

## A PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF LINGUISTIC THEORIES TO TRANSLATION EVALUATION

By

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### **Abstract**

*This paper aims at illustrating how to evaluate translation using linguistic theories. Translation evaluation, though relatively new in the field of translatology, is gaining more grounds as the constant need to review past translations to pass value judgments as to their fidelity, reliability, readability, adaptability or acceptability or currency, keeps accruing. Many attempts have been made in this direction but this paper seeks to prove that translation as a branch of applied linguistics, linguistics still has a lot to offer in this area of translation evaluation. Consequently, the linguistic theory of error analysis was applied in the evaluation of an excerpt of the classical novel Things Fall Apart written by Chinua Achebe but translated into French by Michel Ligny. The theory provided very useful steps that no translation analyst can ignore.*

**Key words:** translation, translation evaluation, linguistics theories, error analysis

### **Résumé**

*Cet article vise à illustrer comment évaluer la traduction à l'aide des théories linguistiques. L'évaluation de la traduction, bien que relativement nouvelle dans le domaine de la traductologie, gagne du terrain puisque le besoin constant de revoir les traductions passées pour en porter des jugements de valeur quant à leur fidélité, leur fiabilité, leur lisibilité, leur adaptabilité, leur acceptabilité et combien elles sont courantes, ne cesse de croître. De nombreuses tentatives ont été faites dans cette direction, mais cet article cherche à prouver que la traduction en tant que branche de la linguistique appliquée, la linguistique a encore beaucoup à offrir dans ce domaine de l'évaluation de la traduction. Par conséquent, la théorie linguistique de l'analyse des erreurs a été appliquée dans l'évaluation d'un extrait du roman classique Things Fall Apart écrit par Chinua Achebe, mais traduit en français par Michel Ligny. La théorie a fourni des étapes d'évaluation très utiles qu'aucun analyste de la traduction ne peut ignorer.*

**Mots clés :** traduction, évaluation de la traduction, théories linguistiques, analyse d'erreurs

### **Introduction**

Translation, as a word, can be viewed in different forms. It could be seen as an area of study. Thus, some people say that they studied Translation or that their area of specialisation is Translation. It is also a common saying that translation in a sub-section or an area of study of contrastive linguistics and sometimes an area of applied linguistics.

Translation has also assumed a lot of meanings to different people and at different times. For Nida and Taber (12), “it consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style.” House<sup>2</sup> (7) on his part, affirms that “translation is a text-processing and text-reproducing activity which starts from a source text to a resulting text”. In other words, translation can be seen as both a process and a product.

As a process, translation can be described as those activities that come into play in transforming information from one language to another. In situations where information cannot get to people that need it due to the code in which this information or message was encoded, the role of the translator is to manoeuvre the text by removing all the linguistic and extra-linguistic barriers that prevented the message from getting to the intended receiver. While doing this, the translator does a lot of mental exercise, makes many decisions, as every word and sentence in the text is weighed against all the other possibilities and options they evoke. He contextualises the work and tries to localise it in order to pass the message with its full weight or impact as it is in the source text. Translation, in this case, is therefore a process that starts from reading the text for comprehension, de-verbalizing the text and continues until the final stage of the re-expression of the message in the desired language has been produced for use by the translator’s receiver. This was affirmed by Lederer (x) when he wrote that “...successful translation requires that texts be interpreted drawing on extra-linguistic knowledge.”

Translation can also be viewed as a finished product. As a marketing strategy, authors and other text producers ensure that they make as many translations of their texts as they can, so as to give the product a wider reach. Translation, therefore, exposes texts to wider reception, reading and understanding. Many works of art have been translated into languages other than the language of production. Similarly, the Bible, the Koran and many other holy books, as well as several classical works have been translated into many languages, thus making them accessible to a greater number of readers.

### **Translation Evaluation**

Translation Evaluation is synonymous with translation assessment. Kang (143) views “assessment’ in Translation as

*diverse methods of describing translation quality and placing a value on its appropriateness, based on the use of such means as making broad statements about the accuracy and readability of a translation, as well as providing a detailed analysis of translation errors and translator competence.*

Assessing a translation could, therefore, be considered as the process of, not only, adjudging the quality of the translation done in terms of accuracy and readability, but also that of identifying the errors and determining the competence of the translator. House<sup>1</sup> (245) further elucidates that “assessment” has typically been used in translation studies to refer to a more systematic or formal process by which textual details of ST and TT are collected, compared, and determined with the goal of describing the quality of translation.”

