

Original Research Article

Evaluating the Translation of Cultural Realia in the Book of Mark from French into Ngiemboon

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Abstract

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This study titled *Evaluating the translation of cultural realia in the Book of Mark from French into Ngiemboon* is based on the premise that achieving equivalence is a major challenge for bible translators into African indigenous languages due to the cultural differences that exist between languages and the absence of existing equivalence in the target culture. The study therefore aimed at investigating the possible constraints in the translation of cultural referents in the Book of Mark from French into Ngiemboonas well as the strategies employed in overcoming them. Determining the effectiveness in the use of these strategies is the object of this study. The study employed an explicatory research design, which entails a careful, close and focused examination of a single major text in an attempt to understand one or more aspects of it (George, 2018, cited by Ningrum, 2020:1). The study is therefore descriptive and analytical. It is corpus-based and essentially qualitative, though the qualitative data has been analyzed quantitatively. Data was collected through a content analysis of both the source and the target language texts to identify cultural realia and how they have been rendered in the two languages under investigation. The collected data was analyzed using Toury's (1995) descriptive translation studies (DTS) method, and the findings were presented in tables, using frequency counts to determine the percentage of particular translation techniques, strategies, theories and approaches to overcome the constraints inherent in the translation of cultural realia from French into Ngiemboon. Findings reveal an agreeable level of success in the translation of cultural realia from the source language to the target language, with the translators mainly employing oblique translation strategies in their renderings, in a bid to make the message more accessible to the target language audience. Hence, they resorted more to domestication than foreignization, as observed in the percentages from the findings (that is, 83.4 and 16.6 percent respectively).

Keywords: Translation, Cultural Realia, Bible Translation, The Book of Mark

INTRODUCTION

The original languages in which the Bible was written were Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. All the New Testament is written in Greek. The first writers of the Bible were using paper made from papyrus reed that grew in Egypt. These plants are not durable and only later transcriptions remained. For many years, message of the Bible were written word by word by hand. Because

of this rewriting process they contain certain corrections (Gordon and Douglas, 1981:25).

Nida (1998:24) states that these translations were done by missionaries sent out by denominational missions, and by societies specialized in sending out missionaries to translate the Scriptures into all languages not having existing translations. He equally affirms that

examples of such societies include the Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT), Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT), Evangel Bible Translators (EBT) and Pioneer Bible Translators. The Wycliffe Bible Translators, also known as the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), is the largest of all these societies with more than 5000 members and with completed translations of the New Testament into 347 languages and other activities in more than 800 languages. The United Bible Societies (UBS), a cooperative effort of more than 100 national Bible Societies, works directly with churches all over the world to produce revisions and new translations in both major and minor languages, making a total of 90 percent of the world's population. In a bid to effectively preach the gospel and win converts to Christianity, some missionaries were sent to Africa to learn African languages. That is how they started translating the Bible into African languages.

Ngiemboon, a language spoken in the Western Region of Cameroon, is one of the languages into which the Bible has been translated. The following versions were consulted in the course of the translation process of the New Testament into Ngiemboon:

- Today's English Version/Good News Bible (TEV)
- Revised Standard Version (RSV)
- New International Version (NIV)
- New Living Translation (NLT)
- Contemporary English Version (CEV)
- English Bible (EB)
- Jerusalem Bible (JB)
- New King James Version (NKJV)
- New American Standard Version (NASV)
- King James Version (KJV)

Chatzitheodorou (2001:4) states that "even if translators know the cultural setting of the biblical era, it is still difficult to reconstruct the cultural setting in which the writing first took place". This study therefore sets out to find out how the task of translation could effectively be performed without meaning being lost or gained, given the existence of Jewish cultural realia that cannot be identified in the Ngiemboon language. The translation of cultural realia from one language to another has always been problematic to the translator because these elements are culture-bound in nature and peculiar only to a specific group of people. Given that culture identifies a people, the translator's task goes far beyond finding receptor labels for source language words and phrases. Since every language has its genius, it therefore means that there are no one-to-one equivalents as far as cultural issues are concerned.

