscar:PRESPT V:TEL|reconhecer:INF
@g:      4
*POR: por detrás de Mudinho Falcão surgia uma figura de mulher nova, um grande chapéu verde cabelos loiros.
%mor: V:PUNC|surgir:PAST:IMPF:FG:BG
*POR: tocava sorridente o braço do exportador. [...]
%mor: V:TEL|tocar:PAST:IMPF:BG
@g:      5
*POR: o navio balançou violentamente,
%mor: V:ACT|balançar:PAST:PFV:FG
*POR: assustando os passageiros,
%mor: V:ACT|assustar:PRESPT:BG
*POR: a mulher soltou um pequeno grito,
%mor: V:PUNC|soltar:PAST:PFV:FG
*POR: o fundo desprendeu-se da areia,
%mor: V:TEL|desprender-se:PAST:PFV:FG
*POR: um clamor alegre elevou-se de terra e de bordo.
%mor: V:TEL|elevar-se:PAST:PFV:FG
*POR: um homem escuro e magérrimo cigarro na bôca ao lado de Mundinho olhava indiferente.
%mor: V:ACT|olhar:PAST:IMPF:BG
*POR: o exportador disse-lhe alguma coisa,
%mor: V:TEL|dizer:PAST:PFV:FG
*POR: êle riu. [...]
%mor: V:ACT|rir:PAST:PFV:FG
@g:      6
*POR: o navio apitou apito largo e livre,
%mor: V:ACT|apitar:PAST:PFV:FG
*POR: rumou para o pôrto.
%mor: V:ACT|rumar:PAST:PFV:FG
@End

## 2 French translation

@Begin
@Participants: FRE French translation of *Gabriela*
@Text:       *Gabriela* by Jorge Amado
@Coding:    Ursula Stephany
@g:     1
*FRE: malgré l'heure matinale une petite foule suivait les durs travaux de renflouement du bateau.

%mor: V:ACT|acompanhar:suivre:PAST:IMPF:BG

*FRE: celui-ci avait touché le fond du chenal et semblait y être ancré pour toujours.

%mor: V:TEL|pegar:toucher:PLPF
    V:STAT|parecer:sembler:PAST:IMPF:BG
    V:TEL|ancorar:PP

*FRE: depuis la pointe du morne d'Unhão les curieux voyaient le commandant et le pilote s'agiter en donnant des ordres,

%mor: V:ACT|ver:voir:PAST:IMPF:BG
    V:ACT|afobar:agiter:INF
    V:TEL|dar:donner:PRESPT:BG

*FRE: des marins qui couraient,

%mor: V:ACT|correr:courir:PAST:IMPF:BG

*FRE: des officiers qui passaient en se hâtant.

%mor: V:ACT|passar:passer:PAST:IMPF:BG
    V:ACT|apressados:se+hâter:PRESPT

*FRE: de petites barques venues de Pontal entouraient le bateau.

%mor: V:TEL|vir:venir:PP
    V:ACT|rondar:entourer:PAST:IMPF:BG

@g:    2

*FRE: Nacib oublia un instant ses soucis.

%mor: V:PUNC|esquecer:oublier:PAST:PFV:FG

*FRE: les machines du bateau ronflaient sans résultat.

%mor: V:ACT|roncar:ronfler:PAST:IMPF:BG

@g:    3

*FRE: le bateau tressaillait,

%mor: V:ACT|sacudir-se:tressaillir:PAST:IMPF:BG

*FRE: sa coque traînait sur le sable,

%mor: V:ACT|arrastar:traîner:PAST:IMPF:BG

*FRE: ses moteurs gémissaient,

%mor: V:ACT|gemer:gémir:PAST:IMPF:BG

*FRE: le pilote criait des ordres.

%mor: V:ACT|gritar:crier:PAST:IMPF:BG

*FRE: sur la passerelle surgit un homme encore jeune,

%mor: V:PUNC|surgir:surgir:PAST:PFV:FG

*FRE: qui cherchait à reconnaître ses amis parmi les spectateurs.

%mor: V:ACT|buscar:chercher:PAST:IMPF:BG
    V:TEL|reconhecer:reconnaître:INF

@g:    4

*FRE: derrière Mundinho Falcão surgit la silhouette d'une jeune femme à grand chapeau vert et aux cheveux blonds.

%mor: V:PUNC|surgir:surgir:PAST:PFV:FG

*FRE: elle toucha en souriant le bras de l'exportateur.

%mor: V:TEL|tocar:toucher:PAST:PFV:FG

@g:    5

*FRE: le bateau roula violemment,

%mor: V:ACT|balançar:rouler:PAST:PFV:FG

*FRE: les passagers prirent peur,

%mor: V:TEL|assustar:prendre+peur:PAST:PFV:FG

*FRE: la femme lâcha un petit cri,

%mor: V:PUNC|soltar:lâcher:PAST:PFV:FG

*FRE: le fond de la coque se dégagea du sable,

%mor: V:TEL|desprender-se:se+dégager:PAST:PFV:FG

*FRE: une clameur joyeuse s'éleva du rivage et du bord.

