

CULTURAL INTERFERENCE IN THE TRANSLATION OF PROVERBS: A CASE STUDY OF OLAROTIMI'S THE GODS ARE NOT TO BLAME

Lanre-Atoyebi, Kehinde Omowumi (PhD)

Department of English, Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Nigeria
omowumi.kehinde1972@gmail.com

DOI: 10.47760/cognizance.2026.v06i02.007

Abstract: Cultural interference in translation remains a significant challenge, particularly in the translation of culturally bound expressions such as proverbs, which are deeply rooted in the worldview, history, and values of a given society. Translation, therefore, goes beyond mere linguistic transfer and often involves negotiating complex cultural meanings that may not have direct equivalents in the target language. Despite the relevance of this issue, scholarly works focusing specifically on cultural interference in the translation of proverbs, especially within African dramatic texts, are relatively scarce. This study aims to fill this gap by examining cultural interference in the translation of proverbs in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. The objectives of the study are to ascertain the presence of cultural interference in the translation of proverbs in the selected drama text, to identify the difficulties encountered in intercultural translation, and to investigate the possibility of achieving perfect translations of culturally bound proverbs. The study adopts Skopos Theory as its theoretical framework, given its emphasis on the purpose of translation as the determining factor for translation methods and strategies. This approach is suitable for analyzing how translators make choices when dealing with culturally specific expressions. The findings reveal that cultural interference is inevitable in translation, making perfect translation of proverbs difficult and often leading translators to resort to strategies such as transliteration. However, the study also finds that cultural similarities between the source and target languages can facilitate more accurate translations. It is therefore recommended that the translation of culturally bound expressions like proverbs should be guided by the translator's understanding of context and the search for the closest possible lexical equivalence.

Keywords: Cultural interference, Translation, Proverbs, Equivalence, source language

1.1 Introduction

Etymologically, the word “translation” is derived from a Latin word “translatum” which means to “carry” or to “bring”. An effective translation presupposes a good knowledge of the target language (the language you want to translate to) as well have a good knowledge of the culture of the said language (source text) in order to have a good translation (target text). These three considerations are found to be necessary and important in the field of translation.

Translating as an activity and translation as the result of this activity are inseparable from the concept of culture. The translational capacity of culture is an important criterion of culture’s specificity. Culture operates largely through translational activity since only by the inclusion of new texts into culture can the culture undergo innovation as well as perceive its specificity.

Translation involving the transposition of thoughts expressed in one language by one social group into the appropriate expression of another group, entails a process of cultural decoding, recording and encoding. As cultures are increasingly brought into greater contact with one another, multicultural considerations are brought to bear to an ever-increasing degree. Therefore, in the process of translation, the translation does not just deal with words written at a certain time, space and socio-political situation, but the cultural aspect of the text should be taken into consideration. The process of transfer i.e. recoding across cultures should consequently allocate corresponding attributes vis-a-vis the target culture to ensure credibility in the eyes of the target reader. This is a situation in which a translator takes the source text (ST) and turning it into the target text in another different language (TT). This is in line with the description of Holmes Toury, cited by Munday (2004:10).

1.1.1 Language and Culture

Culture in this study is not only seen or understood as the advanced intellectual development of mankind as reflected in the arts, but it also refers to all socially conditioned aspects of human life (Snell-Hornby, 1988, Hymes 1964).

A society’s culture consists of all that one needs to know or believe, so as to operate in a manner that is acceptable to its members. Culture is not material phenomenon. It does not consist

of things, people, behaviour or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their model of perceiving and dealing with their circumstances. Culture is social experiences and values of a group of people and how they perceived and understood Akindele and Adegbite (2004).

Culture is therefore seen as a totality of knowledge and model for perceiving thing.

According to Snell-Hornby (1988), language is dynamic and an expression of culture and individuality of the speakers, who perceives the world through language. It is seen as the totality of knowledge and knowledge representation in the mind. According to Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf in their Sapir Whorf hypothesis, thought does not precede language but conditioned by it.

It should be noted also that, for adequate understanding of the text, the context is very important. That is the context of situation and culture. This is according to Halliday's theory of context. This is the first requirement for translating any given text. Therefore, translating without understanding a text is like an effort in futility and understanding a text without understanding its culture would be impossible to translate correctly.

