

Theories And Procedures of Literary Translation: The Concept Of Borrowing

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Abstract

To achieve a good translation, the translator must take into account a number of elements, such as the context of the message, the style used, the meaning and significance of the message, in order to make it comprehensible to people with no knowledge of the source language. So, when confronted with an untranslatable text, what do you do? As a literary translator, how do you add local color to your work? We believe that this is where borrowing becomes essential. It is to the importance of borrowing, and to the questions above, that the present paper intends to respond. Theories of convergence, diffusion and substratum among others are discussed.

Keywords: Translation, Lexical borrowing, Literary translation, Borrowing

Introduction

In a world where knowledge is evolving at an ever-increasing pace, the transfer of words from one language to another (a form of borrowing) becomes essential to enrich the vocabulary of languages. Since the importance of translation is to transfer ideologies, medicine, religion, politics, culture etc. from one language to another for the benefit of humanity. The same applies to the transfer of lexicons (words). Elisabeth Lavault- Olleon, quoted by Iwala (2008) in *Panorama sur la traduction* (Depuis les temps les plus anciens, la traduction est l'un des moyens essentiels de la communication interculturelle, et l'un des modes majeurs du croisement des cultures, Il n'en reste pas moins vrais que le fait culturel, dans son essence, résiste fortement à l'opération de traduction) asserts that "since the most ancient times, translation has been one of the essential means of intercultural communication, and one of the major modes of cultural cross-fertilization. Nevertheless, it remains true that the cultural fact, in its essence, strongly resists the operation of translation" (11)

Thanks to translation, translators can share, make known or transmit lexicons from one language to another. One of the translation processes proposed by Vinay and Dalbarnet consists of borrowing words from the source language to the target language, and vice versa. In the course of translation, French has drawn new words from many different languages. Today, these words no longer have the appearance of foreign words. Similarly, other languages have also borrowed words from French language. Translation, one of the fields of applied linguistics (in its main sense of interlingual translation), is the process of transferring a text written in one language ("source language", or "source language") into another language ("target language", or "target language"). It brings together at least two languages and two cultures, and sometimes two eras. It involves the transposition of a written text from one language to another, conveying the message as faithfully as possible.

According to Iwala, (Le terme traduction est un terme fourre-tout, qui peut prendre des significations différentes selon le contexte dans lequel il est employé. Pour le commun des mortels, la traduction est le passage d'une langue à une autre, une affaire de bilinguisme)"Translation is a catch-all term, which can take on different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. To the average person, translation is the passage from one language to another, a matter of bilingualism". (78)

The author describes translation as a bilingual process involving knowledge of two languages, i.e. encoding in one language and decoding in another. Translation is not merely a bilingual process, it is a bicultural process. Each language is closely entwined with its culture, so it's impossible to take a text from its roots without taking the culture into account.

As we progress through this study, we shall come to realize that language and culture are like Siamese twins.

Problematic

Many freelance translators think that translation is all about bilingualism. They simply don't know how and when to use borrowed words, and their translations border on the half-baked. The borrowing approach is not only functional for aesthetic reason. There are different other reasons for borrowing approach; which without putting into consideration, they jeopardize the other important aspect of borrowing. In a way, this has limited the knowledge of untranslatable texts or untranslatability. Studies in this domain will help to improve knowledge of borrowing, untranslatability and local color.

Significance

The work is of interest to students, translators and teachers of French. It will be of advantage to French-speaking African undergraduates in their

translation courses and to French teachers as a work to be referenced for subjects relating to translation studies and practical translation.

History of Translation

When we talk about translation, we're talking about one of the fields of applied linguistics, which is an interdisciplinary field of study. It goes beyond the realm of pure linguistics. It is the branch of language science that deals with the relationship between language and different areas of social activity – such as language teaching and learning, translation, language policy, terminology, language planning etc.

