

Creating “Our Bodies, Ourselves” in Brazilian Portuguese: The Translators’ Experiences

In 2019, several organizations in Brazil came together to translate and adapt “Our Bodies, Ourselves” into Portuguese. The new group, which includes members of the Coletivo Feminista Sexualidade e Saúde (CFSS), participants in the Research Group on Translation Studies at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and members of the translation team at Universidade de Campinas (Unicamp), are collaborating together to translate the English edition and adapt it to meet the needs of women in Brazil.

In the stories below, the translators share their experiences with the project.

EXPERIENCES OF UNICAMP TRANSLATORS



Érica Lima
Translation Project Coordinator

TRANSLATORS (UNICAMP)

Adriano Clayton da Silva; Carlos César da Silva; Carolina Gomes da Costa; Débora Zacharias;
Eduardo Rorato de Oliveira; Fábio Fonseca de Melo; Frederico DeNiz; Gislaine Cristina Assumpção;
Giulia Mendes Gambassi; Giulia Sanches Bassani; Juliana Aparecida Gimenes;
Leonardo Augusto de Freitas Afonso; Louise Hélène Pavan; Luminita Silveira; Marcela Wiffler Stefanini



Samira Spolidório
Translation Project Manager



Members of the translation team at Universidade de Campinas (Unicamp)

Chapter 1: Our Female Bodies: Sexual Anatomy, Reproduction, and the Menstrual Cycle

Translator: Giulia Mendes Gambassi

The experience of translating the first chapter of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was enriching and challenging, and I’ll highlight some points of this activity on this report.

The first aspect of this experience that I would like to bring up is the opportunity to perceive the need for providing this content with wide access for all women, regardless of class, race, ethnicity, or age. That’s why we are intending to make this content available in other formats that [are] not only written, as we have a [high percentage of illiteracy and functional illiteracy](#).

Additionally, even though I had access to a good education system, a significant part of the information that I found in this first chapter was a novelty to me. I've learned a lot about my body and my health whilst reading and translating this content. That said, it's important to emphasize the social relevance of this project, that has been consolidated with a diverse team, always keeping in mind that this translation project is not only about language but also about the female body and all the stereotyped aspects that follow it, gender identities, taboo and social inequality.

The second point that I would like to take on is regarding my subjective experience during the translation process, as I was able to rescue some memories related to my own body, among them some traumatic experiences of my childhood. Once again, then, I highlight the importance of the discussion that this material can bring, considering the taboo that still involves the female body and its sexuality.

Chapter 9: Birth Control

Translator: Louise Hélène Pavan

Translating the 9th chapter of the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was a transforming experience. The book brings up to light important information in an accessible manner and it is filled with reports of experiences that, as a woman, were easy to personally identify with and I can definitely say I saw myself reflected in many of the situations described. The sentiment of belonging to an ample group of women was amplified by the many relationships I established with the other translators of this grand project, which are also predominantly women.

To realize that those many stories, frequently repeated on a daily basis, could be brought to attention and also to see that it was possible to improve the access to information about body care, medical issues and sexual health made me understand the importance of this translating project, especially in Brazil, where the access to a high quality education is often restricted to privileged socioeconomic groups.

The translating process in itself constituted an enriching experience to my formation as translator, for I faced previously unknown issues and involved myself in a collaborative work in which both meanings and vocabulary choices went through many fruitful discussions that allowed me to better comprehend the impact of my work. This process has marked me and will keep doing so, for through the contact with others, the women whose stories are in the book and translators alike, I find myself in a privileged position of transforming and resignifying provided by translation.

It is important to emphasize one translating challenge that presented itself during my experience when translating the chapter "Birth Control", [was] the dilemma on how to translate the term "health-care provider", which appeared innumerable times in the text. The linguistic reality of the Portuguese language did not allow us to associate gender neutral articles to nouns and therefore "health-care provider" would be characterized either as a male or female professional. With the intent of dissipating this apparent dichotomy I chose - with the support of my translating partner and the rest of the translating team as a whole - to utilize, whenever possible, a reformulation of the term in which gender neutrality was present, so we opted to translate "health-care provider" as "health professional person".

That and many other questions came about during the process and certainly will continue to do so as the translation moves forward, but that shows us how rich languages can be and how they reflect identity and political positions. Being so, the choices we made in this new Portuguese version of the book reveal our positioning whilst translators advocating for a cause: the feminism.

Finally, participating on the volunteer translating project of the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was to me a form of resistance. Resistance facing the current challenges which women face day after day; resistance by bringing to society's attention themes that are considered taboo; resistance by committing to share scientific knowledge.