According to Humboldt's idea, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and Halliday's idea have great implications for translation. The notion that language conditions thoughts and that they are both bound up with the individual culture of a given community would imply that translation is impossible. This is because one cannot translate one's thought, stated in a specific language into another different language because the system of thought in the two languages cannot be the same (each language is unique). Therefore, ultimate translation is impossible where it is, there would be lots of cultural interference and linguistic errors (i.e. lack of linguistic competence in the target language).

Ironically, Humboldt's view about inner and outer forms of language which is later developed into the concepts which is later developed into deep structure and surface structure by Chomsky. Inner form and deep structure are generally known as ideas. All ideas are universal. only the surface structure and the outer forms are different.

According to Snell Hornby (1988), in that case, translation is theoretically impossible always. Consequently and theoretically too, perfect translation is determined by how far the source language (SL) text is embedded in the culture and the greater the distance between the source language text (SLT) and target language text (TLT), the higher the degree of impossibility.

1.1.2 Language, Culture and Translation

Language performs both transactional and interactional functions in texts generally. This is why writers tend to employ language due to the various forms in which language perform these functions. Bamberg (2019) asserts that language forms the important building blocks in the formation of social construct that are achieved in interactions such as emotional ones.

Nothing defines culture as distinctly as its language. Language is an expression of culture and individuality of its speakers. It influences the way the speaker perceives the world. This principle has a far-reaching implication for translation. If language influences thoughts and culture, it means that ultimate translation is impossible. However, Chomsky's "deep" and "surface" structures imply that ultimate translation is possible. In practice, therefore, the possibility depends strictly on the purpose and how deep the source text is embedded in the culture, the more difficult it is to work on. Therefore, the purpose of the translation should be considered before translating culturally-bound expressions.

In time past, translation deals only with language. The cultural perspective has not been looked at. This is evident in most definitions given years back. For example, Cartford (1965) sees translation as the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language. Savory (1968) maintains that translation is made possible by an equivalent of thought that lies behind its different verbal expressions. Nida and Taber (1969) see translation as reproducing in the receptor's language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message in meaning and style. Brislin (1976) identifies translation as the general term referring to the transfer of thoughts and ideas from one language (SL) to another (TL).

It is observed that in the definitions given between 1960s-and 1970s, there is no clear indication that culture is taken into consideration. It is only the definition given by Nida and Taber that one can closely infer from their explanation on the '*closest natural equivalent*' that cultural consideration is considered. This is rooted in the practice of the Bible translation of the expression *Lamb of God* into Eskimo language. Lamb symbolizes innocence, especially in the context of sacrifice but Eskimo culture does not know "lamb". Therefore, the word does not symbolize anything. He now chooses to use "*seal of God*" instead of *Lamb of God*. Considering the important roles performed by culture in human's life, it is expected to be translated especially if the text to be translated is embedded into a specific culture. Snell-Hornby (1988) in her theory sees language as an integral part of culture.

1.1.3 Language, Culture and Proverbs

There is great interrelatedness between language and culture. This is revealed in terms of language being a part of culture and its vehicle. The totality of the way of life of an entire society is known as culture. This implies that different aspects of human life such as codes of manners, dressing, religion, ritual, norms, behaviour, belief systems and language. According to Odebunmi (2008), language therefore expresses the patterns and structures of culture and consequently influences human thinking, manners and judgement.

Four key components of culture have been identified according to Odebunmi (2008) citing Hault (1969): Values which control other components of culture, deal with what a society attaches importance to; norms relate to pattern of behaviour designed for individual member of the society in particular situations; institutions relate to the divisions of a society where values and norms are applied; artifacts are objects that are produced from the values and norms of a culture. All these reflect society's systems, beliefs and world views.

Proverbs are expressions recognised by people as embodying the wisdom and philosophy of their ancestors (Umeasiegbu, 2007). Proverbs deal with issues that border on value, norms, institutions and artefacts of society across the whole gamut of the people's experiences (Odebunmi, 2008). Proverbs therefore are a tool to describe and express social, cultural, natural

and other events and practices. Therefore translating a proverb that originally existed in a culture or language (SL) to another language or culture (TL) brings about cultural interference. Except in situating where the idea(s) behind the proverb cut across both cultures, hence, the receptor would be confused and the goal of translation would not be achieved.