Translation has a very long history, indeed it is as old as mankind (Steiner and Bariki) (4), especially if we consider it from the angle of the three typologies defined by Roman Jakobson. According to Roman Jakobson, translation can be grouped into three categories:

- I. Intra-linguistic translation or reformulation, which means that the verbal signs of one language are interpreted by other verbal signs of the same language.
- II. Inter-lingual translation or translation proper, which involves the interpretation of verbal signs from one language into another.
- III. Inter-semiotic translation, where verbal signs are interpreted by non-verbal signs.

The first (intra-linguistic translation) and third (inter-semiotic translation) types have been around for a long time. All reported speech is an intra-linguistic translation. The use of verbal and non-verbal signs for communication should be as old as mankind. Our concern in this study is inter-lingual translation, or translation proper, which also has a very long history. George Steiner, author of *Babel*, divides the history of translation into four periods:

- I. The Roman period, with Cicero, Horace and Alexander Fraser Tyler as the main translators. This is the first period.
- II. The second period.
- III. The third period extends from Valéry to the 1960s.
- IV. The fourth period begins in the 1960s.

The history of inter-lingual translation goes back to the Rosetta stone (3000 BC), which represents the oldest translation work, belongs to this period. Judicial and religious texts were translated in Mesopotamia and Egypt, but the translation of literary works into foreign languages began under the Roman Empire. Livius Andronicus is the best-known translator of this period. He translated Greek texts for the Roman public, and endeavored to preserve the artistic quality of the original texts.

The most remarkable turning point in the history of translation can be attributed to the translation of the Bible. The Bible has been translated into at least 2,000 languages; it is the most translated book, with over 450 versions. According to Sawant, "by 2005, at least one book of the Bible

had been translated into 2, 4000 of the 6,900 languages listed by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL)" (2).

In the first half of the century, the emphasis was on accuracy and style. In the second half of the century, translation theories flourished, and translation became an important tool in foreign language teaching. Machine translation and computer-assisted translation (CAT) were introduced. Today, translation research covers a wide range of disciplines.

Literary Translation

Literary translation involves novels, poems and other literary texts. It requires stylistic skills, a good imagination and extensive cultural knowledge. The aim is to reproduce the full effect of the original text for the reader in the target language, as well as the meaning of the words. The translation must be as pleasant to read and evoke the same emotions as the original, following Cervantes' adage: "Put nothing in, leave nothing out". Great translators, whatever their working languages, have a very demanding educational background, literary studies'. According to Jean-Charles, most literary translators translate from several languages - but also, and above all, into their mother tongue, the language into which they translate (62).

From time to time, you'll encounter sentences with complicated words relating only to the world evoked in the text, and which may not exist in the target language. These words may pose difficulties for the translator. In such cases, borrowing becomes necessary. Particularly in literary translation, the translator uses borrowing for aesthetic reasons, to introduce local color into the work and also to popularize words. For example: most people of different languages and origins use the word 'Allah' instead of the semantics of this word in their own language. Provided the word becomes well recognized and well accepted. A good translator possesses more than linguistic skills: he or she must be able to analyze the text, and must also have good writing skills. To translate literary texts, he or she must have a sound knowledge of the literature of the two languages concerned, and master the jargon in both.

Theoretical Framework

Roger T. Bell in his work *Theory and Practice of Translation* that: There is, however, no such thing as total equivalence, as has been elegantly demonstrated, but texts, in different languages, can be equivalent at different levels of presentation: context, semantics, grammar, lexicon, and, at certain degrees: equivalence at the level of the word, the expression, the sentence. Thus, radically different translations can also be totally correct, although one, for example, takes into account the equivalence of words - the literal translation, the other the total equivalence of meaning - the free translation. Jacques Derrida addressed the question of untranslatability in his essay (*la mythologie blanche*) "White Mythology", published in 1972. In this essay, Derrida stresses the

need to view translation as a complex and inevitably imperfect phenomenon. He concludes that, while all translation is imperfect, it can nonetheless be a means of opening up dialogues and developing different points of view.

