

MONOLINGUAL LITERARY TRANSLATION: ISSUES AND COMMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The growing interest in translation studies arises from the compelling need to share knowledge both on bilateral and multilateral bases through the instrumentality of language. This feat has been accomplished in technology, science, arts and culture among others. The present study aimed at discovering the creative efforts of translating literary material from the source language (SL) into target language (TL). An expert in French and English translated a literary piece of 117 words originally written in English into French using the technique of monolingual translation. In analyzing the translation, it was discovered that the French translation produced more literal language than the English source text. Perhaps French and English have more in common linguistically and culturally. Expectedly, the utilitarian end of translation: producing the exact text in the translated text as in the source text was achieved through the use of various translation techniques. The suggestion here is to provoke more research interest in the area of translation since it (translation) facilitates co-operation among nations and peoples in a knowledge based society.

Keywords: Monolingual translation, Literary Materials, Language, Issues, Comments.

Introduction

One of the fields of scholarship through which knowledge is developed and shared with people of mutually unintelligible language backgrounds is literature. This field is developed from the three basic elements: prose, drama and poetry. These three major branches of literature also give rise to the adjective – literary. What is literary is creative, artistic, stylistic and sometimes unique. To create is to bring into existence something new or something that had never existed. It simply means being imaginative. Okono (2020) reports a creative style of an informant in presenting the aftermath of an accident before the actual event and likens it to the narrative technique of Chinua Achebe in *No Longer at Ease*. Similarly, Okono (2020)b observes that when the ingredients of good writing: clarity, economy, simplicity, unity and coherence are present in an essay of any genre, the essay becomes a creative and a logical write-up. Creativity has to do with aesthetics this is why descriptive essay appears to be the most difficult among the four types because it requires a higher degree of aptitude in aesthetics (Okono, 2021, P.110). Translation from a certain SL to a TL is not all that straightforward and easy; the translator is bound to witness some cultural barriers as Okono (2023) observes that some L₂users of English lack English vocabulary to express cultural processes and or/objects in vernacular.

Translation like any other aspect of language could be affected by the mother tongue of the translator. Urujzian (2018) examines linguistic issues such as language and its functions, language and regional variations i.e. mother tongue interference, language and culture, productivity and creativity as indices of internalization of the English language. She concludes that from the above indices English has become a global language, a window to the world and

the key to being a global citizen. Similarly, Enang, E.T., Urujzian, V.G. and Udoka S.T. (2013) aver that English has become a vital tool to communication in Nigeria in view of the multilingual posture of the country. Translation of literary material from English into Ibibio demands a certain degree of competence in creativity (Okpiliya and Akpan, 2016)). Such a level of competence can be developed from the study of literature for as Urujzian (2012) asserts, lack of serious study of literature affects students' communicative competence because they have not been exposed to the varieties of styles in language usages, vocabularies and expressions which is only possible through the study of literature.... The development of competence in literature can be rooted in the school curriculum. At the level of secondary school, Urujzian (2016) queries "How does the secondary school English language curriculum accommodate innovations and creative usages in the language?"

Okono (2023)b defines translation as the presentation of a message in a language (TL) other than that in which it was originally written(SL). (cf Finlay, 1971, P. 1) and as language engineering is the skillful application of methods and strategies in the organization of elements of language for the achievement of the desired effects, it therefore follows that translation of literary material and for this paper, prose from SL into TL would demand a lot of creativity. The above position is re-echoing the views of Quintessential (2015) which defines literary translation as the translation of literature such as novels, plays and poems (Akpan, 2023). The source goes further to say that a literary translator must be capable of translating feelings, cultural nuances, humour and other subtle elements of a source text (Affiah, Amaku, and Akpan, .The major objective of this study is to explore the creative efforts of the translator: from English into French at handling semantic gaps between the ST and TL. It is hoped that the findings and the suggestions in the course of this study will help translators sharpen their techniques and procedures in translating literary material from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL).