Evaluating a translation work is often considered a difficult task. This is because a perfect translation has been regarded by many as elusive, making it extremely difficult for any researcher to define, in concrete terms, what a ‘good’ translation really is. The divergence in opinion may also be related to different conceptualizations or theorizing of translation (Kang 132). Consequently, the thrust of this paper is to reflect on the issue of evaluation in translation and highlight how linguistic theories can be used in the evaluation of translation works.

Like the eternal debate in the translation field on what really is a faithful translation, assessing the quality or level of faithfulness of a translation is difficult because such judgement is usually based on what the assessor understands as a faithful translation. Ezeafulukwe (140) maintains this position by explaining that:

*What could be seen as mistranslation to one group could be considered an excellent translation when offered to another group. A translation that is full of technical jargons of a particular profession could be seen as a faithful translation by people in the field who use such terms and terminologies in the day-to-day exercise of their functions. But such a translation would be worthless to a layman who cannot make or decipher meaning from such terms and terminologies, even though it is written in a language he is supposed to be familiar with.*

However, some techniques in translation such as adaptation, equivalents and free translation, which are as a result of the translator’s freedom aimed at intersemiotic transfers, have sometimes been termed errors in translation. Even mistakes of the decoder of the translator’s well encoded message, have sometimes been attributed to translation errors.

A translator, as a professional, should not be an accomplice to the errors of the conceiver of the message he is translating. Rather, he/she should be at great liberty to correct them and/or even add or subtract any information that would aid the transfer of meaning as well as help the receiver to decode and understand the intention of the Source Text (ST). It is not a secret that some Target Texts (TT) are better than the ST as the prowess, style and imagination of the translator can result in an ameliorated TT. On the other hand, a translator that is not competent can do a lot of damage

to a beautiful work of Art. Sometimes, mere oversights or production errors can cause distortions in the translation, thus preventing the original message from being passed across. It then becomes necessary to always review translations to discover if errors would be dictated or even when it is necessary to update a text.

Translation evaluation deals with error analysis in translated texts. Error analysis, in this context, involves placing the ST and TT side by side with a view to discovering the unjustifiable translation shifts. Translation shifts, as explained by Catford (73), are “departure from formal correspondence in the process of going from the source language to the target language”. The TT is therefore analyzed to ascertain its faithfulness to the ST, the receiver and the language. It equally necessitates looking at the linguistic equivalents and how well they represent the conceiver’s intention.

### **Essence of Translation Evaluation**

In the field of pedagogy, translation evaluation, which is a form of error analysis, helps in language teaching and in the training of translators. Translation evaluation is a bid to recapture the message of the original text. It does the work of quality control, ensuring minimal difference between the author’s intention and that communicated by the translator. It compares the TT to the ST with a view to finding out its strength and weakness. A translator does a lot of text analysis in the process of translating so as to convey the intentions of the originator of the message. The job of the translation evaluator is to find out to what extent the translator achieved the purpose of his translation.

Translation evaluation deals with translation as a finished product but also seeks to understand the process of translation that eventually led to the TT. It seeks to check how far the original intention has been transferred, traces the development of terms, analyzes the characteristics of translated language, studies how language was used in context or out of context. Translated texts are analyzed to get an improved quality of the TT. This is as a result of the corrections of mistakes either of mistranslation or non-translation, improvement of language and the correction of typographical errors discovered during the process of translation evaluation. New editions can come about as an offshoot of the evaluation of a translated text. Through the evaluation of translation, a good corpus for language pedagogy, discourse analysis, linguistic and translation studies could be compiled. Even materials for intercultural and interlinguistic studies can be offshoots of an evaluated translation.

### **How to Evaluate a Translation**

For the purpose of Translation assessment, translation as a process and a product are holistically evaluated. Since the major purpose of translation is to complete the circuit of communication bridged by linguistic barrier, the major area of focus while evaluating a translated work would be to find out to what extent this barrier has been removed. A good translation is adjudged faithful when it passes exactly the same message as the original. Faithfulness in translation is of three levels: faithfulness to the author/text, to the language and to the receiver.

Since oftentimes the translation assessor does not get to meet the several receivers of translation to know the effect that the translation has on them, he uses himself as a representation of the other receivers and thus bases his analysis on his understanding of the text. This can sometimes be faulty as perception differs from one receiver to the next, as it is affected by the individuality and experiences of each. Every understanding is therefore an approximation of reality.

