

TRANSLATION AS AN IDEOLOGICAL ENTERPRISE IN RELATION TO GLOBALIZATION: AN INSIGHT INTO IGBO ORAL PHRASEOLOGY IN THE LITERARY TEXTS

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ABSTRACT

Translation is an aspect of human action which is a function of myriads of factors, such as the function of the translation in the target language (TL) and socio-culture, the intention of the translator and the intention of the commissioner. The factors determine which approach and strategy may be adopted in the translational action of any given source language (SL) text. A great deal of philosophizing already takes place in the direction of approaches and translation strategies, though not exhaustive. Therefore, in this paper the approaches to translating are further treated in association to the two basic definitions of translation and exemplified with English translations of Igbo oral phraseologies. Every approach propagates a certain version ideology. Subsequently, a further philosophizing on topical issues on translation shows that the semantic approach to translation would maximally project the peculiarities of the source oral texts on the global stage, through the medium of English (the language used in propagating global ideology). Using the approach, an English variety is engendered and simultaneously introduced into the global socio-cultural cocktail. The engendered variety coupled with its contents then competes with some other socio-cultural ideologies and varieties for relevance. In this way translation contributes to the remoulding of the global culture.

Keywords: Semantic approach, peculiarities of the source oral text, English, competition

INTRODUCTION

Translation is defined variously by different authors; some define it from socio-cultural viewpoint while others do so from linguistics point of view. Thus Nida (1959:19) defines it as “producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the message of the source language, first in meaning and secondly in style”. Nida considers that a translatorial action should recognize the peculiarity of social forms within texts through a reactualization of the socio-cultural peculiarities in dynamically equivalent terms of the TL. In other words, the product of a translatorial action should not reveal its non-native origin. Toury (1995:173) shares Nida’s view on translation, but re-enacts the view in more lucid terms: “the source language text would have to be modified by target conditions -- cultural, literary, textual or merely linguistic.” Toury supposes that it is the systemic position and the cultural semiotic functions, which the SL text gives rise to, that make the difference and not any of the surface realizations. In other words, literary translation involves the imposition of conformity conditions beyond the linguistic and/or general textual ones, namely to models and norms which are deemed literary at the target end. Nevertheless, to some authors, translation is an impossible task, though attempts are often made to achieve the impossible. Sequel to that, Newmark (1984:7) in recognition of differential socio-cultural accretions of dissimilar socio-

cultural and linguistic groups defines translation as “a craft consisting in the *attempt* to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language”. A great preponderance of authors, to a great extent share Newmark’s view on translation: Koller (1983: 111); Wills (1977: 72); Finlay (1971: 4); Snell-Hornby (2004: 38); Nida (2004: 55) and Reiss (2004: 168) to mention but a few.

All the authors mentioned above tend to emphasize the parametric differences between source and target languages, and suppose that such differences in ideologies should be retained the way they are generated and received in both the target and source socio-cultures. Invariably, the ideological dichotomies of the target and source languages should be reemphasized and sustained without allowing them to influence each other. For example, an Igbo oral proverb, “Égbé béré ùgō béré, nké sị ibē yá ébènà, ɳku kàá yá” would be communicatively translated into a target English as “Live and let live”. The target reader who reads the translated text takes in the information as if it were generated from his/her socio-culture, but in reality, a great deal of information is obfuscated from him/her. In the translatorial action process of the communicatively translated Igbo oral text the socio-cultural conditions, features, thought process and style of the original text are overlooked. Through the approach, socio-cultural projection and competition are stifled and fettered. Consequently, the source and the target language benefit little or nothing from each other. In principle, one may claim that transfer of information does not take place in the Igbo oral proverbs rendition. What happens is that the presence of the SL text stimulates the translator to reinvoke an already existing phraseology or discourse of the TL socio-culture which is deemed an equivalent phraseology or discourse that would likely have similar effect on the target audience as could be imagined in the SL situation.

However, there are some other definitions of translation, which deemphasize the peculiarities of socio-cultures and foreground the universality of human language. Catford (1965: 1, 20) for instance defines translation as an “operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another”. Here emphasis is on text; it is not words that are translatable units, but texts, that is, the original words of the author and sentences. Words in the SL text are substituted with words in the TL text. This definition rejects the communicative implication of translation in pursuit of sense relations in the SL with the view of replacing them with their semantic equivalents in the TL. Catford sees translation more or less as a scientific process. Implicitly, Nida’s dynamic equivalence is excluded here as it falls outside the ambit of semantics -- the scientific study of meaning. Ajunwa (1991: 13) and Bassnett (1996: 2) share a view similar to Catford’s on translation. Bassnett for instance, suggests that a translatorial action should ensure that, “1. The surface meaning of the two texts will be approximately similar and that, 2. The structures of the SL text will be preserved as closely as possible but no so closely that the TL structures will be seriously distorted”.