Translation thus becomes an interesting and challenging activity, given that the translator's role lies in bridging the differences between cultures and languages. Due to the specific nature of some texts or the incompetence of some translators inter alia, many translations register additions and omissions in semantic contents, often resulting in loss and gain in meaning. This

is the case with the translation of the Bible into Ngiemboon. This study therefore sets out to shed light on the possible constraints in the course of translating cultural realia from English into Ngiemboon in the book of Matthew in the New Testament, as well as possible solutions to overcome these constraints. The constraints in the translation of cultural realia in the New Testament Book of Mark from French into Ngiemboon as well as the strategies proposed can serve as a benchmark, or an example so to speak, in translating not only the Bible from a non-indigenous language to an indigenous language, but also in the translation of other literary texts.

The Problem

As posited by Ilze (1998:53): The act of translating involves interpreting the source language, and rewriting and recreating the text in the target language...A translation is a balancing act where the translator has to balance two cultures and languages in the translation process. Inevitably, this situation is unbalanced. Subtle nuances and references get lost in the translation process...

After reading through the French and Ngiemboon version of the Bible and precisely the New Testament Book of Markone notices the existence of cultural realia. Thus, considering that French and Ngiemboon are two completely different languages existing in two different cultures and contexts, it is worth investigating whether the cultural referents in the French version of the Book of Mark have been replicated into Ngiemboon in such a manner as to bridge the comprehension gap between the source language and target language cultures.

Research Questions

1. What are the possible constraints in the translation of cultural realia in the New Testament Book of Mark from French into Ngiemboon?
2. How effectively have the identified cultural realia in the New Testament Book of Mark been translated from French into Ngiemboon?

Research Objectives

1. To assess the possible constraints in the translation of cultural realia in the New Testament Book of Mark from French into Ngiemboon
2. To assess whether the identified cultural realia in the New Testament Book of Mark have been effectively rendered from French into Ngiemboon.

After having presented an introduction, research problem, research questions and research objectives of the study, the next section focuses on a review of related literature

Literature Review

In order to attain the objectives of this study, the main concepts have been probed into. They include translation, translation quality assessment, the concept of culture and Bible translation. They are the focus of the ensuing discussions.

Translation

Many definitions have been put forward on the definition of translation, ranging from early theoreticians like Catford and Newmark. The definitions have been proposed under different paradigms like the linguistic paradigm, the cultural paradigm and the social and psychological paradigm. This study does not intend to present a panoramic view of the different definitions of translation, but rather to provide a definition or definitions that are in sync with it. In view of the fact that this study falls within the purview of translation quality assessment, the definition put forward by House is worth revisiting. She defines translation “as the result of a linguistic-textual operation in which a text in one language is re-contextualized in another language” (2015:13). House continues by stating that “translation is however, subject to, and substantially influenced by a variety of extra-linguistic factors and conditions. It is the interaction between ‘inner’ linguistic and ‘outer’ extra-linguistic, contextual factors that makes translation such a complex phenomenon.”

In sync with the above definition, this study therefore sets out to investigate how biblical concepts in the New Testament Book of Mark have been ‘re-contextualized from the SL (French) into the TL (Ngiemboon).

The next concept to be discussed in this work is translation quality assessment.

Translation Quality Assessment

In plain terms, Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) is used when we want to see to what extent a translation is good or bad. The notion of good or bad translation has been advanced by many schools of thought and theorists who propose different methods, theories or approaches to ascertain a translation.

The question of quality in translation has become a central one in the field of Translation Studies. Many scholars have come up with various schools of thought on what a good or bad translation is. Thus, TQA seeks to measure how good or bad a translation is, with the intention of guaranteeing good translations. Without some means to assess the quality of translation, it would be difficult to know if the translation quality is good and if so, how to keep it that way (Schiaffino and Zearo, 2005:3). So, the bone of contention rests on how to

measure a translation, to determine if it is good or bad.