It is worthy of note that African proverbs have origin or background and explanation that are rated in the socio-cultural life of the people. Yoruba people to be precise value proverbs very highly, it is part of their culture for they consider them as the wisdom and love of the race (Faturoti, 2016). That is why speakers, writers and general users of the Yoruba language employ proverbs as cogent means of communication in virtually all their quotation activities. Proverbs are also used to articulate their views, educate, encourage, warn, advise rebuke, praise and oil their wheel of interactions, as pleasing as possible. Quite a number of writers of novels, poetry and drama texts ensure copious use of proverbial sayings to drive home their points with the view to making their works functional and culturally relevant. Therefore, Yoruba novelists have done a lot to sustain, promote and propagate proverbs considered not only as one of the oldest and most important genres of their societal folklores but also as the cornerstone of their society's culture.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problems

This paper identifies some of the difficulties encountered in inter-cultural translation using Ola Rotimi's "The Gods are not to Blame" as a case study. Some of these difficulties include idiomatic expressions and colloquialism, cultural references and allusions, semantic and pragmatic differences, technical and logistical changes, including terminology management. Inter-cultural translation poses significant challenges due to linguistic, cultural and contextual differences. Words and phrases have different connotations and associations in various cultures, making it difficult to convey the intended meaning (Baker, 2018).

Cultural references and allusions also pose significant challenges. Translators are expected to consider the target audience's cultural background and familiarity with specific references. Bassnett (2014) emphasizes the importance of cultural competence in translation,

highlighting the need to balance fidelity to the original text with cultural sensitivity. Additionally, culturally contextual understanding is crucial, as pragmatic context, historical context and non-verbal cues can impact translation accuracy (GUH, 2014).

This paper further finds out if culturally-bound expressions like proverbs which are rich and embedded in culture translatable and still sustain their messages.

It observes critically the cultural reflection in the translated proverbs from the SL to the TL and examines if the recipient or reader in the TL would have a perfect understanding of the concept or message being communicated.

1.3 Justification of the Study

The fact is that there are few works devoted to the linguistic analysis of drama text. “The gods are not to blame”, especially from the translation angle. Most researchers do not look at the text from the translation perspective and the effect it might have on the TL readers (whose culture may be completely different) if they get the same impressions in terms of the meaning, message and style. For example, Monye (1995) analyses all the proverbs in the text in relation to the contextual usage without anchoring it on any theoretical framework. Other studies such as Ogbulogo (2002) merely mention the subject with reference to “The gods are not to Blame” in his discussion of other works of Ola Rotimi. Angbogu and Ahizih (2020) look at the language used in text from a psychological perspective. He examines the use of language in conveying emotions in the text.

This paper therefore looks at this text from the translation angle so as to fill the gap and to shed more light into the translatability of proverbs in the text from SL to TL and how culture interferes and reflects in the translated proverbs.

1.4 Aim and Objectives

The purpose of this study are to:

- * To ascertain if there is cultural interference in the translation of proverbs using Ola Rotimi “The Gods are not to blame” as case study;

-
- * find out the difficulties encountered in inter-cultural translation from SL to TL;
 - * investigate if perfect translation of culturally bound proverbs is possible; and
 - * make some helpful suggestions on the appropriate procedures that could be used to translate culturally-bound expressions.

1.5 Literature Review

Several research have been carried out on cultural interference in translation and the difficulties encountered in translating culturally-bound text.

Anwar Harganti and Mukti (2020) analyzed translation of Aladin's movie script using the Motina and Albir's (2002) translation technique. The findings of their study showed that linguistic compression was used the most prominently at 56.52%, while other techniques occur less frequently (10% and below).

Another research was conducted by Kuswahono (2019) to investigate the translation of cultural words in the Davinci Code novel from English to Indonesian. The study revealed that pure borrowing occurs in most (118 occurrence), followed by transposition (23 occurrences), while the rest at 10 or less times.

Sodiq, Budiman and Hidayat (2020) conducted research to analyse religious tourism brochures. In their study, they revealed that the translation technique that were used the most in translating is borrowing.

Al Farisi (2020) also analysed the religious text in Quaranic metaphor, using the same technique. The result showed that the application of the literal translation presented the primary meaning of the Quran verses accurately while application presents the secondary meaning transparently with the target language as the orientation.

Munday (2001) describes these five different types of equivalence i.e (1) denotative equivalence is related to equivalence of the extra-linguistic content of a text; (2) connotative equivalence is related to the lexical choices, especially between near-synonyms; (3) text-normative equivalence is related to text types, with texts behaving in different ways; (4) pragmatic equivalence, or 'communicative equivalence', is oriented towards the receiver of the

text or message, and (5) formal equivalence is related to the form and aesthetics of the text, includes word plays and the individual stylistic features of the source text.