The job of a translation analyst entails evaluating linguistic and semantic transfers of the TT. Translation evaluation entails comparing the two languages in morphology and syntax, evaluating the author's use of equivalents, while the semantic analysis questions whether the message which is the author's intention was passed across with all the intercultural considerations required for the target receiver to comprehend the message. This is in line with Katharina Reiss's view on translation criticism that, frequently the latter [i.e., the author's intention] can be conclusively interpreted only when the linguistic context is evaluated in the light of its situational context (86). In other words, the translation critic must take into consideration the effect of extralinguistic determinants on the linguistic form of the original text.

Even though there is no perfect translation, any translation that deviates significantly from the original is adjudged unfaithful. The translator rendering an unfaithful translation must have faced some problems during the exercise of his duty. Good work of translation evaluation can be done by looking out for the common problems in translation and examining how these problems were surmounted to arrive at the final transfer of meaning. Such translation problems present themselves in the following forms; (1) Lexical problems (2) Semantic problems (3) Syntactical problems (4) Rhetorical problems (5) Pragmatic problems. Translation evaluation therefore involves looking out for these problems and examining how the translator managed them.

### **Scopos Theory of Translation**

As House<sup>3</sup> (78) convincingly argues that “translation quality assessment presupposes a theory of translation” and “different views of translation itself lead to different concepts of translational quality, and hence different ways of assessing it.” Translation theories have evolved over the years from the linguistic, to the interpretative and textual theories. Both Linguists, language teachers and translators have in the course of their analysis employed these theories. However, for the purpose of this practical evaluation a marriage of the Skopos theory of translation and the Corder’s matrix for error analysis have been adopted as the theoretical framework for Translation evaluation. Skopos is a Greek word meaning "purpose, aim, goal, finality, objective; intention". One might be tempted to ask the question “Why choose Skopos for his study?” According to Gentzler (70),

*The two most important shifts in theoretical developments in translation theory over the past two decades have been (1) the shift from source-oriented theories to target-text-oriented theories and (2) the shift to include cultural factors as well as linguistic elements in the translation training models. Those advocating functionalist approaches have been pioneers in both areas.*

Skopos theory falls within the second category. Other scholars like Lorna Hardwick (22), posit that “translation involves translating or transplanting into the receiving culture the cultural framework within which an ancient text is embedded”. Lorna sees translation as an instrument capable of helping the readers to mentally reconstruct past or lost civilizations. Vermeer is the first proponent of the Skopos theory. His work is thus summarized by Snell-Hornby (54): “Basically however, as we see from the title of his 1986 essay, Vermeer views translation as a cultural transfer rather than a linguistic one, language being part of culture”. Also, while explaining the Skopos theory, Nord explains that “the term Skopos usually refers to the purpose of the target text” (26). In other words, Skopos theory gives priority attention to the purpose of the ST.

Hans Vermeer (7) himself explicates further that:

*The translator is the target-text "producer". Commissioner and translator have to agree upon the purpose and the "strategy" for designing the translation. The purpose for which a translator designs a translation ("translatum") in agreement with his commissioner is called the "skopos" of the text.*

He also adds that “a translation is meant to function for its intended purpose and addressees.” (Vermeer15). Therefore, in the translation of Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, the novel that



forms the corpus of this paper, since Achebe's major purpose of writing was to restore the African identity through the correction of its misrepresented and misunderstood culture, by bringing the Igbo and the European cultural systems to the same level of representation and contestation. *Things Fall Apart* though evidenced by Teoh Jacquelyn as having been translated into 61 languages(<http://brittlepaper.com>), the translations should not lose sight of Achebe's engagement. Thus, any translation that neglects or attenuates his purpose is already unfaithful. The Skopos approach to translation has come under criticism by House<sup>3</sup> (81) who thinks that "it is oriented towards the target audience to the utter neglect of the source text" hence the decision to marry this approach with the error analysis theory where both the source and the target texts receive equal consideration.

### **Error Analysis (EA) Theory**

In linguistics, according to Richards and Schmidt (184), "an error is the use of a word, speech act or grammatical items in such a way it seems imperfect and significant of an incomplete learning". In other words, an error is the use of a wrong lexis or wrong grammatical structures in an oral or written statement.