With the considerations above, Catford, Ajunwa and Bassnett’s view on translation is adopted as a touchstone in arguing that translation is an ideological enterprise, which relates with globalization. The reason for the choice is that, the three authors view translation cognitively as a sociolinguistic enterprise, which main objective is to recapture the textual, ideational and interpersonal contents of the SL text in a semantically equivalent TL text. That is, translation should recapture the specific social situations that are constructed with specific purposes by one or more speakers. Subsequently, texts go beyond formalistic expressions and extend to the socio-cultural, political educational, economic, medical issues etc. For example:

A strange smell, as of a rotting corpse, or of a great animal in the throes of death rose from the music and occupied the room. (*The Famished Road* by Okri 1991:362)

The social context of the above text is charged with bewilderment. By imposing the features of animate beings upon a strange smell, Okri suggests that there is more that meets the eye than is suggested by ordinarily playing the accordion. The focus here is on language in use. That is language that is functional. The thrust of Catford, Ajunwa and Bassnett's view on translation is that the social context manifest in the forms of the SL text above should be recaptured in a choice TL text through the application of semantically appropriate TL forms. Therefore, the Igbo oral proverb, “*Égbé béré ûgō béré, nké sì ibē yá ébènà, nku kàá yá*” will be translated semantically to read “let the eagle perch, and let the kite perch, whichever that says no to the other, let its wings break” (Achebe 1958: 14). This translation linguistically has a universal outlook, though it shows .the thought process of the Igbo in the Eastern part of Nigeria. Thus Pedro (1999: 552) states

Translatability of a text is guaranteed by the existence of universal categories in syntax, semantics and natural logic of experience. Should a translation nevertheless fail to measure up to the original in terms of quality, the reason will normally be not an insufficiency in syntactic and lexical inventories in that particular TL, but rather the limited ability of the translator with regard to text analysis.

Pedro, by this assertion completely denies the existence of socio-cultural untranslatability. Although one does not completely subscribe to Pedro's view, one maintains that the view holds a considerable way in translation theory and practice. It suffices here to say that communicative approach to translation may become clearly necessary in cases of use variations occasioned by differential discourse practices in the two languages in contact (cf. Oyetade and Ifesieh BAB/TRA/V 407/11/RH)

Definition of Terms

Ideology

Ideology can be defined as systems of abstract thoughts applied to societal affairs and thus makes the concept central in politics. Sequel to that, every human action, translation inclusive, entails an ideology whether or not it is propounded as a explicit system of thought. In the same vain translation is not only ideological, but also political, because it involves negotiations among different agents. On the one hand, there are authors, translators, publishers, editors and readers, who deal more directly with the texts, while on the other hand there are theoreticians and critics who propose myriads of principles that govern the translational action of the texts.

Globalization

Since translation, besides linguistic and socio-cultural, also plays a sociological role, globalization can then be defined from that perspective. It is the intensification of worldwide social relationships which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. In other words, it is a process that involves time-space distanciation in which interaction is stretched across space so that people no longer have to be physically present to interact with one another. Technological innovations such as the internet and satellite communication make this possible (Haralambos and Holborn 2008: 554). The ultimate and inherent effects of globalization are stiff socio-cultural, political, socioeconomic competition and ultimately, homogenization of products. The consequences of the competition are generally improved standard of living, increased access to information and intensified inter-socio-cultural interaction and comprehension, in which translation plays a role. It suffices to mention that regions and endeavours that do not

key into the powerful global force to compete for excellence stand a risk of incurring lose and eventual extinction.