According to the anecdotal approach, a central problem in translation quality assessment is the operationalization of concepts such as “faithfulness to the source text” or the “natural flow of the translated text”. Proponents of this approach tend to see the quality of a translation as dependent on the translator and their personal knowledge, intuition and artistic competence.

Response-oriented approaches focus on the dynamic equivalence between source and translation (Nida 1964). That is, the manner in which the receptor of the translated text responds must be equivalent to the manner in which the receptor of the source text responds to the source text. He postulated three criteria for an optimal translation: general efficiency of the communication process, comprehension of intent and equivalence of response.

In the 1960s, sociolinguists like Carroll suggested the use of broad criteria such as “intelligibility” and informativeness for assessing translation quality. The weakness of all these response-based methods is the fact that the human mind is not taken into account. This approach is also reductionist in that the overall quality of translation is made dependent on measures of intelligibility and information (House, 2001: 28).

In the text-based approaches, pairs of source and target texts are compared with a view to discovering syntactic, semantic, stylistic and pragmatic regularities of transfer. An exponent of this approach, House (2002:34), suggests that the most important invariant in translation is the text type to which the text belongs, as it determines all other choices a translator has to make. She proposed three basic types on the basis of Bühler’s (1999) three language functions: content-oriented, form-oriented and conative. This study is inspired by the text-based approach to translation quality assessment. Given that the study focuses on assessing the translation of cultural referents, it is worth reviewing the concept in the ensuing paragraphs.

Cultural Referents

Before reviewing the concept of cultural reference, it is worthwhile defining culture. So many definitions of culture have been put forward. Prominent amongst them is Hofstede (1980:15-16) who defines culture as “a construct processed by human mental programming that includes three levels: (1) **the universal level**, which is related to the common bodily nature of all human beings and is inherited (2) **the collective level**, referring to the culture which is shared within a group and is learned from other individuals in that group, and (3) **the individual level**, which is specific to the individual and is both learned and inherited. We may agree with Hofstede that culture is individual, collective and universal.

Newmark (1988:94) for his part, defines culture as “the

way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression." The link between language and culture is inescapably noticed in Newmark's definition. In line with Newmark, Richards et al (1992) view culture as "a set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behaviours, social habits, etc. of the members of a particular society." It should be observed that the various components of culture enumerated by Richards et al in their definition are aspects of cultural referents.

Summing up the definition of culture proffered by the above scholars and many others not cited in this work, Hall (1997:2) observes as follows: "to say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world in ways which will be understood by each other."

Reverting to the study, speakers of French on the one hand, and Ngiemboon on the other hand, belong to different linguistic and cultural worlds, which makes the problem of mutual understanding difficult. That is why this study sets out to investigate the effectiveness of the translation of cultural referents in the New Testament Book of Mark from French into Ngiemboon.

The above definitions of culture are in no way exhaustive. By referring to culture as a set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behaviours, social habits, etc., Richards et al (1992) provide an idea of what cultural referents may refer to. Gonzalez and Scott-Tennent define cultural referents in the following words:

Any kind of expression (textual, verbal, non-verbal or audio-visual) denoting any material, ecological, social, religious, linguistic or emotional manifestation that can be attributed to a particular community (geographic, socio-economic, professional, linguistic, religious, bilingual etc. and would be admitted as a trait of that community by those who consider themselves to be members of it (2005:160).

In line with Gonzalez and Scott-Tennent's conceptualization of cultural referents is what Katan terms 'logical levels of culture,' which provides a comprehensive view of how culture reveals itself. Thus, according to Katan (2004:43), culture reveals itself in each of the following logical levels: (a) Environment, including food, housing, climate, etc. (b) Behaviour: actions and ways of behaving in certain cultures (c) Capabilities: strategies and skills used to communicate (d) Values of society and its hierarchy (e) Beliefs (f) Identity.

The translator has the arduous task of not only identifying culture-bound expressions in the source language but equally replicating them in the target language. Thus, how can cultural referents such as the ones Katan has explained above be translated from one language into another?