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2015) defines translation as the interpretation of the meaning of a text in one language (the source text and the production, in another language of an equivalent text (the 'target text' or the 'translation') that communicates the same meaning (Akpan, and Okon, 2022). The source argues that although interpreting can be considered a sub-category in regard to the analysis of the processes involved, in practice the skills required for these two activities are quite different. For instance, translators receive extensive practice with representative texts in various subject areas, learn to compile and manage glossaries of relevant terminologies and master the use of both current document-related software (for example, word processors, desk-stop publishing systems and graphics or presentation software) and computer-assisted translation (CAT) software tools. On the contrary, interpreters are trained in precise listening skills under taxing condition, memory and note-taking techniques for both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. The source maintains that translation remains essentially a human activity in spite of efforts to computerize or otherwise automate (Akpan, 2023). The source advises the translator to have a thorough knowledge of the grammar, semantics, syntax, idioms as well as the culture of the source language speakers. For the above goal to be attained, the source advises the translator to translate into the language of which he is the native speaker. The source delineates fourteen types of translation: specialized, commercial, computer, video-game, general, legal and literary translation. Others are medical, pedagogic, scientific, scholarly. Technical, dubbing and subtitling, religious and machine translation.

Kwintessential (2015) corroborates the above delineation of translation types but adds few others such as administrative, economic and financial translations. The source defines literary translation as the translation of literature such as novels, plays and poems. It goes further to say that a literary translator must be capable of also translating feelings, cultural nuances, humour and other elements of the source text.

For J.C. Catford, translation is the presentation of a message in the language other than that in which it was originally written. What is written can technically be regarded as text, for, according to Catford:

Translation may be defined as ... the
Replacement of textual material in
one language (SL) by equivalent
textual material in another language
(TL) (J.C. Catford, 1965 p 20).

In his definition Catford opposes translation between medium levels. That is to say that he does not consider translation from a written medium to a spoken medium vice versa.

Baker (1999) adopts a bottom up approach in translation. She starts with simple words and phrases and then to larger grammatical units before considering pragmatics and context of culture. While agreeing with Snell-Hornby (1988) and Hatim and Mason's (1990) model of translation process that textual analysis should proceed from the "top down", from macro to the micro level, from text to sign as well as text- type and context as starting points, Baker chooses the reverse order to analyze translation processes. Baker like Nida and Taber (1974) models her translation procedures on Halliday's systemic grammar regarding units of structure of grammar such as subject, predicator, complement and adjunct (SPCA).

Ian Finlay (1971) differentiates between translation and interpretation. According to the source, translation is the presentation of a message in a language (TL) other than that in which it was originally written while interpretation is the presentation of a message in a language in which it was originally spoken.

Vinay and Darbelnet (1977) examines seven procedures of translation. These are: borrowing, calque, literal, transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation. The first three are direct or literal translation techniques while the other four are what the source calls oblique translation methods.

A relevant aspect of the theory of literary translation is the goal of dynamic equivalence sometimes referred to as the goal of equal response. Nida and Taber (1974) define dynamic equivalence as the degree to which the receptor of the message in the receptor's language responds to it in substantially the same manner as the receptor in the source language.

Quantitative and Qualitative Limitations

This work could not incorporate a larger corpus of source language text due to intended of the paper. A weakness of the study is that the translator was not regulated in the exercise: he was allowed to consult sources.

Methodology

The literary piece which is used in this study has seven sentences numbered accordingly in the two languages: English and French, for proper comparison and analysis. Creativity will be measured in terms of the translator's ability to achieve in the target language those words, situations and events that do not have one-to-one correspondence between the source language and the target language. Each sentence in the source text and the translations for instance, the first sentence, is coded ST1 and so on. The French language will also be coded TL₁. The first paragraph of chapter six of *The Voice of Man* has been adjudged by enlightened readers as very descriptive which underscores the rationale for its choice for the study. The French translator though not a native speaker has taught French in the university for more than two decades, an Associate Professor and a prolific writer in French has travelled and studied in France and francophone countries severally. He has both the competence and the performance to handle this type of translation effectively. Above all, the translator has both Master's and Doctorate Degrees in translation from English into French and vice versa. He is currently the Head of Department of Foreign Languages, University of Uyo, Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted for this work is Applied Linguistics. Catford (1965) sees the theory of translation as the theory of applied linguistics which is concerned with a certain type of relation between languages and is consequently a branch of comparative linguistics. Catford describes applied linguistics as a term used to cover all those applications of the theory and categories of general linguistics which go beyond (i) the elucidation of how languages work and (ii) the description of a particular language or languages for its/their own sake. For Lyons (1981) applied linguistics is a sub-field of linguistics which has as its concerns the concepts and findings of linguistics to a variety of practical tasks. This theory is relevant to the study in respect of the application of the principles and techniques of monolingual translation to translate the source text into the target text and in this case from English into French.