Snell-Hornby (1988) clarifies when the target text is expected to be a faithful reproduction of the source text, then equivalence is defined as identity (of meaning and/or form), not necessarily in the strict sense of interchangeability and complete reversibility, but more often in the sense of equal value or correspondence.

Significantly, none of the studies cited above addressed cultural interference in the translation of proverbs to be precise. This study therefore bridges the gap by focusing on selected proverbs in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are not to blame*. The study critically examines the culture that is reflected in each of the proverbs, the situation that warrants the use of the proverbs, the context of usage and the Yoruba equivalent which if critically observed, one will see the element of transliteration from the source language to the target language.

1.6 Review of Translation Theories and Theoretical Framework

About five translation theories will be reviewed and the theoretical framework chosen for this paper will be established. Some of the translation theories to be reviewed include:

- * Justa Horz-Manttari's theory of translation action.
- * Hans J. Vermeer's Skopos theory which centered on the purpose of a target text (TT)
- * John Dryden Triadic Model theory of translation
- * Mary Snell-Hornby's Integrated Approach
- * Cartford and Newmark Translation Theories

1.6.1 Justa Horz-Manttari's theory of translation action

She takes up concept from communication theory and action theory with the aim (among others) of providing a model and guidelines applicable to a wide range of professional translation situation. This theory views translation as a purpose-driven, outcome oriented human interaction and focuses on the process of translation as message transmitter involving inter-cultural transfer. She stresses the fact that inter-cultural transfer should take place satisfactorily.

However, this theory fails to consider cultural differences in more detail. Individual culture is unique and there exist lots of differences between one culture and another. Therefore, each culture should be given recognition and the issue of cultural transfer should be moderated. Also, this theory disregards source text (ST). There is need to be a close relationship between the source text (ST) and target text (TT). This relationship is determined by the purpose of the translation.

1.6.2 Hans J. Vermeer's Skopos Theory

“Skopos” is a Greek word for ‘aim’ or ‘purpose’. This theory basically focuses on the purpose of translation which determines the translation methods and strategies that are to be employed in order to produce a functionally adequate result. This result is the target (TT). Skopos theory addresses two important facts which are: the reason or purpose for translating a source text and what the function of the target text (TT) will be. He further gives five rules about a TT that a target text is determined by its skopos (purpose/aim) and that it offers information in a TT culture and language from the source culture and source language. Since a target culture differs from a source culture, a target text must be coherent with the source text (i.e. internal and inter-textual coherence).

Despite Vermeer's view points, Skopos theory does not pay sufficient attention to the linguistic nature of the ST nor to the reproduction of micro-features in the TT. The goal may be achieved but there is a neglect of the stylistic and semantic levels of individual segment.

1.6.3 John Dryden Triadic Model theory of translation

John Dryden reduces all translation to three categories which include:

- **Metaphrase:** Word by word and line-by-line translation which corresponds to literal translation.
- **Paraphrase:** Sense-for-sense translation. Here, the author is kept in view by the translation. The author's words are not strictly followed as his sense.
- **Imitation:** Forsaking both words and sense. This is a free translation and it is more or less adaptation. He rejects imitation especially where the translator uses the source text (ST) as a

pattern to write as he supposes that the author would have done. He therefore prefers paraphrase and advises that metaphrase and imitation should be avoided.

Later, Dryden had to shift his stand and changes his stand to a point between paraphrase and literal translation.

Dryden's theory does not pay sufficient attention to the linguistic nature of the source text and the stylistic elements in the source text are also neglected.

1.6.4 Mary Snell-Hornby's Integrated Approach

She integrates a wide variety of different linguistic and literary concepts into translation. It is an interesting attempt to bring together diverse areas of translation and to bridge the gap between the commercial and artistic translation. She removes rigid division between different types of languages, she opines that translation studies should not just focus on a particular area or field, be it commercial or literary, but should be encompassing.

However, an attempt to incorporate all genres and text types into such a detailed single overarching analytical framework may lead to inconsistency.

1.6.5 Cartford (1965) and Newmark (1981) Translation Theories

The contribution of Cartford (1965) and Newmark (1981) to translation as a field of study cannot be over emphasized. Cartford had a preference for a more cultural linguistic-based approach to translation. His approach is based on the linguistic work of Firth (1950) and Halliday (1994). His focus in translation theory is the introduction of types and shift of translation. He defines them as departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from source language to the target language.