Error analysis is an area of linguistics that seeks to identify and describe the different forms of language errors committed by foreign language learners and the causes of such errors. It is of great import to translatology as the greater part of the linguistic errors committed by the translator could be traced to limited grasp of the target language or the target culture. Linguists have made several attempts to identify the types of errors often committed by language learners and many linguists have classified these errors into several categories. Linguists like J. Richard et al distinguish two categories: interlingual and intralingual errors. While interlingual errors emanate from native language interference, intralingual errors occur as a result of wrong application of target language rules.

Error analysis in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) was developed by Corder and his colleagues in the 1960s as an alternative to Contrastive Linguistics faulted for its failure to predict a great majority of errors. Corder identified the followings steps for any EA research: collecting samples of learner language, identifying the errors, describing the errors, explaining the errors and finally evaluating or correcting the errors.

**Practical Illustration of Translation Evaluation/Assessment using error analysis (EA) theory**

The various steps of EA enunciated by Corder have been adopted in the analysis and evaluation of the translation of our corpus.

- **Collection of samples and identification of errors**

Sample of a translated text was needed for the purpose of this research and so the theme and version of an excerpt of Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* were used for this study. Though there are many translations of *Things Fall Apart* but, the corpus for this research was taken from the translation by Ligny.

- **Identifying the errors**

An attempt was then made to identify the errors. This was done by placing the theme and the version side by side and going through the text to discover translation errors or unwarranted shifts. The identified errors or shifts were highlighted and identification numbers ascribed to them as shown below.

Excerpt from <i>Things Fall Apart</i> (164-165)	Excerpt from <i>Le monde s’effondre</i> (251-253)
<p>CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE<sup>1</sup></p> <p>When the District Commissioner arrived at Okonkwo's compound<sup>2</sup> at the head of an armed band of soldiers and court messengers he found a small crowd of men sitting wearily<sup>3</sup> in the obi<sup>4</sup>. He commanded them to come outside, and they obeyed without a murmur.</p> <p>'Which among you is called Okonkwo?' he asked through his interpreter.</p> <p>'He is not here,' replied Obierika.</p> <p>'Where is he?'</p> <p>'He is not here!'</p> <p>The Commissioner became angry and red in the face<sup>7</sup>. He warned the men that unless they</p>	<p>CHAPITRE XXV<sup>1</sup></p> <p>Quand le Commissaire de District arriva au domaine<sup>2</sup> d'Okonkwo à la tête d'une troupe armée de soldats et de messagers de la Cour, il trouva un petit rassemblement d'hommes qui, fatigués<sup>3</sup>, s'étaient assis dans l'obi<sup>4</sup>. Il leur ordonna de sortir, et ils obéirent sans murmure.</p> <p>— Lequel d'entre vous s'appelle Okonkwo ? demanda-t-il par l'intermédiaire de son interprète.</p> <p>— Il n'est pas ici. répondit Obierika.</p> <p>— Où est-il ?</p> <p>— Il n'est pas ici!</p> <p>Le Commissaire s'échauffa et le rouge lui monta au visage. Il avertit les hommes, qu'à</p>



produced Okonkwo forthwith, he would lock them all up. The men murmured among themselves, and Obierika spoke again.

We can take you where he is, and perhaps your men will help us.'

The Commissioner **did not understand**<sup>5</sup> what Obierika meant when he said, 'Perhaps your men will help us.' One of the most infuriating habits of these people was their love of **superfluous words**<sup>6</sup>, he thought.

Obierika with five or six others led the way. The Commissioner and his men followed, their firearms held at the ready. He had warned Obierika that if he and his men played any **monkey tricks**<sup>7</sup> they would be **shot**<sup>9</sup>. And so they went.

There was a small bush behind Okonkwo's compound. The only opening into this bush from the compound was a little round hole in the red-earth wall through which fowls went in and out in their endless search for food.

**The hole would not let a man through.**<sup>10</sup> It was to this bush that Obierika led the Commissioner and his men. They skirted round the compound, keeping close to the wall. The only sound they made was with their feet as they crushed dry leaves.

Then they came to the tree from which **Okonkwo's body was dangling**<sup>11</sup>, and they

moins qu'ils ne lui livrent immédiatement Okonkwo. il les mettrait tous en prison, Les hommes murmurèrent entre eux, et Obierika prit de nouveau la parole.

— Nous pouvons vous emmener où il est, et peut-être que vos hommes nous aideront.