Translator: Marcella W. Stefanini

The translation of one of the chapters of the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was a very enriching experience, especially because it was a teamwork. The possibility of exchanging thoughts and doubts with the group and coming up with solutions together was very significant for me, as a translation student who doesn't have much practical experience. In addition, this exchange allowed us to reflect on linguistic issues that are only possible through translation, such as the issue of gender, which in English is often not marked, but is so in Portuguese. In this sense, the translation of words like "doctor" and "health care provider" needed to be considered in order to promote gender inclusion.

Related to this, the theme of the book made the translation even more stimulating, since much of the information contained there was unknown to me before I read it. I believe it was very important, as a woman, to learn more about the female body and, in the case of the translated chapter, about the options of contraceptive methods, especially the advantages and disadvantages of each method. Although we study the human body and have sex education classes at school, added to the clarifications on contraception offered by health care professionals, some of the methods presented by the book are little known, since the most common for us are the pill and the condom. In this sense, it is worth highlighting, in relation to the translation process, the need to conduct a more detailed research in order to find the Brazilian translation for the "cervical cap" method, since it is a method that is little used in Brazil and little mentioned in materials on contraceptive methods.

From this small example, I realized the importance of a woman knowing her body and the issues surrounding it (such as contraception), in order to empower herself and be able to make the most appropriate choices based on this knowledge. In relation to contraception, this reveals itself very clearly. Despite the importance of the health care professional to clarify and guide the woman about contraceptive methods, I realize, from my own experience, that there is no discussion about all the methods in order to decide together, woman and professional, the most appropriate method. The discussion is usually centered on a few methods, such as those mentioned, condoms and pills, which are more common, including some others, such as the IUD and the patch. It is possible that the choice of these methods in particular and not others is related to factors such as ease of access, however, I believe it is essential that women have knowledge of the various methods in order to be able to have a more active role in the choices concerning her body. This reflection only became possible for me because of the project, the reading and subsequent translation of the chapter.

Chapters 12 (Unexpected Pregnancy) and 25 (Environmental and Occupational Health)

Translator: Carlos César da Silva

The experience of translating *OBOS* was enriching -- both by the groupwork and the collective effort of everyone involved in the project and by the importance of the themes at hand. The professors' initiative to pair up women with men to avoid problematic and/or inadequate statements was very rewarding and soothing considering the sobriety of the texts. Having been a part of the translation of two chapters -- one among four people and one in pairs -- I have had a few counterproductive experiences for sharing the responsibility with other people, but everything was solved with much reciprocity and commitment from all of the parties involved.

Chapter 12, translated with a female partner, was the most uncomplicated of the two projects -- both by the interpersonal relationship and by the lightness of the chapter's writing, besides its tough subject. My partner was ever attentive in helping me solve problems regarding the proper vocabulary and also in suggesting reliable sources for the adaptation of data about the United States to the Brazilian context.

Chapter 25, on the other hand, raised many discussions among the group, especially because of the amount of information specific to North American laws about work environment and about the control of toxic substances. For example, the term "pesticides" was the one that we debated on more, considering that in English it is used more generally, whereas in Portuguese it is restricted to poisons against pests that cause infestation in agriculture.

Overall, our biggest problems were the technical difficulties with *SmartCat*. The tool helped and complicated our workflow in equal parts, but it was a great learning experience that will most likely benefit us later on in the project.

Translator: Carolina Gomes da Costa

The process of translating the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was an enriching experience for my academic background: as a translator, a human being, and a woman. With this work I kept in touch with people from the graduate group, in contact with subjects relevant to life and. In addition to that, I developed this voluntary translation work.

I worked on the translation of two chapters, one in pairs and the other in a quartet. The both experiences were different. In chapter 12, *Unexpected Pregnancy*, my partner and I were able to organize more easily, and the translation process was faster and more efficient. However, the translation of chapter 25, *Environmental And Occupational Health*, was more complex because it had more people to trade files with and finish the translation. Also, some problems in communication among the group occurred.

The *SmartCat* tool enabled us to carry out the translation together, using the same translation memory and facilitating the archiving of the project. However, the use of the tool was also a challenge. Some functions and requirements of the program, such as tags and text organization made its use a little difficult, but with the group, we were able to solve problems and have the texts translated and formatted.

The translation raised several questions: doubts about how to proceed at times, how to carry out the translation with such a large group and still maintain the standardization of pronouns, professions, terms, what to add, remove, or adapt in the text. However, the result, so far, has allowed us to proceed with the translation and thus improve our translation processes as a group.