He identifies two major types of translation shifts, which include level shift and category shift. Level shift is a situation whereby the source language item at one linguistic level has a target language at a different level. Category shift is divided into four types which include structure shift (grammatical change between the SL and the TL), class shift (a SL item is replaced with a TL item which belong to a different grammatical class. unit shift (involves

changes in rank) and intra-system shift (when SL and TL possess systems which approximately formally as to their constitution, but when translation involves selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system). For example when a SL singular becomes a TL plural.

However, his view was criticized by Snell-Hornby (1988) due to these facts: Cartford's definition of textual equivalence is circular, his theory's reliance on bilingual informants is hopelessly inadequate and his example sentences are isolated and simplistic. Some linguistic aspects are not taken into consideration such as textual, cultural and situational aspect.

Newmark's approach to translation is text-based. He is of the opinion that translation is not culturally affiliable as some other researchers believe. He sees translation as an attempt to replace a written message and or statement in one by the same message and or statement in another language.

Newmark sees equivalence effect as an unlikely result in two cases. If the purpose of the source language text is to affect and the target language translation is to inform or vice versa. Also, if there is a pronounced cultural gap between the SL and the TL text. Monabaker (1992), six years after Newmark's view, focuses on types of equivalence and is of the opinion that equivalence is influenced by many linguistic and cultural factors.

The theoretical frameworks used in this paper are Vermeer's Skopos theory and John Dryden's triadic model theory. The research also employed the theoretical assumptions of Barret's (2012) psychological constructionist theory.

Skopo's theory was chosen because the focus of this framework is hinged on the purpose of the translation which determines the translation method and strategy. Ola Rotimi translates the proverbs in his text in order to reveal the values, norms artefacts of his society to the society (readers). Some of these proverbs are direct translation (word-by-word) from the Yoruba language to English (transliteration). This reveals one of the triadic model of Dryden (metaphrase). Baret constructionist theory states that language is a fundamental element in emotion. Language helps to constitute emotions and it plays a crucial role in emotion experiences and perceptions. Most of the proverbs used are emotionally instigated.

1.7 Research Methodology

The study draws data from Ola Rotimi's drama text "The Gods are not to Blame" ten proverbs in which Yoruba culture are reflected in and expressing emotions of anger, fear, distrust, suspicion and admiration were randomly selected from the text. The secondary data include books, journals, articles and the internet. The data were analyzed using the frameworks of Dryden's systematic theory of translation, Vermeer's Skopo's theory of translation and Barnet's psychological constructionist theory. In analyzing the data, the proverbs selected in the text were identified and numbered serially for easy reference. The context at which the proverbs are used were discussed. The Yoruba equivalents of the proverbs were written out and the culture they depict were also mentioned. Descriptive approach was imbibed and qualitative content analysis was adopted.

1.8 Textual Analysis

"The Gods are not to blame" is a drama text which portrays predestination, crime and punishment, self-knowledge, power, ethnicity etc. It is the belief of Yoruba culture that every man has his peculiar destiny and fate which everyone believes can never change and that no man has power to change it. Odewale is born with a curse that he will kill his father and marry his mother. Every effort to disallow the occurrence proves abortive. In an attempt not to make it happen, the baby was given to one of the servants (Alaka) to take him to the bush and kill him. This baby was not killed but handed over to a hunter in the bush. When he is grown up and was told the message, he runs away to avoid the fulfillment without knowing that he is running into his fate. He commits the crimes of patricide and incest ignorantly. He kills his father unknowingly when he meets him on his farm land and his father mocks his tribe, unknown to him that he is his father.

He is later made a king in his own town Kutuje after saving them from the tribe of Ikolu. He has ignorantly fulfilled the destiny as prophesised by the gods. He takes an oath to find the killer of the former king and swears to punish the killer of the former king (his father) by pulling

out the person's eyes and banishing him from the kingdom. This eventually becomes his lot on discovery.

Ola Rotimi uses proverbs, metaphoric expressions, simile, incantations, and apostrophes to drive home his point. Our point of focus is how proverbs in the text are used to reflect culture.

1.8.1 Analysis of Ten selected Proverbs in Ola Rotimi's *the Gods Are Not to blame*

Proverbs are extensively used in Ola Rotimi's "The Gods are not to blame". According to Umeasiegbe (2007), proverbs are expressions recognised by people as embodying the wisdom and philosophy of their ancestors. These proverbs portray Yoruba cultural values. The selected proverbs will be analysed one after the other. The context, Yoruba equivalent, cultural interference and the English explication will be revealed.

1.

Proverb: "The snail may try, but it cannot cast off its shell"

Context:

Voice: You have a curse on you son.