Data Analysis

The first sentence in the source text was translated literally into French. The second sentence originally written in figurative style was translated similarly into French. Sentence three was another figurative sentence in ST which was equally exegeted in figurative style. The fourth sentence written in figurative style in English was equally translated in figurative style into French. The fifth sentence in ST was an idiomatic expression and was translated into an equivalent idiom in French- TL. Sentence six in ST was literal and was equally translated in literal style into French. The seventh sentence in ST was figurative expression and was translated in figurative style into French. The monolingual translations now follow in Table 1.

Table 1 showing English – Source Text and French – Target language

English – ST	French – TL
ST1: The sky remained blue and clear	TL1: Le ciel fut bleu et clair
ST2: The sun travelled toward the far west and began to bid farewell to Ikot Iseng.	TL2: Le soleil voyagava vers l'ouest lointain et commença à dire adieu à Ikot Iseng
ST3: The foliage of the shrubs around the village square grew weary of the day's toil	TL3: Les feuillages des abrisseaux autour de la place du village devinrent lassés de labeur

and longed for a refreshment while the freshness and the serenity of IkotIseng faded in people's eyes.	du jour et desirerent un rafraîsissementtandisque la sérénitéd'IkotIsengfutréléguédans les yeux des gens.
ST4: The fresh sweat which oozed out of people's pores metamorphosed into colourless oil and nerves and limbs started to flag.	TL4: La nouvelle sueur quisuîntèrent des pores des gens se métamorphosa en l'huileincolore et les nerfs et les membrescommencèrent à languir.
ST5: But the day dragged on.	TL5: Mais le jour traîa.
ST6: The flowering leaves of the lawn that were cut down by the Church sanitation team withered and became dark green.	TL6: Les feuilles en fleur de la pelouse quifurentcoupéesparl'équipe de l'église se fanèrent et devinrentvertesfoncées.
ST7: The three heaps of hay bore eloquent testimony of the amount of work done on the Church premises.	TL7: Les troistas de foinstémoignèrent de quantité du travail qui futréaliséedans les locaux del'église.

Table 2 shows the Data Analysis of Literal and Figurative (Creative) Translations

Sentences	SL(English)	TL (French)
S1	Literal	Literal
S2	Figurative	Figurative
S3	Figurative	Figurative
S4	Figurative	Figurative
S5	Idiomatic	Idiomatic
S6	Literal	Literal
S7	Figurative	Literal

KEY: The code: S1 stands for sentence one, SL stands for Source Language and TL stands for Target Language.

Table 3 Shows the type of figurative sentence and idiom in the source text.

Sentences	Sentence Type	Figure of Speech
S2	Figurative	Personification
S3	Figurative	Personification
S4	Figurative	Synecdoche
S5	Idiomatic	Transparent
S7	Figurative	Personification

Discussion

The French translator in this exercise has shown tremendous passion for the language in finding target language equivalents for the source text (ST). His background in French and his area of specialization as a translologist are germane to his success in the exercise of translating. But he uses simple past tense also known as le passé simple to exegete translation of literal material from English into French. It should be noted that the source text for this exercise is a paragraph of a narrative which justifies the choice of the verb tense in French.

In using le passé simple 'fut' which is a form of the verb: faire meaning to do in French the translator seeks to preserve the integrity of the TL in handling weather. The standard expressions: il fait beau temps, il fait froid, il fait chaud in French meaning the weather is fine, the weather is hot and the weather is cold should be well noted. For an international reader of the translation, the verb 'fut' would be more apt than for example, the word for word restait in l'imparfait.