Chapter 24: Violence Against Women

Translator: Débora Andreza Zacharias

At UNICAMP, I am having the opportunity of translating project *Our Bodies, Ourselves* to Brazilian Portuguese, which brings me a profound sense of accomplishment, since there is not such a complete book on women's health in Portuguese with so much information and so many references. The topic I am responsible for is violence against women.

In a country with alarming numbers of violence against women, our responsibility as translators is even broader. Our work details, through the many texts we have translated, legal means for women to defend themselves, raising awareness of the fact that all women have a right to be protected. Official data and reports indicate that sharing with women defense mechanisms and means of filing complaints against violence has become an urgent matter.

To make this project relevant to all women and to give them a voice, we need to reveal the cultural identity of each country, including characteristics that are part of women's realities in different locations and detailing public policies. This approach will give them access to instruments to protect themselves and also to allow them a chance to reflect upon their realities.

This project is also an exercise in translation. When we translate, we must consider the cultural identity of the women we are talking to, the means of reaching them, which information they need to have safer and more conscient lives. Each translation choice is also a political choice, inspired by reflections on the topics covered in the book: life and women's bodies, women's lives. Translating is not just replacing words in one language by words in another language. Translating is taking over a political position, especially in a voluntary project destined to promote ideas that can transform and improve people's lives.

Translator: Gislaine Cristina Assumpção

My experience as one of the translators of the book *Our Bodies Ourselves* has been very important to me in several aspects. It was the first time I participated in a group translation project and this practice of translating and proofreading with multiple people was enriching with regard to my academic and professional experiences. I have been even more sure that the act of translating is always subjective, because, although it was a group work using a CAT tool, the *Smartcat*, the translation choices are always personal and cross a path of reflections before they become definitive.

I have found some difficulties in terms of terminology, for example in the paragraph that deals with "Gray Rape". This expression refers, according to Laura Stepp, author of the article "A New Kind of Date Rape", to a

type of violation that occurs due to a lack of clear communication between the victim and the aggressor, and in contexts of meetings and casual sex, in which signs might not be understood, or alcohol may be involved etc. The decision for the translation "Estupro Cinza", although not used in Brazil, was due to the proximity of the use of the color gray to indicate lack of clarity, cloudiness, also in the Portuguese language. In addition, I came across other small issues that were clarified during our discussions every week at the university.

Concerning the title of the chapter, "Violence Against Women", and the subject that it develops over the pages, I confess that I was very uncomfortable when I started to read, and then translate. As a woman, I felt like the text was a little bit mine, too. I put myself in the place of those women who gave their testimonies, who reported the difficult situations they went through and I got emotional at several times. Like most women, raised in a macho society, I had no idea that sexual violence is not just about forced penetration. It's much more than that.

Anyway, I have learned a lot and I could verify that translators inevitably get involved with what they translate and certainly leave a mark of their historicity in their writing, since every discourse is subjective and presents a profound participation of those who produce it.

Translator: Juliana Aparecida Gimenes

Being part of the translation project *Our Bodies, Ourselves* into Brazilian Portuguese has been a great experience in terms of personal and academic achievements. I would like to highlight the social, political and cultural necessity of this kind of translation we are doing here.

I think it is important to say that this has been the first time I am, personally, translating a huge project like this one, which involves many people from different countries. There is no doubt that the *OBOS* book is very important for citizenship consciousness, and we know, unfortunately, that many women around the world do not have access to quality information about health, rights, and ways to live a decent life presented in these texts.

My work group [Débora, Eduardo and Gislaïne] and I have been translating *Chapter 24: Violence Against Women*, a very sensitive and delicate issue. There are hard extracts, not because of English language (expressions, vocabulary, grammar), but because of the context and the tone of the women reports. There are reports about physical and psychological mistreatment from young girls to elder women. It is hard to translate such narratives and to be indifferent to those situations.

My general perception is that the reading and translating was an easy process, mainly due to the fact the book is written in a simple and clear English, because the objective is to reach as many women as possible, and language cannot be an obstacle. On the other hand, what may occupy us for a longer time in researches and adaptations are the law contexts that are very different from the United States to Brazil.

Translation Project Manager: Samira Spolidorio

Participating in the OBOS translation project has been a source of great personal satisfaction for me. I have been involved with the study and practice of voluntary translation since the time I started my studies in translation. My grad studies specialization final thesis and also my master's thesis dealt with voluntary translation done by fans (fansubbing). I also did several subtitles and voluntary translations for causes/organizations/institutions with which I identify. And I identify a lot with the feminist movement and with women's health issues. So this work fills an "existential void" in relation to personal and professional fulfillment that working with the translation of mobile applications and subtitling of commercial videos do not provide me.