Odewale: What kind of course?

Voice: You cannot run away from it, the gods have willed that you will kill your father, and marry your mother.

Odewale: Me! Kill my own father and marry my own mother!

Voice: It has been willed.

Odewale: What must I do then not to carry out this will of the gods?

Voice: Nothing, To run away would be foolish.

"The snail may try but it cannot cast off its shell". Just stay where you are.

Yoruba Equivalent (translation): *Ìgbín kì í binu ìkàrahun ara rẹ̀, kó sọ ọ̀ nù.*

Cultural Interference: The conversation/dialogue between the voice and Odewale reveals Yoruba culture about their beliefs in the gods to tell them what the future holds for them and that man has no control over his destiny. This is replicated in the proverb.

Comments: The translation of the proverb in the Yoruba language is not word-for-word but reveals one of Dryden's triadic model (paraphrase), which is sense for sense

2.

Proverb: What use are greetings to a dying body?

Context:

First Chief: People of our land!

The kind stands before you in greetings.

First Citizen: What use are greetings to a dying body?.

Chiefs (shocked): Aha!

Odewale: (gestures to Chiefs). Let them talk. (Page 9)

Yoruba Equivalent: *Òkú kó be àlàyè ni aájò ìkìní.*

Cultural Interference: The culture of the Yoruba embraces greetings in whatever situations. This is revealed in the greetings of the king despite the pandemic in the city. There is a binary opposition between greetings and the dying body.

Comments: A critical look at the translation above, reveals sense-for-sense (paraphrase) according to Dryden's theory. But the same key words are mentioned "òkú" – "the dying", (a noun and continuous action) "ìkìní" – greetings.

3.

Proverb: When a chameleon brings forth a child, is not that child expected to dance? (page 9).

Context:

Third Citizen: When the chameleon brings forth a child, is not that child expected to dance? As we have made you king, act as king.

Yoruba Equivalent: *Ìgbómo jáde ògà dì dandan kí omo re o mújó.*

Cultural Interference: This proverb is largely derived from the fauna of the Yoruba. It makes reference to the social structure of the Yoruba community, the genetic dancing skill of the chameleon after birth. This reveals the accusation posed to Odewale for not doing what he is supposed to do as a king..

Comments: The Skopos (aim) of this proverb is to make the king (Odewale) act as a king and find solution to the sickness in the land. The translation in the target language is a direct translation from the SL which corresponds to literal translation or metaphrase according to Dryden. This is a social-crises motivated proverb.

4.

Proverb: “Secrets of the owl must not be known in the day light” (Page 62).

Context:

Odewale: Hunter Ogundele is not my father, his wife Mobike is not my mother. You said so. Well, who gave me life?

Alaka: It is well. I will tell you I... I but... I beg you let us go inside you and I alone in private. Secret of the owl must not be known in the day light.

Yoruba Equivalent: *Ẹyẹ òwìwí kí'n sọ aṣírí ara rẹ ní oju mọmọ.*

Cultural Interference: Yoruba culture embraces privacy especially when revelation of secrets in the open could lead to further problems or when it bothers on taboo issues like in the case of Odewale who kills his father and marries his mother (incest) Elders in the community handle such cases with confidentiality.

Comment: The translation here is sense by sense translation from the source language to the target language.

5.

Proverb: Two rams cannot drink from the same bucket at the same time. They will lock horns (page 34).

Context: Odewale accuses Aderopo falsely but Aderopo denies the accusation. Thus, Odewale puts up a defence filled with emotions of anger and remarks: “Two rams cannot drink from the same bucket at the same time. They will lock horns”.

Yoruba Equivalent: *Àgbò méjì kò lè mu omi nínú kete kan náà.*

Cultural Interference: In Yoruba land, when a king rules, he is suspicious and guards himself with spiritual powers against any attacker or enemy. By this proverb, Odewale threatens Aderopo, who is presented as the ram that thug his throne with him.

Comment: The proverb is a direct translation from the source language to a target language, except for the fact that the last clause is not translated in the target language.

6.

Proverb: “All lizards lie prostrate, how can a man tell which lizard suffers from bellyache? (Page 13).

Context: The third chief asks Odewale to point to one person plotting evil against the throne. Odewale says he cannot mention name because all lizards lie prostrate...