Le Commissaire **ne comprenait pas**<sup>5</sup> ce que Obierika voulait dire par ces mots:« Peut-être que vos hommes nous aideront. » Une des habitudes les plus irritantes de ces gens était leur amour des **mots inutiles**<sup>6</sup>, pensa-t-il.

Obierika et cinq ou six autres montrèrent le chemin. Le Commissaire et ses hommes suivaient, leurs armes à feu prêtes. Il avait averti Obierika que si lui et ses hommes **lui**<sup>8</sup> jouaient **un mauvais tour**<sup>7</sup> on leur **tirerait dedans**<sup>9</sup>. Ils allèrent donc.

Il y avait un petit bosquet derrière le domaine d'Okonkwo. La seule sortie du domaine donnant sur ce bosquet était une étroite ouverture ronde dans le mur de terre rouge par laquelle entrait et sortait la volaille dans sa quête sans fin de nourriture.

**L'ouverture était trop petite pour un homme.**<sup>10</sup> C'est à ce bosquet qu'Obierika conduisit le Commissaire et ses hommes. Ils firent le tour du domaine en longeant le mur de près. Ils ne faisaient pas d'autre bruit que celui de leurs pieds écrasant des feuilles sèches.

Puis ils arrivèrent à l'arbre d'où **pendait en sebalançant**<sup>11</sup> le cadavre d'Okonkwo, et ils s'arrêtèrent net.

stopped dead.

'Perhaps your men can help us bring him down and bury him,' said Obierika. 'We have sent for strangers from another village to do it for us, but they may be a long time coming.'

The District Commissioner changed instantaneously. The resolute administrator in him gave way to the **student<sup>12</sup> of primitive customs.**

'Why can't you take him down yourselves?' he asked.

'It is against our custom,' said one of the men. 'It is an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offence against the Earth, and a man who commits it **will not be buried<sup>13</sup> by his clansmen.** His body is evil, and only strangers may touch it. That is why we ask your people to bring him down, because you are strangers.'

'Will you bury him like any other man?' asked the Commissioner.

'We cannot bury him. Only strangers can. We shall pay your men to do it. When he has been buried, we will then **do our duty by him<sup>14</sup>.** We shall make sacrifices to cleanse the desecrated land.'

Obierika, who had been gazing steadily at his

— Peut-être que vos hommes peuvent nous aider à le descendre et à l'enterrer, dit Obierika. Nous avons envoyé chercher des étrangers d'un autre village pour le faire pour nous, mais ils peuvent mettre longtemps à venir.

Le Commissaire de District changea instantanément. L'administrateur résolu qui était en lui laissa la place à **l'homme<sup>12</sup> curieux de coutumes primitives.**

- Pourquoi ne pouvez-vous pas le descendre vous-mêmes ? demanda-t-il.

- C'est contre notre coutume. dit l'un des hommes. C'est une abomination pour un homme de se défaire de sa propre vie. C'est une offense à la Terre, et un homme qui la commet **ne peut être<sup>13</sup> enterré par les membres de son clan.** Son cadavre est maudit, et seuls les étrangers peuvent le toucher. Voilà pourquoi nous demandons à vos gens de le descendre, parce que vous êtes des étrangers.

- L'enterrez-vous comme n'importe quel autre homme ? demanda le Commissaire.

- Nous ne pouvons l'enterrer. Seuls des étrangers le peuvent. Nous paierons vos hommes pour le faire. Une fois qu'il aura été enterré nous ferons notre **devoir envers lui<sup>14</sup>.** Nous ferons des sacrifices pour purifier la terre souillée par ce sacrilège.

Obierika, qui avait gardé les yeux fixés sur le cadavre pendant de son ami, se tourna soudain