His exegesis of sentence two: a personification in English an exact personification in French with all the lexical items word for word is apt. In translating 'far west' as l'ouest lointain the normal sequence of French syntax of adjectives post modifying nouns is reflected. What is of paramount significance is the goal of dynamic equivalence. It must be noted that the English standard expression 'to bid farewell' is changed creatively to the more common 'à dire adieu' in French which in back translation means to say good bye.

The translation of sentence three is interesting. The translator avoided the word arbustes meaning bush (shrub) and went for 'abrisseaux' which pointedly means shrub. His selection of TL lexes among many synonyms underscores his preservation of merit of translation and preference for terminological exactitude. Linguistically, the translation of the figurative sentence has also highlighted syntactic differences between the SL and the TL. The adverbial phrase 'around the village square' is translated 'autour de la place du village'. We note the use of partitif verb in French which is almost non-existent in English. The phrase 'grew weary' in ST is translated 'devinrent lasses' in TL which in back translation would mean became tired or weary. The change is in the verb while the adverb remains the same. The translation is apt. Except for the above verbs: grew devinrent (became) all other lexical items in the ST and TL in sentence three are in what is called word-to-word correspondence or mô-t-à-mô-t in French.

It could be debatable in linguistic terms why the translator uses la nouvelle sueur and not la sueur fraîche. This perhaps portrays the fact that translation is also subjective no matter our scientific approach. Nouvelle means new while fraîche means fresh. The question is why does he change from one-to-one correspondence to dynamic equivalence in this item?

The translator must have deliberately omitted the word: freshness in the noun phrase: 'the freshness and the serenity of Ikot Iseng' Otherwise the two words must have coalesced in his mind; he only translated 'serenity'. If he did not omit any lexical item he would have had: la fraîcheur et la sérénité. Baker(1999) is instructive on omission. Her advice is that if the meaning conveyed by a particular item or expression is not vital enough to the development of the text to justify distracting the reader with lengthy explanations, a translator should omit translating the word or expression in question.

The translation of the idiomatic expression 'but the day dragged on' as 'mais le jour traîna' is apt. The semantic properties of the French word: traîner are of significance. 'Dragged on' in back translation provide a beautiful idiom in word-for-word correspondence.

The exegesis of 'dark green' in sentence six as "vertes foncées" could not have brought about the goal of dynamic equivalence needed in this type of work. Note that noir means black but foncées is dark and it so stated exactly in the French-English dictionary. Another apt translation

is the use of the reflexive verb: 'se fanèrent' which one of the shades of meaning is to fade. Additionally, this verb has to do with hay which is thematic in this text.

A typical correspondent between ST and TL in this exercise is the use of passive voice. Note: 'furent coupées': were cut (down) in sentence six; and 'fut réalisée': done in sentence seven. In a language such as Ibibio language spoken in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, the passive voice elements could have been changed to active voice in the process of translation since there is no passive voice in Ibibio language system.

An issue of significance in the monolingual literary translation is the change from phrase in ST to clause in TL in sentence seven: 'eloquent testimony' is changed to 'témoignèrent éloquentement' which in back translation means testified eloquently. This was a way of handling 'bore eloquent testimony' in ST. In order to achieve dynamic equivalence, the translator brought the sense of bearing (carrying) in English verb to the noun in French: 'témoignage' and changed the part of speech from noun to verb: 'témoignèrent'. The change from phrase to clause is called rank shifting in English. In this arrangement the adjective: eloquent in the phrase 'eloquent testimony' was changed to adverb in French: éloquentement meaning eloquently. Through this creative effort, the translator has achieved the ultimate goal of translation: dynamic equivalence.

Conclusion

The translation from English into French became more literal hence French had equivalent of all the 117 English words of the passage. From the colour blue : bleu, to the village square: place du village, dark green: vertes foncées and testimony: témoignèrent. The conclusion is that the translations have achieved the requirements expected in the source text for the speakers of French. This type of sharing of knowledge through the instrumentality of language is profoundly relevant in a knowledge based society.

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