INTERACTION BETWEEN TRANSLATION, IDEOLOGY AND GLOBALIZATION

Every text emanates from one or more socio-cultures. In a similar manner every product of a translational action takes its rise from one or more socio-cultures. Translation as a kind of human action constrains the translator to engage the action with sets of baggage, which include: 1) cognitive baggage (competence), 2) Socio-cultural baggage (performance) and 3) Expectations and aspirations. The cognitive baggage originates from the conscious sensational experiences. Therefore, it has a universal or global outlook, because since every individual has similar sense organs all perceive the world generally the same way and tend to rationalize experiences in more or less the same way. For example, if ethical principles were not constant and unchangeable, there would have not been a worldwide declaration of human rights. This is because; human rights embody moral ideas such as liberty, equality, justice and security. These moral ideals are fixed notions which have been accepted and embodied in different national constitutions across the world (cf. Dzurgba 2008: 20). Therefore, the cognitive baggage has a semantic slant. While the expectations and aspirations take their rise from the socio-cultural baggage, the socio-cultural baggage in turn originates from the naturalized parameters and peculiarities of the socio-culture. Therefore, it has a local or regional outlook and since it emphasizes the peculiarities arising from specialized appropriations of the lexical items to generate certain institutional discourse and socio-cultural commonsense, it has a pragmatic inclination. Subsequently, the naturalized parameters and peculiarities of the socio-culture are commonsense, by virtue of which they are false consciousness. Therefore, they are socio-semiotic ally ideological (cf. Fairclough 1995: 71; 2001: 28; Locke 2004: 1-2; Bloor and Bloor 2007: 4-11; Malmkjaer 2002: 102-106). Apparently, translation is a sociolinguistic enterprise that engages transfer of ideologies from one socio-culture to another. However, the ideologies are encoded in the lexicon of the language, which is a major constituent of the cognitive baggage. That is why Levinson (1983: 8) stipulates that “aspects of linguistic structure sometimes directly encode (or otherwise interact with) features of the context. It then becomes impossible to draw a neat boundary between context-independent grammar (competence) and context-dependent interpretation (performance)”. Sequel to that, the point of departure between the cognitive and socio-cultural baggages lies in lexical appropriations to express peculiar nuances of meaning associations. Subsequently, the socio-cultural baggage can be described as specialized and peculiar appropriations of the lexicon within the grammar of a socio-culture to capture local experience as they relate to particular socio-cultural and linguistic groups. Implicit in this description is the existence of socio-cultural and linguistic use variations, which is usually and necessarily translated communicatively. Therefore, since it is the constituents of the cognitive baggage that are differentially appropriated to generate the socio-cultural one, it is deductively logical to claim that the cognitive aspect is the centre point in every socio-cultural and linguistic application. Therefore, an approach that maximally exploits the engagement of the cognitive baggage and minimizes that of the socio-cultural would be critically essential in a translatorial action that would meet global needs.

METHODOLOGY

In this write up nine phraseologies (texts) altogether are purposively selected from remarkable English novels, which writers are from Igbo oral cultural background. The novels are *Toads for Supper* (TFS) by Ike 1965; *Bridge to a Wedding* (BTW) by Munonye 1978; *Danda (Danda)* by Nkem 1964 and *Things Fall Apart* (TFA) by

Achebe 1958. Four texts are taken from *TFA* because the book is not only the earliest published among the four, but also a world classic; three texts are taken from *Danda*, because the book ranks next to *TFA* in terms of the number of years it has been in circulation. From the remaining two books, one text is taken from each. In selecting the texts, it is borne in mind that the messages distributed in the entire books share respectively common linguistic socio-cultural background (Adejare 1992: 15). The Igbo oral versions of the select texts are collected from competent Igbo English bilinguals and provided along with their English versions in the books. It is easy to collect the Igbo oral versions of the texts because they are phraseologies comprising proverbs, idioms, puns, maxims and metaphors generally, which have specific structure in the grammar of Igbo. The select texts are subjected to contrastive analysis. The two main approaches to translation (semantic and communicative approaches) align themselves to the two levels of translation -- the semantic and the pragmatic levels respectively. Therefore, for the purpose of comparison and contrast, the SL and TL forms are equated which no matter how far they diverge superficially are semantically and pragmatically equivalent. In this way the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions of the SL text are contrasted with that of the TL. Translational equivalent of this sort is a suitable tertium comparationis for evaluating translatorial actions via contrastive analysis (cf. James 1980).

Analysis of Texts

1. Igbo oral text: I nwèrè ụkwụ ojoo.
Gloss: You have leg bad.
Semantic translation: You have unfortunate legs. *Danda* p. 37. Communicative translation. Sorry I have just finished eating.
2. Igbo oral text: Kpọọ há n'oriri, há gà-èbidō n'ụtụtụ ná-ácho ányánwụ ma
Gloss: Call them for feast, they will-begin in morning to lookingsun and Cont: na-áju nwúnyè ha ma ógè ò rulá.
Cont: will asking wife their if time it reach.
Semantic Translation: Call them to a feast and they start early to watch the sun, every now and then saying to their wives: is it time? *Danda* p. 143.
Communicative Translation: Once it involves a feast they would be very time conscious.
3. Igbo oral Text: O na-egbúgide oja sitē n'ógè ọkukọ kwàrà rúkwéé mgbè há
Gloss: He will blow flute from in time fowl crows till time they
Cont: labasíri n'mpiō ha.
Cont: enter in pen them.
Semantic Translation: He flutes from the cry of the cock to the time the chicken return to roost. *Danda* p. 26.
Communicative Translation: He flutes from morning till night.
4. Igbo text: Nnē, i nwèrè ọnụ ojoo.
Gloss: Mother, you have mouth bad.
Semantic Translation: Yours is a bad tongue, mother. *BWP*. p. 28.
Communicative Translation: Mother you are very abusive.
5. Igbo oral text: Ihe m̄ biàrà i gwá gị bụ nà i gà-àsá ányá gị n'mmiri.
Gloss: what I come to tell you is that you will-wash eyes your in water.