The Translation of Cultural Realia

The translation of culture-bound expressions is often fraught with challenges, especially when the translator cannot find such concepts in the target language due to the absence of appropriate equivalents. Most often, the translator resorts to 'cultural substitution,' by using a related concept to translate a concept without an appropriate target language equivalent.

According to Nida, 1964:91 (cited by Mofor 2023:15), the translator is confronted with five obstacles when translating culture-bound expressions. They are:

- **Ecology:** two languages that are used in two countries far apart with different natural conditions, with different vocabularies;
- **Material Culture:** each country has its own material culture. It can be food, clothes, houses, and means of transportation, etc.
- **Religious Culture:** the religious difference followed by two people from different countries who speak different languages can bring about difference of vocabulary;
- **Social Culture:** some terms which are associated with social culture, such as terms of relatives, marriage, jobs, entertainment, games and sports are not easy to translate;
- **Linguistic Culture:** the special characteristics of two languages involved in translation, such as difference in the system of phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon can be an obstacle as well. In translation, cultural differences can lead to cultural limitations as well.

Toury (1980:187) equally notes that the concept which emphasizes on the essence of cross-cultural understanding as well as bilingual competence in translation is based on the consideration that every translation involves two languages and two cultures at a minimum. He continues that the more differences between the source and target languages in both aspects, the higher the level of difficulties in transferring meaning or messages between the two languages.

Larsson (1984:52) concurs with Toury by observing that one of the most difficulties in translating is found in the differences between cultures, since the people of a given culture look at things from their own perspectives. This inevitably leads to untranslatability. The issue of untranslatability had earlier been broached by Catford when he distinguished between linguistic untranslatability and cultural untranslatability (1965:264). Linguistic untranslatability means there is no substitution to the source language lexical or syntactic element in the target language whereas cultural untranslatability means that there are some cultural terms or some cultural concepts in the source language which are not recognized in the target language culture.

Commenting on the difficulties inherent in the rendering of culture-bound expressions, Wierzbicka

(1994:95) noted that the main problem of translating cultural terms is finding lexical equivalence for foreign and uncommon objects to the target language culture. This may be due to the fact that there are no equivalent words or phrases in the target language that can be used to reveal the content and the message implied.

To conclude the debate on the difficulties involved in the translation of culture-bound expressions or referents, without necessarily being exhaustive, Venuti, 2008:119 (cited by Mofor 2023:16-17) points out that cultural differences raise conceptual differences and makes translating a time-consuming activity. Thus, it becomes the main obstacle in translation since every society has its own cultural pillars. Venuti concludes by stating that the translation of cultural expressions requires the use of certain translation strategies by the translator. That is why this study sets out to investigate the effectiveness of the translation of the New Testament Book of Mark from French into Ngiemboon, two languages which inhabit different linguistic and cultural hemispheres. This logically leads to the next concept, which is bible translation.

Bible Translation

Bible translation implies the translation of the Bible into various languages. Most of the existing translations of the Bible into our indigenous languages were not based on the original language source texts (Greek and Aramic) but rather on other translations of the major languages of colonial powers. A lot has been written on Bible translation. This study will only look at the literary and cultural perspectives owing to their inextricable link with the work.

Smalley, a former UBS Consultant view Bible translation from the point of view of shifts. Thus, according to him, inevitable shifts occur when translating the Bible from one language into another owing to the existence of linguistic and cultural differences. This is captured in the following words:

The history of Bible translation is punctuated by a few great shifts when major new factors started new directions, each new era from then on running concurrently with those which began earlier (1991:203)

This necessarily implies that the translator has to take shifts in consideration, in a bid to replicate the original message, especially when translating from languages like French into Ngiemboon owing to their cultural differences.