Yoruba Equivalent: *Gbogbo álángbà ló da ikùn délé, a kò mo èyí tí inú ñ run.*

Cultural Interference: In Yoruba culture, like in other cultures too, human beings are deceitful and are not trust-worthy. Most enemies pretend as friends and display the greatest hospitality and care. You don't know whom to trust. This is implied by Odewale's proverb.

Comments: There is word by word and line-by-line translation which corresponds to literal translation from SL to TL (Dryden's metaphrase).

7.

Proverb: “...we have left out pot unwashed and our food now burns” (Page 21).

Context: Aderopo that was sent to find out the reason behind the illness in the land. he comes back and feels reluctant to deliver the full message from the oracle. Odewale filled with anger orders Aderopo to speak quickly. Oderopo now says: “The oracle warns us that we have left our pot unwashed and our food now burns” (meaning that the unexpected has happened due to our negligence).

Yoruba Equivalent: *Èpa ò gbóró mó.*

Cultural Interference: The proverb is a message from the oracle (Orunmila) which Yoruba culture so much believe in as God's representative to investigate into the future and reveal every secret. The message is proverbially structured to depict the situation in the land of Kutuje.

Comment: The translation here is just a paraphrase of the SL.

8.

Proverb: “When crocodiles eat their own eggs, what will they not do to the flesh of a frog? (Page 23).

Context: When one of the chiefs in Kutuje recounts how king Adetuba was killed in a bush near Ede, Odewale becomes very suspicious again filled with emotions of distrust and suspicion, that if they could kill their own king, what else could they not do to him a stranger.

Yoruba Equivalent: *Nígbà tí oòní bán je eyin ara ré, kí òpòlò alárá yíyí má sàfíra.*

Cultural Interference: The proverb also depicts distrust and suspicion that are very common among the indigenous culture.

Comment: The translation of the proverb is a direct translation or transliteration from the SL to the TL. However, there is a description of the frog's body in the Yoruba transliteration.

9.

Proverb: "A chicken eats corn, drinks water, swallows pebbles, yet, she complains of having no teeth. If she had teeth, would she eat gold?" (page 33).

Context: Odewale eulogizes Baba Fakunle the seer when he comes to the palace to interpret the message from Orunmila.

Yoruba Equivalent: *Àdìre tin je àgbàdo, to'n mu omi, tó nje òkúta, to tun ni òhun kó l'eyin, to ba wa l'eyin nko, kini ibá je?*

Cultural Interference: Proverbs are also employed in Yoruba culture to show admiration praise. Just as Odewale eulogizes the seer this proverb.

Comment: Word by word translation which corresponds to literal translation is used.

10

Proverb: "By trying often, the monkey learns to jump from three without falling". (Page 14).

Context: Odewale tries to pacify the citizens of the land not to relent. He advises them to take different herbs and boil them longer for effective result. They should keep on trying like the monkey.

Yoruba Equivalent: *Fòní şe fòla şe, ní òbo fi di ògbà nínú òkítì tita.*

Cultural Interference: The monkey's several attempts leading eventually to perfection and success. It reflects social cultural knowledge among the speakers about the use of the herbs. This is common among indigenous languages especially, Yoruba.

Comment: The proverb here is also transliterated from the SL to the target language (i.e word by word).

1.9 Discussion and Findings

From the descriptive analysis above, it is evident and clear that there is cultural interference in the translation of proverbs in Ola Rotimi's "The gods are not to blame. Language is an expression of culture. This fact has a far-reaching implication for translation. This is the main reason why perfect translation from one culture to another seems almost impossible, except if the translator has a linguistic competence in both languages and cultures.

Difficulties are encountered while translating from SL to TL, especially if the text is embedded deeply in culture. This is the reason why transliteration or word by word (metaphrase) and sense-for-sense are been resorted to. Some of the difficulties encountered are cultural interference, imperfect equivalence, incompetence in the target language, meaning modification, meaning narrowing etc. sometimes, the meaning may be preserved.

Perfect translation of culturally bound expressions are possible, if the culture in the two languages (SL and TL) are similar but where culture differs, the translator uses the lexical items or expressions that best fits the translation.

The translation analysed above are signally rooted in the Yoruba culture. Ola Rotimi just translated the indigenous proverbs using English language. The meaning still retains its original meaning in the SL. It is only with much explication and context would a non-native be able to comprehend the messages of the proverbs.

Context here means context of situation and culture (Halliday and Hassan, 1985:7). This context is necessary for adequate understanding of the text, which should be the first requirement for translation, as well as understanding the culture of both the SL and the TL.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be concluded that theoretically, a text which is embedded in culture can be translated based on certain conditionalities. The degree of its closeness to its source culture and

the extent to which the meaning of its source text is to be retained is determined by the Skopos (purpose) of the translation.