<p>friend's dangling body, turned suddenly to the District Commissioner and <b>said fiercely</b>:<sup>15</sup></p> <p><b>That man</b><sup>16</sup> was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog ..." He could not say any more. His voice trembled and choked his words.</p> <p>'Shut up!' shouted one of the messengers, quite unnecessarily.</p> <p>'Take down the body,' the Commissioner ordered his chief messenger, 'and bring it and all these people to the court.'</p> <p><b>Yes, sah</b>,<sup>17</sup> the messenger said, saluting.</p>	<p>vers le Commissaire de District et dit <b>d'une voix furieuse</b><sup>15</sup>.</p> <p>- <b>Cet homme</b><sup>16</sup> était un des plus grands hommes d'Umuofia. Vous l'avez poussé à se suicider; et maintenant on va l'enterrer comme un chien... Il ne put dire un mot de plus. Sa voix tremblait et étouffait ses paroles.</p> <p>- Ta gueule ! hurla un des messagers, tout à fait sans raison.</p> <p>- Descendez le corps, ordonna le Commissaire à son messenger en chef, et amenez-le ainsi que tous ces gens devant la Cour.</p> <p>- <b>Oui, sah</b><sup>17</sup>, dit le messenger en saluant.</p>
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- **Description and Correction of Translation Errors or Shifts**

In this section the errors or unwarranted shifts in translation, to which numbers had been ascribed, are highlighted and taken one after the other and explained. Suggestions for better translations are also proffered.

(1) *CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE*<sup>1</sup> / *CHAPITRE XXV*

In as much as a translator is free to modify the original text to serve his purpose, the decision of changing from Roman to Arabic numerals cannot be understood. In translation, literalism is not a crime, if it conveys the intention of the author. *CHAPITRE VINGT-CINQ* would have been preferable.

(2) *compound*<sup>2</sup> / *domaine*

The word "*domaine*" is too vague to describe «compound» as it is in the traditional African setting. From the description made in the novel, Okonkwo had a compound surrounded by a mud wall. In

place of *domaine*, the translator of the novel, Ligny, could have used *l'enclos* or *l'enceinte* in order to aptly designate the traditional architectural design as portrayed in the novel.

(3) *Wearily*<sup>3</sup> / *fatigués*

To translate “wearily”<sup>3</sup> with *fatigués*<sup>3</sup> is to attenuate the impact the word is construed to make. One can imagine the impact of the sight of such a brave man dead in the most disdainful way. The sight is what weighed the men down. The word *lasses* brings out the meaning of tiredness but not out of physical exertion.

(4) *the obi*<sup>4</sup> / *l'obi*<sup>4</sup>

*Obi* is a significant and distinguishing architectural design of the Igbo traditional society. It is very significant and merits adequate translation due to the cultural weight that it carries. Though the original text used it in vernacular, but a translator should have made the difference because he is expected to do everything to convey the originator’s message. If a translator allows a mistake in a source text to remain in the target text, he would be seen as an accomplice to the error and he bears the reproach in his translation. So, it behooves on the translator to rectify and avoid every error in the original text. *Obi* is a central house in a typical Igbo homestead. The traditional Igbo marriage system was predominantly polygamous with the *obi* at a central position. It serves as the parlor where the husband, the head of the family, receives visitors. Gatherings are frequent sights in the *obi*. It is also a place for family meetings and deliberations. It is usually surrounded by other huts which belong to the various wives and their children.

In Ligny’s translation, he tried to be faithful to the author’s style where the word was used in Igbo language. One would have applauded Ligny for his faithfulness to the original style but the major intention of Achebe for writing *Things Fall Apart* was to debunk the colonial files that presented Africa as barbaric and without culture. Every necessary attention was geared towards exposing the Igbo culture to, at least, bring it to limelight. This being the case, the Scopos theory of Translation postulates that texts have purposes that the encoder wants them to achieve. A translator should as well not lose sight of the purpose of translation before he can translate the intention for which the ST was formulated. The Scopos theory of Translation considers the culture of the ST and the TT. It takes into consideration the aim and purpose of the text as well as the function it is expected to serve the receiving culture.

*Obi*, is distinctive in Igbo architectural design and plays a major role in the day-to-day life of the family. Consequently, Ligny ought not to have left out this culturally significant edifice. By borrowing the word as it is in the original, a lot of meaning is lost. A footnote or even a paraphrase

should have been used to explain the borrowed word if he must remain faithful to the style of the author.

(5) *did not understand*<sup>5</sup> / *ne comprenait pas*<sup>5</sup>

The change in the tense of the verb was uncalled for. The imperfect tense, which was used to translate the simple past tense, is a tense used to explain habitual happenings in the past or actions that lasted in the past. These two conditions do not apply to the sentence. The author's tense is preferable. The translation should therefore read *The Commissioner did not understand / Le commissaire n'a pas compris*.