Larson (1991:35) on his part, notes that the translation of the Bible is marked by different periods. He calls on translators to consider the following periods when translating the bible from one language into another because it may impact on their rendering:

- *The period of the missionary translator:* At this stage, the missionary translator needed to learn the target or receptor language as well as its underlying culture and inevitably required informants or assistants indigenous to that culture.
- *The period of the missionary translator with native assistants:* Here the missionary translator acts like the principal translator. But realizing his limitations and his inadequate grasp and command of the receptor/target language, he chooses to work with dependent or auxiliary translators.
- *The period of dependent translators working in their own language with assistance from missionary advisors/exegetes.* Here, the text is wholly translated by translators who are indigenous to the receptor/target culture, albeit with limited training and education. This explains their need for and dependence on missionary advisors/consultants/exegetes for the quality control of the translation. Decisions on the final form of the target/receptor text are often influenced by the missionary translators.
- *The stage or phase independent translators working in their own language:* Here, most of the decisions on the final form of the text are made by the translators themselves. They do not accept as gospel truth, the words of the missionary advisor, exegete or consultant. They take responsibility of the quality of the final text in their language in the light of their native knowledge in their language and culture as well as their training in the required areas of specialization.

It is in recognition of the above four stages posited by Larson that this study intends to investigate the translation of cultural realia from French into Ngiemboon, using the New Testament Book of Mark as case study.

Barrick for his part, (2005) considers the Bible as a literary work of art and calls on translators to try as much as possible to capture the literary essence in the translation of the Bible because it is these qualities that affect readers. He notes that the goal of every bible translator should be 'to reproduce the literary effects as clearly as possible within the limitations of a different language' (2005:10).

Another scholar who considers Bible translation from a purely cultural perspective is Voorhie (1999:590). He points out that people and their cultures have intrinsic values, and urges bible translators to respect this in their renderings, since it involves people's heart language and their identity within their respective cultures. Pitman (2002:113) corroborates Voorhie's thesis by observing that "bible translation as a mission focuses on finding terms and concepts in the recipient culture and language..."

Finding out how cultural terms and concepts of the New Testament Book of Mark have been replicated from French into Ngiemboon is the object of this study.

After having reviewed the core concepts of the study, the next section discusses the theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by the sociolinguistic theory of translation. Adherents of this theory include Labov in "Sociolinguistics Patterns" (1972), Hymes in "Language in Culture and Society: a Reader in Linguistics and Anthropology" (1974), Nida in "Language Structure and Translation: Essay" (1975) and Newmark in "A Textbook of Translation" (1988). The latter scholar, Newmark (1988:45-47), describes the sociolinguistic theory of translation as a communicative translation theory which attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership. Thus, the sociolinguistic theory of translation jettisons the idea of word for word translation and rather embraces thought for thought translation. Here, the focus is not on the language itself but on the effect it will have, once ideas have been rendered in the other language. While considering the author's intention, the translation adapts and makes the thought and the cultural content of the text more accessible to the target language audience. The sociolinguistic theory resonates the relationship between language and culture and hinges on the main thrust of this study, which is to assess the translation of cultural referents in bible translation from a non-indigenous language (French) to an indigenous language Ngiemboon, with particular focus on the New Testament Book of Mark.

It should equally be observed that the sociolinguistic theory of translation is not bound by the constraints of word for word or structure for structure translation since the aim is to produce as closely as possible, the same effect on the target reader as on the readers of the original text. This affirmation lends credence to the importance of this theory to the present study. Thus, with the relative freedom posited by this theory, the replication of cultural realia in the Book of Mark from French into Ngiemboon, such that the target language reader experiences the same effect as the source language reader, is worth investigating.

Apart from the sociolinguistic theory, this study has equally made use of other translation theories and text criticism or literary translation approaches as support theories for the analysis of the translation of cultural realia as observed later in the work.

After having reviewed related literature on the study and presented the theoretical framework, the study proceeds with the methodology.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs an explicatory research design, which entails a careful, close and focused examination of a single major text in an attempt to understand one or more aspects of it (George, c2018, cited by Ningrum, 2020:1).

The text in this case is the New Testament Book of Mark in French and the target language version, which is Ngiemboon. The aspect referred to is cultural realia in the Bible and how they have been translated into Ngiemboon. The study is therefore descriptive and analytical. It is corpus-based and essentially qualitative, though the qualitative data have been analyzed quantitatively.