Despite previous experiences with voluntary translation, participation in a project of this size and volume was the first time. And also the first time I worked as a project manager, helping with the planning and preparation of the translation project that was presented to the authors to pitch our translation proposal and show that "volunteer" for us does not mean "carelessly" (in the same way that my previous experiences also had nothing "careless"), the preparation of the documents (which I recognize, was one of the most flawed points of this first phase and that I already know how to improve for the second stage) helping other translators to understand the platform (even though I know that it can also be improved and optimized) and in fact reading and reviewing the texts of topics that are so important and interesting to me and from which I always learn a lot.

I would have liked to have noticed the problem with the formatting of the original files earlier and avoided the translators' headaches (after all this is the role of a project manager) and also to have had the opportunity to help more in the standardization of the final texts sent for the technical review doing a linguistic and translation review before (which is an activity that I really like to do); however the fact that the first phase coincided with my sandwich doctoral period in Spain ended up limiting my participation in relation to what I hoped I could have contributed.

Moving forward, I hope to be able to be a more active part of the language review group for chapters already translated and to be able to provide more support to translators during the new translation stage. I'm also very excited about Judy and Norma coming to Unicamp!

Experiences of Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) Translators



Participants in the Research Group on Translation Studies at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)

Chapter 11: Sexually Transmitted Infections

Translator: Pérola Farias

My experience translating chapter eleven of OBOS has been pretty enlightening. As someone who has never had a Sex Ed Class and doesn't have a lot of experience herself, I've learned not only how to prevent STIS, but also how to recognize them. The materials were all written in a way that was very non-judgmental.

I have also read every report the Brazilian Ministry of Health has put on the most common STIS in Brazil. Reading about several statistics on the different communities that make my country made me think about what those statistics say about our society. The source text written in English has the American relationship with health, race, and class, interwoven within it, and while translating and adapting the chapter, I couldn't help but think a lot about those subjects and how to best represent the Brazilian relationship to them, while also questioning it and calling for help when needed.

Chapter 20. Perimenopause and Menopause

Translator: Eliane Albuquerque

Last semester I had the opportunity to work in the OBOS translation project at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. The chapters of the book were assigned to different groups, and my group was in charge of translating chapter 20, Perimenopause and Menopause.

This experience was valuable in various ways.

Regarding my translation professional practice, I found this was an opportunity to work in a team. We had regular meetings, in which we could discuss issues on terminology and adaptations necessary to make the book true to our culture and society. We also learned how to use a new CAT tool.

Furthermore, we had frequent discussions on theoretical texts on feminist translation and the influence of globalization on translation, which served to undergird academic discussions pertaining our translation project.

Finally, I enjoyed the experience of translating a text on women's health. I learned a lot about perimenopause and menopause, the influence that the pharmaceutical companies usually exert to force women to use medications unnecessarily, and how important it is for women to be well-informed about their health and rights related to treatments they might need to undergo.

Translator: Lis Coutinho

In the second half of 2019, I started to participate in the research group on Translation Studies at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Here, volunteer translators and researchers in translation are committed to translating, revising and adapting the book "Our Bodies, Ourselves" that will have its first translation into Portuguese.

In our first meetings, by learning a little more about the content of the book and its authors, we were put together in small groups to translate a chapter. My group was tasked to translate chapter 20, which covers the perimenopause and menopause period. Each member of my group was responsible for translating about 300 segments in the Smartcat translation tool. During the process of translating, we struggled to make some adaptations, such as the names of medications for hormonal therapy, because we did not know whether certain drugs are sold in Brazil and whether they are available at affordable prices. For me, using Smartcat was a challenge that I had to deal with since I had never used this tool before.

Participating in this project allows me to learn more about great translation techniques, to discuss the political aspect of women's health and their reproductive rights in Brazil and reflect on political, cultural and linguistic differences. This experience has been crucial for my education and training as a translator.

Translator: Wisley do Carm Vilela

I am Wisley Vilela, a 53-year-old man who works as a translator and had the opportunity of joining the translators' team working on the translation of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* into Brazilian Portuguese. As part of my engagement in this project, I recently translated a video in which Amy Agigian, by the 50th anniversary of OBOS at Suffolk University, introduces *OBOST*. When talking about *OBOS Today*, she states that 50 years ago OBOS was trying to tackle the lack of access to information. Now, she argues, instead of lack of access to

information, we have broad access to an excess of unverified and unreliable information. The task of curating the available information is huge and paramount. Working on this task seems to me like the work of a miner who must move mountains of gravel to find a small precious gem.