Semantic Translation: What I have come to tell you is that you must wash your eyes in water. *TFS* p. 43.

Communicative Translation: I have come to tell you that you must be very careful.

6. Igbo oral Text: Ilu bụ mmánu é jì è rí ókwú.

Gloss: Proverb is palmiol one use one eat word.

Semantic Translation: Proverbs are palm oil with which words are eaten. *TFA*. p.5.

Communicative Translation: The application of proverbs in a discourse gives it a persuasive force.

7. Igbo Oral Text: Áwọ á dighị àgbá ọsqo ehihe n'kiti.

Gloss: Toad do not shoot run afternoon for nothing.

Semantic Translation: A toad does not run in the day time for nothing. *TFA* p. 15.

Communicative Translation: There is no smoke without fire.

8. Igbo oral text: O wétéré ojì wètèrè ndụ.

Gloss: He bring kola brought life.

Semantic Translation: He who brings kola brings life. *TFA* p.5.

Communicative Translation: He who presents a gift to his visitor wishes him well.

9. Igbo oral text: M gághị ebi n'ikpéré mmiri wèré ọsqo-mmiri ná-ákwo áká.

Gloss: I not live in bank water use saliva to washing hand.

Semantic Translation: I cannot live on the bank of a river and wash my hand with spittle. *TFA* p. 117.

Communicative Translation: I have the wherewithal to solve my problem.

FINDINGS

In the nine texts above, it is found that semantic translation pursues the sense relations in the SL text. This is noticeable in the lexical similarities found in the glossing of the Igbo oral texts. Through the approach, the thought process, socio-cultural condition of the text production, local colour and style of the original text are transferred into the TL text. Although the common core features of English is maintained in the translation, it is noticeable also that the translation exploits the syntactic possibilities of the source language. That is the main reason why Igboanusi (2002, 2006) calls it Igbo English.

Therefore, the semantic translation domesticates source language ideology in the English target language and thereby engenders a variety of it, but beyond that, it at the same time estranges the message meanings to some English audience, who become semantically dislocated due to their lack of the Members Resources (cultural value and background information) of the Igbo. Subsequently, while the ideologies remain Igbo in cadence and tonality, it remains linguistically strange in the TL, English, which is bent and tended to carry the load of the Igbo experience. It is the linguistic strangeness achieved through the semantic approach that distances the Igbo ideologies from their American and European counter parts as seen in the communicative translation. Through the approach, the ideologies are uniquely set on the global stage through the medium, English to compete with the rest of the cultures of the world. In the process of the competition intercultural dialogue is stimulated. Intercultural comprehension is enhanced, too. Consequently, the world culture is reshaped. One of the main hallmarks of the semantic approach to translation is that it keeps the translator at an invisible realm in the translatorial action process and at the same time allows

him/her to bring in his/her creative abilities in situations of unpredictability engendered by semantic use variations. In the semantic translation, it can be noticed that a text can easily be traced back to the original through back translation, quite unlike in the communicative translations. However, one may argue like Birbili (2000), that back translation can cause a problem by instilling a false sense of security on the translator by demonstrating a spurious lexical equivalence. Sequel to that, the problem can be resolved through a rigorous conceptual comparability of meanings and multiple group confirmatory factor analysis (cf. Lin et al. 2012).

CONCLUSION

In this write up two basic types of definitions of translation have been explored and associated to the major approaches to translation. The thesis of this paper is that translation in all its ramifications is ideological because every approach propagates a certain version of reality, but that for a literary translation to be unique and represent the ideologies of the source in a global TL (English) the semantic approach to translation would be a good option because it recaptures and projects the specific socio-cultural conditions of the source text production into the TL socio-culture. In this way the oral socio-culture not only competes with the rest of some other socio-cultures in the same TL but also contributes to the remoulding of global culture. Such remoulding of culture is an essential feature of current poetics in translation practice (cf. Gentzler 1998: 170; Stolze 2008: 21). However, the problem of semantic dislocation mentioned above can be drastically reduced by critical examination of the text and by finding out the historical and cultural bases of the texts. The crux of the matter is that something new is created in the interaction between the SL and the TL, which is neither an exclusively source nor a target side phenomenon. It cannot be described satisfactorily solely in their respective terms, nor can it be shrunk to their respective limited concerns without incurring some loss.

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