The main theories of borrowing are diffusion theory, convergence theory and substrate theory. Jespersen's convergence theory suggests that languages borrow elements from each other when they are in close contact. Saussure's diffusion theory suggests that languages borrow elements from each other through cultural contact and exchange. Writing on "The Translation of Literature", Susan Bassnet-Mc Guire, well-known professor of comparative literary studies at the University of Warwick, described two opposing perspectives on literary translation: the pessimistic and the optimistic approach. The former takes up the oft-repeated views on untranslatability, while the latter implies that everything is translatable. Bassnet-McGuire applied the pessimistic perspective, citing Sapir Whorf's hypothesis: "No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached". For Bassnett-McGuire, the ability to translate despite obviously different social realities is a "triumph over incomprehension" (38).

She drew on what appear to be examples of grande culture in English and Spanish to explain the different "temporal frames of reference" "Buon giorno" is the Spanish functional equivalent of "GoodMorning", even though these terms do not have the same semantic meaning. They nevertheless express the same desired greeting. As Bassnett McGuire has pointed out, if simple greetings can pose translation problems, one can imagine what complex translation processes can offer. Substrate theory suggests that languages borrow elements from each other when one language is substituted for another. For example: French has borrowed many words from English through cultural contact between the two languages. Words like: - Parking, shopping, okay. Etc. And even, English has borrowed many words from French through cultural contact. Words like: Coup d'état, restaurant.

Literary Translation Procedures

There are theories and principles that guide the translator in his or her task. Some of these principles and theories date back to the 16th century. The French humanist Etienne Dolet, executed for "mistranslating" one of Plato's dialogues, published five principles of translation in 1540:

- I. The translator must be fully aware of the meaning proposed by the original author, and can clarify obscurities if necessary.
- II. The translator must master both languages.
- III. The translator should avoid word-for-word translations.
- IV. The translator must use everyday language.

- V. The translator must ensure that the choice of words is appropriate to produce the right tone. Quoted by Susan Bassuett-Mc Guire (54)

These ancient principles are still valid today, even if many more detailed and explicit ones have recently emerged.

To optimize the translation process, there are several strategies by Savory Theodore - listed below, which the translator should consider in choosing the best words according to the desired result:

- I. Reproduces either the forms (syntax and vocabulary) or the ideas (semantic content) of the original;
- II. Keep the style of the original or adopt a new style, renounce the form of the source-language text, or keep it;
- III. Preserve the historical dimension of the original work or choose a modern form;
- IV. Produce a text that resembles an original work written in that language, either as a translation;
- V. add or delete words, phrases or expressions, or attempt to transfer the entire text from the source language to the target language. (32)

The above list gives us an indication of the kind of decisions the translator has to make even at the beginning of the translation process. As soon as he has decided on the way in which he wants to translate the text, the interpreter will have to focus on the methodological options available, the means to which he would have access to achieve the transfer.

These ancient principles are still valid till today, even when many more detailed and explicit ones have recently emerged.

Some principles are prescriptive, while others, like Dolet's, are descriptive. The translation process has been evolving for centuries between native and non-native languages worldwide. Each language is different from the others. The distinctive features of a language include its structure, sound system, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and so on. For example, the structure, sound system, pronunciation, writing and grammar of English and Marathi or English and Hindi are different. The translation process becomes difficult because of these differences Datta Sawat(2023 <http://www.researchgate>) But problems of untranslatability are not limited to structural or grammatical differences between languages, for example between Yoruba and English. Language is strongly embedded in the culture of the people who use it. Language expresses culture in an obvious way. Translating from a source language such as Yoruba to a target language such as English is beyond translating the structure, grammar or words; it is also about translating the culture of the source language to the target language. Literal or word-for-word translation is easy to achieve from one language to another. But it does not guarantee the intended meaning.

BORROWING

A borrowing is a word or expression that a translator borrows from another language, without translating it, but generally adapting it to the morphosyntactic, phonetic and prosodic rules of the source language. The term "borrowing" is debatable, since there is never any contract or debt, and words do not have to be returned... Borrowing must be clearly distinguished from inheritance, which, in French, corresponds to the evolution of Latin and Germanic words, through complex oral processes. Each language is thus made up of "native" words, created or inherited from its roots, and words borrowed from other languages. The borrowing mechanism involves contact between languages and between people. A loan word is first made by an individual speaker or by a group; some are then adopted by the language, others disappear.