It has been with a sense of the importance of the task and of gratitude for being though a tiny part of it that I translated the final fourth part of chapter 20 of *OBOS*. Furthermore, I did peer reviews on translations done by other team members. It was a pleasure doing that, but it was also educational and practical since my wife is going through symptoms associated with perimenopause.

When I first contemplated the idea of joining the *OBOS* translation project, I thought that, by being a man, it would be better if I did not do the translation work, but I would gladly do supportive tasks. Nevertheless, when I was appointed to join the team that was going to translate chapter 20, I accepted it and gave it my best shot. I am glad I did so because it has been a rewarding experience. In this project, I have been working surrounded by awe-inspiring women and learning from them will hopefully make me more aware of what is it like to be a woman in a society so deeply marked by sexism and bias against women. More than that, I wish that this perception helps me to make things differently, that it enables me to influence as many people as I can to do the same. What better and far-reaching way could I find to achieve this than by translating *OBOS*?

Translator: Thayna Pinheiro

During one of our lessons about Translation Studies we came across a book called *Our Bodies Ourselves* (*OBOS*) in a research paper. None of us had heard about it, but we were really interested in it and decided to find out more about the book. We were all amazed by how interesting and complete the book is and we thought it would be great to have a similar book in Brazilian Portuguese. That was our motivation to start this project and collaboratively translate *OBOS*.

The translation process itself started last year and it has been a challenging but rewarding experience. I was asked to translate chapter eleven, which covers sexually transmitted infections, with two other students. It has been challenging because, as it was written by north American women, the text has lots of information about the USA and it all needs to be adapted to our reality in Brazil. Besides that, there were also some difficulties with vocabulary differences between the languages.

Even though there are some challenges, I am very passionate about this project. I really believe having this book published in Portuguese could make a difference in the lives of many women. Especially because many of the topics tackled by the book are still taboo here and recently we've seen conservative people strongly opposing sex education lessons at schools, therefore, *OBOS* could be a source of information for these teenagers who are not learning about their health and sexuality at school or through their parents.

Translator: Raphael Ferreroni

I feel that taking part in this translation process has been an enriching experience for me, not only as a translator and academic but also as a person. I have considered myself an ally to women and the feminist movements for a long time, supporting your claim to reproductive rights and the fight against sexism; however,

as a gay man, I had always thought some matters of women's health to be wholly beyond my concern, as I would never have such experiences nor need to support a partner who would.

Having read and translated the chapter on menopause in OBOS, however, my eyes were opened to what some women in my life are going through, and I found myself better able to understand and provide them with needed support. I cannot wait to have a finished version of the book in Portuguese to recommend! This is a country where women's issues are still belittled and kept away from the mainstream, and I believe that a book as thorough as this one will be able to do a lot of good. I'm proud to play my small part in making this possible.

Chapter 14 “Considering Parenting”

Translator: Maria Gabriela Patricio

My personal experience translating chapter 14 of “Our Bodies, Ourselves,” Considering Parenting, was a discovery process for me. Both professional and personal.

First of all, this was my first experience translating outside a classroom as a student and it made me realize that translating is about making other people, who perhaps don't have that much of acquaintance with the language in which the source text was written, have access to the material. For this reason, I found translation to be something very human, which can offer valuable information to the world. I also realized the extent to which Portuguese is a sexist language and, as the book deals with feminist ideologies, my biggest challenge was overcoming that sexism in my translation.

The first translation struggle came with the title of the chapter –“Considering Parenting”. In Portuguese there are only two equivalent words in which we can translate ‘parenting’ into: ‘maternidade’, a word used only to refer to motherhood and ‘paternidade’ to refer to fatherhood. However, in English, there are three words: ‘parenting’ for both parents, ‘motherhood’ for mothers and ‘fatherhood’ for fathers. There are no lexical choices in Portuguese that can cover both sexes, as the word ‘parenting’ can in English. Moreover, the articles in Portuguese are marked by gender and the common gender to refer to both men and woman is the male gender. Those and some other issues made it very hard to use only a feminist language translating this chapter. For me, this has definitely been the greatest challenge so far.



Coletivo Feminista members working on the Portuguese adaptation of “Our Bodies, Ourselves,” from L to R: Bia Fioretti, Raquel Pereira, and Luiza Cadioli

For updates on the Brazil project, see <https://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/global-projects/brazil-coletivo-feminista-sexualidade-e-saude/>

Para mais informações, veja [OBOS Brasil](#) e [“Nossos corpos por nós mesmas”: um projeto de tradução feminista](#).