(6) *superfluous words*<sup>6</sup> / *mots inutiles*<sup>6</sup>

Instead of translating *superfluous* as useless words, whereas it also has the meaning of excessive, it would have been safer to use the French equivalent *superflu* that means exactly the same thing. The meaning of the sentence "One of the most infuriating habits of these people was their love of superfluous words" is rather that they were verbose, not that the words were useless.

(7) *monkey tricks*<sup>7</sup> / *un mauvais tour*<sup>7</sup>

*Monkey tricks*, is an expression, carefully chosen by Achebe to depict the western vision of Africans as monkeys and sub-humans. It is the same message he wanted to pass across when the commissioner asked "Which among you is called Okonkwo?" instead of "Who among you is called Okonkwo?". The translation of *monkey tricks* with "*un mauvais tour*" does not explain the author's intention. As the purpose of the novel was to debunk some erroneous widespread prejudices against Africans and the Igbos in particular, it behooves on the translator to make sure that the author's intention is transferred and that the receiver of the TT gets the full effect of the message. Therefore, to depict the idea of monkey in the expression, "*singerie*" comes handy. The translation should read thus *Il avait averti Obierika que si lui et ses hommes jouaient leurs singeries...*

(8) *Lui*<sup>8</sup> *jouaient un mauvais tour*

*Lui* is a gain in this translation. This is a semantic addition that was not in the original. This addition reveals the translator's inner reasoning which may not really be the original intention of the author. Achebe did not specify to whom the trick they played would be intolerable, but Ligny had concluded that it was a trick on the Commissioner that would not be tolerated hence the addition of the word *lui* that was not in the original. But a trick on the commissioner's men is also a slight on the authority of the Commissioner whom they work for, so the Commissioner could just

be warning them against playing any trick on himself or on his men or even both of them. Thus, it was unnecessary to put words into the commissioner's mouth. Instead, being silent where the author was not specific would have been a better technique. *Jouaient leurs singeries...* is therefore suggested.

(9) ...*dedans*<sup>9</sup>

Another addition of meaning is noticed here where *be shot* is translated as *tirerait dedans...* *Dedans* is simply the translator's semantic addition which can be done without.

(10) ...*hole would not let a man through*<sup>10</sup> / *L'ouverture était trop petite pour un homme*.<sup>10</sup>

The use of the *hole*, as used by Achebe, was to further buttress the fact that the space was not fit for human use. *L'ouverture* removes this connotation. This translation does not explain why the hole was considered small. Achebe explained the smallness of the *hole* in relation to the use it was put to with the intention of portraying to what task and subjugation the so-called "animals" of Umuofia subjected the Commissioner. The French version *Le trou ne laisserait pas passer un homme* is, therefore, suggested.

(11) *Okonkwo's body was dangling*<sup>11</sup> / *pendait en se balançant*<sup>11</sup> *le cadavre d'Okonkwo*

Here again we notice a semantic addition of *pendait*. Through this addition the translator laid more emphasis than did the author. This, however, helped to better the text as this extra illustration helped the readers to better imagine the picture that Achebe wanted to paint. This is a translation technique that Vinay and Darbelnet referred to as *étoffement*(109).

(12) ... *to the student*<sup>12</sup> / ...*à l'homme*<sup>12</sup> *curieux*

Translating "student" as "l'homme" is a deviation from the author's intention. Whereas Achebe carefully selected the words he needed to bring down the District Commissioner's ego, (the District Commissioner represents the egocentric, pompous White men) to the position the assumed subjects conceive him. The translator does not seem to understand the purposes these selected words are serving, hence substituting "student" which connotes someone that lacks certain knowledge and needs tutelage with "homme"; a full-fledged, developed male human being. The word *étudiant* which means student should therefore be retained in the translation.

(13) ...*will not be buried by his clansmen*.<sup>13</sup> / ...*ne peut être enterré par les membres de son clan*<sup>13</sup>

Whereas the original says that the burial by clansmen **will not** take place, the French version, indicates that clansmen **cannot** bury him. This is a further explanation of the original text as the French version seems to be explaining why the burial will not take place. But actually, *will not be buried by his clansmen* can simply be translated with *ne sera pas enterré par les membres de son clan*. The sentence that follows goes further to explain why his clansmen will not bury him: “His body is evil, and only strangers may touch it”(1.14).