%mor: V:TEL|elevar-se:se+élever:PAST:PFV:FG

*FRE: un homme au teint sombre et très maigre la cigarette à la bouche à côté de Mundinho regardait l'air indifférent.

%mor: V:ACT|olhar:regarder:PAST:IMPF:BG

*FRE: l'exportateur lui dit quelque chose,

%mor: V:TEL|dizer:dire:PAST:PFV:FG

*FRE: il rit.

%mor: V:ACT|rir:rire:PAST:PFV:FG

@g:    6

*FRE: le bateau fit retentir la sirène,

%mor: V:TEL|apitar:faire+retentir:PAST:PFV:FG

*FRE: qui lança un long cri de délivrance,

%mor: V:TEL|0PORT:lancer:PAST:PFV:FG

*FRE: et il fit route vers le port.

%mor: V:ACT|rumar:faire+route:PAST:PFV:FG

@End

## 3 English translation

@Begin
@Participants: ENG English translation of *Gabriela*
@Text:        *Gabriela* by Jorge Amado
@Coding:      Ursula Stephany
@g:    1

*ENG:despite the early hour a crowd had gathered at the foot of Unhão Hill.

%mor: V:ACT|acompanhar:gather:PLPF:BG

*ENG:the ship was stuck deep in the mud and it looked as if they would never get her free.

%mor: V:STAT|pegar:be+stuck:PAST:IMPF:BG
    V:STAT|parecer:look:PAST:IMPF:BG
    V:TEL|ancorar:get+free:COND

*ENG:officers and seamen rushed about,

%mor: V:ACT|ver:0ENGL:PAST:IMPF:BG
    V:ACT|afobar:0ENGL  V:ACT|correr:0ENGL
    V:ACT|passar:rush+about:PAST:IMPF:BG

*ENG:while the captain and pilot shouted orders.

%mor: CONJ:TEMP|while
    V:ACT|dar:shout:PAST:IMPF:BG

*ENG:small boats coming from Pontal circled the ship.

%mor: V:TEL|vir:come:PRESPT
    V:ACT|rondar:PAST:IMPF:BG

@g:    2

*ENG:Nacib forgot his troubles for a moment.

%mor: V:PUNC|esquecer:forget:PAST:IMPF:FG

*ENG:the ship's engines were straining without success.

%mor: V:ACT|roncar:strain:PAST:IMPF:PROG:BG

@g:    3

*ENG:the ship shuddered,

%mor: V:ACT|sacudir-se:shudder:PAST:IMPF:BG
*ENG: dragging on the bottom,
%mor: V:ACT|arrastar:drag:PRESPT
*ENG: the engines roared,
%mor: V:ACT|gemer:roar:PAST:IMPF:BG
*ENG: the pilot shouted orders.
%mor: V:ACT|gritar:shout:PAST:IMPF:BG
*ENG: on the captain's bridge a well-dressed young man shading his eyes with his hand was trying to identify friends on the shore.
%mor: V:PUNC|surgir:0ENGL
    V:ACT|buscar:try:PAST:IMPF:PROGR:BG
    V:TEL|reconhecer:identify:INF
@g: 4
*ENG: behind Mundinho Falcão one could see a blond woman wearing a large green hat.
%mor: V:MDL| can:PAST:IMPF:BG V:ACT|surgir:see:INF
*ENG: she smiled and placed her hand on his arm.
%mor: V:ACT|smile:PAST:IMPF:BG/FG
    V:TEL|tocar:place:PAST:IMPF:FG
@g: 5
*ENG: the ship jerked violently,
%mor: V:ACT|balançar:jerk:PAST:IMPF:FG
*ENG: the passengers looked frightened,
%mor: V:STAT|assustar:look+frightened:PAST:IMPF:BG
*ENG: the blond uttered a little cry,
%mor: V:PUNC|soltar:utter:PAST:IMPF:FG
*ENG: and the ship broke free of the mud.
%mor: V:TEL|desprender-se:break+free:PAST:IMPF:FG
*ENG: a joyful clamor arose on shore and on board.
%mor: V:TEL|elevar-se:arise:PAST:IMPF:FG
*ENG: a dark extremely thin man with a cigarette in his mouth stood next to Mundinho looking without interest at the prospect of the town.
%mor: V:ACT|0PORT:stand:PAST:IMPF:BG
    V:ACT|olhar:look:PRESPT:BG
*ENG: the exporter said something to him
%mor: V:TEL|dizer:say:PAST:IMPF:FG
*ENG: and he smiled.
%mor: COO:CONJ| and V:INCH|rir:smile:PAST:IMPF:FG
@g: 6
*ENG: the ship whistled loud and clear,
%mor: V:ACT|apitar:whistle:PAST:IMPF:FG
*ENG: and headed for the pier.
%mor: V:INCH|rumar:head:PAST:IMPF:FG
@End