There are three types of borrowing - These are:

- I. Lexical borrowing
- II. Linguistic borrowing
- III. Semantic borrowing

Lexical borrowing: the transfer of lexical units from the source language into the target language, without modifying anything semantically or structurally.

This involves borrowing words from the source language to the target language and vice versa. Example: French borrows words like: *alaouite*, *ayatollah*, *darbouka*, *keffieh*, *mastaba*, *méchoui*, *mechta*, *medersa*, *médina* etc. from Arabic. From English: *weekend*, *flashback*, *stop*, *Blazer*, *camping*, *committee*, *container*, *rail*, *tourism*, *tunnel*, *garage*, *gourmet*, *hipster* and so on. Whereas English borrows French words like: *restaurant*, *coup d'état*, *rendez-vous*, *tête à tête*, *esprit du corps* etc. There are old borrowings that are no longer considered borrowings because they have entered the lexicon of the borrowing language and are therefore part of the language.

There are also new borrowings. For example: In the translation of a play 'Omokewu' translated under the title 'Student', there are new borrowings from Yoruba, Hausa and Arabic such as :

Origin	Borrowing
Yoruba	<i>Ipele</i>
Yoruba	<i>Sanyan</i>
Arabic	<i>Alhamdoulillah</i>
Arabic	<i>Allah</i>
<i>Hausa</i>	<i>Gafara</i>
Hausa	<i>Sannu</i>
Fulbe	<i>Gogo</i>

This means that the borrowing is not translated, and is often italicized by the translator. Borrowing is a common feature of the translation of

African works, and it is sometimes difficult to find the equivalent of these African borrowings in the target language.

Semantic borrowing: When a translator resorts to lexical calque, he or she creates or uses a neologism in the target language by adopting the structure of the source language. In other words, it's the transfer of lexical units from the source language into the target language, semantically modifying them. In some cases, the transfer of meaning from the lending language to a word whose form is identical or similar in the borrowing language. These semantic borrowings are often viewed unfavorably, as they compete with pre-existing words. However, some are still accepted in modern usage. For example: "Footing" is a semantic borrowing of the English word "Jogging". Lay off" gave rise to the French word "licenciement". "The boss" - "Le patron", "The interview" - "l'entretien", "The office" - "l'agence", "The vacancy" - "la vacance", "The worker" - "le travailleur", "The skill" - "le savoir-faire", etc.

Linguistic borrowing: Linguistic borrowing occurs when a language A uses and ends up integrating a linguistic unit or feature that previously existed in a language B and that A didn't know; the borrowed unit or feature is itself called borrowing". (Dictionary of Linguistics, Larousse, 1973). For example: "C'est fini" is a French expression borrowed into English. Some examples of linguistic borrowing are: deal Killer (Deal Killer), on the road (On the road), Playing hard to get (Playing hard to get), happy hour (Happy hour) and so on. All these expressions have been borrowed from English. Similarly, many English expressions come from French, especially in the arts and fashion. "bon appétit" (bon appetite), "coup de grâce" (coup de grâce), "cul-de-sac" (cul-de-sac), "faux pas" (faux pas) "haute couture" (haute couture) "enfant terrible" (enfant terrible), "hors d'œuvre" (hors d'oeuvre), "crème de la crème" (crème de la crème) etc.

Conclusion

In conclusion, language is dynamic, yet there are linguistic transformations. Borrowing is an essential concept in translation. Borrowing can be considered a normal phenomenon in translation, language formation and cultural cohabitation. There are borrowings from one language to another, and even borrowings between different varieties of the same language. Borrowing is considered a natural phenomenon in the evolution of languages, since languages are constantly evolving and interacting with other languages. As translation is a bicultural affair, involving different cultures and languages, translators need to be very well grounded. Understanding the languages and terms that belong to each translation fields (Literary translation and scientific/technical translation) in which work is to be done is important for the translation advancement, because as the years go by, new terms are introduced in almost every field of translation.

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