(14) *When he has been buried, we will then do our duty by him*<sup>14</sup> / *Une fois qu'il aura été enterré nous ferons notre devoir envers lui*<sup>14</sup>

The lack of understanding of the custom and cultural practice of the Igbo traditional society is manifested in the translation of “by him” with “envers lui”. Nobody in the Igbo traditional society of Achebe owes any duty to anyone that decided to take his life, as life is considered sacred. Whoever commits such atrocity loses all rights and privileges of his kindred. But it is the duty of the living to cleanse the land where such atrocity has been committed, as it is believed that only God who gives life has the right to take life. As such, any human being that dares to interfere with life has dared God and God is capable of unleashing mayhem on the whole community. Family members are therefore expected to perform some cleansing rituals while the elders offer sacrifices to pacify the gods and cleanse the spirit of suicide from the community. Some of these rituals could be done close to the dead person’s corpse or close to where the person was buried. This extralinguistic information should have deterred the translator from translating ‘*When he has been buried, we will then do our duty by him*’<sup>14</sup> as ‘*Une fois qu'il aura été enterré nous ferons notre devoir envers lui*’<sup>14</sup> but rather with *Une fois qu'il aura été enterré nous ferons notre devoir qu'il nous impose*.

(15) *...ferociously*<sup>15</sup> / *...d'unevoixfurieuse*<sup>15</sup>

Nothing in the theme indicated whether it was the voice that was ferocious or the linguistic behaviour. The translator assumed it was the voice. But even if it were so the word “ferociously” has an exact French equivalent “*férocement*” which would have been used. “*furieuse*” with which the translator used fails to convey the full intensity of Obierika’s action or emotion nor does it align with the author’s purpose. The word *ferocious* has as synonyms the following words; *fiercely/férocement*      *violemment*,      *viciously/vicieusement*,      *brutally/brutalement*, *wildly/sauvagement*, *violently/violemment*. These synonyms would bring out better the barbaric



tendencies the colonial masters believed the Africans had which Achebe brought to bear and went on to correct.

**(16) *That man*<sup>16</sup> / *Cet homme*<sup>16</sup>**

A deviation from the author's point of view, due to non-mastery of some cultural issues, resulted in a lexical error. "That man" connotes an existing distance between the man being referred to and the person referring to him. In the Igbo society, no one wants closeness with a person who tampered with life, let alone his own life. Obierika, though a friend, has started distancing himself from Okonkwo as revealed by his use of "That man". "Cet homme" which signifies "This man" is therefore a shift from the author's intention of creating a gap between the people and the man who took his life. "Cet homme-là" would be preferable.

**(17) *'Yes, sah,*<sup>20</sup> *Oui, sah*<sup>20</sup>,**

"Sah" is a pigeon English form of the English word "Sir". Most Anglophones would understand the word without an explanation. Ligny simply borrowed the word and inserted it in his translation: a translation that has francophone readers as the target readers. But this is out of place as the word means absolutely nothing to the non-Anglophone reader. The equivalent of "Sir" in French is "Monsieur" and a corruption of it would be "Mosio" which Ligny could have used to convey the real meaning of "sah" as used in the context of a recruit who does not master the language of his master which Achebe rightly depicted.

## **Conclusion**

Translation is first a linguistic act before being a communicative act. This paper highlighted how Linguistics theories can be used to evaluate a translated text. For a long time, linguists like Vinay and Darbelnet dominated the translation evaluation scene thanks to the seven technical procedures of translation that they propounded, serving as a theoretical framework for translation analysis. Catford, another linguist, contributed to translation analysis by bringing in the term "Translation shifts" in his theory of Translation. Though Translation has become a full-fledged discipline, it remains true that its link with Applied Linguistics cannot be severed.

In this study the steps of error analysis propagated by the linguist Coder were adopted to evaluate the French translation of an excerpt from *Things Fall Apart* by Michel Ligny. Error analysis is an area of linguistics that seeks to identify and describe the different forms of language errors committed by foreign language learners and the causes of such errors. In sum, the five steps for

error analysis as propounded by Corder include collecting samples of learner language, identifying the errors, describing the errors, explaining the errors and finally evaluating or correcting the errors. These five steps worked perfectly well in the evaluation of the corpus as can be seen analyzed in this paper.

One can therefore decipher that since Translation deals with language and language use, which are also part of the preoccupations of Linguistics, problems of translation would always find solutions through the application of linguistic theories. Linguistics theories such as those bordering on discourse or text analysis, semantics, equivalents, language use, linguistic shifts would prove themselves useful in the evaluation of Translation.

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