## 4 German translation

@Begin
@Participants:    GER German translation of *Gabriela*
@Text:    *Gabriela* by Jorge Amado
@Coding:    Ursula Stephany
@g: 1
*GER: trotz der frühen morgenstunde beobachtete eine kleine menschenmenge die angestrengten versuche, das auf die sandbank aufgelaufene schiff wieder flottzumachen.
%mor: V:ACT|acompanhar:beobachten:PAST:IMPF:BG
    V:TEL|desencalhe:flottmachen:INF
*GER: es sah aus, als wäre es dort für immer vor anker gegangen.
%mor: V:TEL|pegar:auflaufen:PP
    V:STAT|parecer:aussehen:PAST:IMPF:BG
    V:TEL|ancorar:vor+anker+gehen:IRR:BG
*GER: von der brücke der Unhãohöhe aus konnten die neugierigen den aufgeregten kapitän und den lotsen erkennen, die lebhaft kommandos gaben.
%mor: V:MDL|können:PAST:IMPF
    V:TEL|ver:erkennen:INF:BG
    V:STAT|afobar:aufgeregt:PP
    V:ACT|dar:kommandos+geben:PAST:IMPF:BG
*GER: matrosen und offiziere liefen hin und her.
%mor: V:ACT|correr:hin+und+herlaufen:PAST:IMPF:BG
    V:ACT|passar:0GER:BG ADJ|apressados:lebhaft
*GER: kleine boote, die von Pontal gekommen waren, umringten das schiff.
%mor: V:TEL|vir:kommen:PLPF
    V:ACT|rondar:umringen:PAST:IMPF:BG
@g: 2
*GER: Nacib vergass einen augenblick seine sorgen.
%mor: V:PUNC|esquecer:vergessen:PAST:IMPF:FG
*GER: die schiffsmaschinen stampften vergebens.
%mor: V:ACT|roncar:stampfen:PAST:IMPF:BG/FG
@g: 3
*GER: durch das schiff ging eine erschütterung,
%mor: V:TEL|sacudir
    se:eine+erschütterung+gehen:PAST:IMPF:BG/FG
*GER: der schiffsrumpf schob sich durch den sand,
%mor: V:ACT|arrastar:sich+schieben+durch:PAST:IMPF:BG/FG
*GER: die maschinen stöhnten,
%mor: V:ACT|gemer:stöhnen:PAST:IMPF:BG/FG
*GER: der lotse brüllte kommandos.
%mor: V:ACT|gritar:brüllen:PAST:IMPF:BG
    NP:INDEF|kommando:PL
*GER: auf der kommandobrücke erschien ein gutgekleideter, noch junger mann,
%mor: V:PUNC|surgir:erscheinen:PAST:IMPF:FG
*GER: der die flachen hände schützend über die augen hielt.
%mor: PRO:REL|der V:ACT|halten:PAST:IMPF:BG
*GER: er bemühte sich, unter den zuschauern freunde zu entdecken.
%mor: V:ACT|buscar:sich+bemühen:PAST:IMPF:BG
    V:TEL|reconhecer:entdecken:INF
@g: 4
*GER: hinter Mundinho Falcão erschien eine blonde junge frau mit einem grünen hut.
%mor: V:PUNC|surgir:erscheinen:PAST:IMPF:FG

\*GER: lächelnd ergriff sie den arm des exportateurs.
%mor: V:TEL|tocar:ergreifen:PAST:IMPF:FG
@g:   5
\*GER: das schiff erzitterte.
%mor: V:INCH|balançar:erzittern:PAST:IMPF:FG
\*GER: einige passagiere erschraken.
%mor: V:TEL|assustar:erschrecken:PAST:IMPF:FG
\*GER: die blonde frau schrie leise auf.
%mor: V:PUNC|soltar:aufschreien:PAST:IMPF:FG
\*GER: plötzlich löste sich der kiel von der sandbank.
%mor: ADV:TEMP:PUNCT| plötzlich V:TEL|desprender-
      se:sich+lösen:PAST:IMPF:FG
\*GER: freudige rufe ertönten an bord und an land.
%mor: V:ACT|elevar-se:ertönen:PAST:IMPF:FG/BG
\*GER: ein spindeldürrer dunkelhäutiger mann stand, die
      zigarette im mund, neben Mundinho und betrachtete
      gleichgültig das schauspiel.
%mor: V:ACT|0PORT:stehen:PAST:IMPF:BG
      V:ACT|olhar:betrachten:PAST:IMPF:BG
      NP:DEF|schauspiel
\*GER: der exportateur sagte etwas zu ihm,
%mor: V:TEL|dizer:sagen:PAST:IMPF:FG
\*GER: und er lachte.
%mor: CONJ:COO|und V:ACT|rir:lachen:PAST:IMPF:FG
@g:   6
\*GER: die schiffssirene heulte auf, ein langer, befreiter ruf.
%mor: V:INCH|apitar:aufheulen:PAST:IMPF:FG
\*GER: dann lief das schiff in den hafen ein.
%mor: V:TEL|rumar:einlaufen:PAST:IMPF:FG
@End

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