It is therefore recommended that in the translation of culturally-bound expressions like proverbs, the translator should first understand the context of usage, do a cultural interpretation of the source language, decide on equivalence and find the closest possible lexical equivalent to the item.

References

1. Al Farisi, M. (2020). The impact of using foreignization and domestication on the translation accuracy of the Quranic metaphor (Kinayah) verses. *Humanities and Management Sciences-Scientific Journal of King Faisal University*, 21(1). <https://doi.org/10.37575/h/rel/1966>.
2. Anwar, F. Z., Haryanti, D., & Mukti, V. C. (2020). Translation techniques of expression utterances used in the movie script of Aladdin. *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Language, Literature, and Arts Education (ICLLAE 2019)*. Paris, France: Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.200804.060>.
3. Baker, M. (2018). *In other words: A course book on translation (3rd ed)*. London: Routledge.
4. Bamberg, M. (2019). The role of language in the construction of emotions. Retrieved 21st January, 2019 from <http://massey.ac.nz/valock/virtual/bamberg.htm>.
5. Bassnetette, S. (2014). *Translation studies*. London: Routledge.
6. Brislin, R. W. (1976). *Translation: Application and research*. New York: Gardner Press Inc.
7. Catford, J. A. (1965). *Linguistic theory at translation: An essay on applied linguistics*. London: Oxford University Press, p. 33.
8. Catford, J. C. (1965). *A linguistic theory of translation*. London: Oxford University Press.
9. Faturoti, O. R. (2016). *An insight to ethical and behavioural patterns in Yoruba proverbs in forms and functions of proverbs in Nigerian languages*. Ibadan: Alafas Nigerian Company.
10. GUH, E. (2014). *Translation and relevance*. London: Routledge.
11. Hault, T. (Ed.) (1969). *Dictionary of modern sociology*. New Jersey.
12. Humboldt, Wilhelm von (1977). "Natur der Sprache überhaupt" in H. H. Christmann (ed.), *Sprachwissenschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft.
13. Kuswahono, D. (2020). The use of translation techniques in translating cultural words in the Da Vinci Code Novel from English into Bahasa Indonesia. *Anaphora*, 3(1), 38-46, <https://doi.org/10.30996/anaphora.v3i1.3642>.
14. Molina, L., & Albir, A. H. (2002). Translation techniques revisited: A dynamic and functionalist approach. *Meta*, 47(4), 498. <https://doi.org/10.7202/008033ar>.
15. Monye, A. (1995). "The Use of Proverbs in Ola Rotimi's "The Gods are not to Blame". *Proverbium* 12:251-262.
16. Munday, J. (2000). *Introducing translation studies: Theories and application*. London: Routledge.
17. Munday, J. (2001). *Introducing translation studies: Theories and applications*. London and New York: Routledge.
18. Newmark, P. (1981). *Approaches to translation*. New York: Pergamon Press.
19. Nida, E., A., and Taber, C., R. (1982). *The theory and practice of translation*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
20. Odeunmi, A. (2006). "A Pragmatic reading of Yerima's proverbs in 'Yemoja Attahiru' and 'dry leaves on Ukan Trees'". *Intercultural pragmatics* 3, 2:153-170.
21. Ogbulogo, C. (2002). "Proverb as discourse. The example of Igbo youth and culture heritage". *Journal of Cultural Studies* 4, 1:37-49.
22. Savory, T. (1968). *The art of translation*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.



-
23. Snell-Hornby, M. (1988). *Translation studies: An integrated approach*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins B. V.
 24. Snell-Hornby, M. (2006). *The turns of translation studies: New paradigms or shifting viewpoints?*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
 25. Sodiq, J., Budiman, T. C. S., & Hidayat, N. (2020). Translation techniques in translating cultural issues in the Indonesian religious tourism brochure in Semarang city. *International Journal of Research in Education*, 1(1), 33-40.
 26. Umeasiegbu, R. (20087). African literature and the oral tradition. *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities* 9, 22-35.
 27. Whorf, B. L. (1973). *Language, thought and reality. Selected writings*, ed. J. B. Carroll, Cambridge: MIT Press.
 28. Zhang, M. (2018). Some thoughts on the influence of culture on translation in Literary Translation. In *Journal of Advance in Computer Science Research*. Vol. 83 pp. 399-403.