Data was collected through a content analysis of a parallel corpus: the New Testament Book of Mark in French and the target language version, Ngiemboon. 12 excerpts relating to cultural realia were collected and classified according to Newmark's (2010) taxonomy (that is, ecology, material culture, social culture, organizations, custom, activities, procedures and ideas, gestures and habits).

Data was analyzed at extra-textual and micro-textual levels. The extra-textual level entails the presentation of the Ngiemboon language and alphabet among others, while the micro-textual level involves the analysis of raw data through Toury's (2005) descriptive translation studies (DTS) approach. DTS proposes a three-dimensional approach to textual analysis, which involves identification, description and explanation respectively, as have been presented in the excerpts.

Data Presentation and Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the data is presented and analyzed at both the extra-textual and micro-textual levels.

Extra-textual Data

This section presents inter-alia, an overview of the Ngiemboon language, the Ngiemboon alphabet and the translation of the Bible into Ngiemboon.

Overview of the Ngiemboon Language

The Ngiemboon language is part of the Bamileke sub-group of the Eastern Grassfields language family, spoken in the West Region of Cameroon (Anderson, 2008). It has an estimated number of 400,000 speakers. Using EGIDS (Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale), a tool used to measure the status of a language in terms of endangerment or development, Ethnologue (1951) estimates that the Ngiemboon language is developing. In other words, the language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some, though this is not yet widespread or sustainable. The language has 5 dialectal variations (Batcham, Balessing, Bangang, Bamougong, Balatchi).

The Ngiemboon alphabet consists of 24 consonants

Table 1. Cultural realia according to Newmark (2010)

No.	Categories	Description	Explanation
1	Ecology	Flora, fauna, winds	Names of plants, trees, winds, natural phenomenon
2	Material Culture	Artefacts, food, clothes, houses, towns, transport	Name of food, beverages, clothes, houses, city, transportation
3	Social Culture	Work and leisure	Name of human labour, entertainment, hobbies, sports
4	Organizations, Customs, Activities	Political, social, legal, religious, artistic, administrative	Name of political organization, activities, procedure, ideas, etc.
5	Gestures and Habits	Non-linguistic features	Name of regular behaviour and movement

and 8 vowels. They are represented below in upper and lower cases:

Upper Case

A B C D E F G H I J K
L M N O P R P f S Sh
T T s U U V W W Y Y Z

Lower Case

a b c d e f g h l j k
l m n ŋ o o p r p f s sh
t t s u u v w w y y

Presentation of the Corpus

The corpus of this study is a body of 12 excerpts which were extracted from the translation of the New Testament Book of Mark from French into Ngiemboon. The translations were produced in different periods: 1910 (SEGOND version) and 2007 respectively. It should be noted that the translation of the New Testament into Ngiemboon was published by the Bible Alliance (ABC) of Cameroon in 2007. The 12 excerpts are phraseological items classified according to the cultural categories (ecology, material culture, social culture, organizations, customs, activities, procedures, and ideas, gestures and habits) proposed by Newmark (2010).

The Gospel of Mark is the second of the four canonical gospels and of the three synoptic Gospels. It tells of the ministry of Jesus from his baptism by John the Baptist to his death, burial, and the discovery of his empty tomb. Mark's Gospel stresses the deeds, strength, and determination of Jesus in overcoming evil forces and defying the power of imperial Rome. Mark also emphasizes the Passion, predicting it as early as chapter 8 and devoting the final third of his Gospel (11–16) to the last week of Jesus' life. The New Testament Book of

Mark was chosen for scientific investigation because it presents a rich amount of different and varied instances of cultural referents.

Micro-textual Analysis

This involves a presentation of the various excerpts following Newmark's (2010) classification. Table 1

This study uses categories 1, 2, and 4 to analyze the excerpts owing to their correlation with the selected cultural referents.

Category 1. Ecology

Excerpt 1.

A. IDENTIFICATION

ST: Jean parut, baptisant dans **le désert**, et prêchant le baptême de repentance.

Gloss :

Ngiemboon: Jân/ñnéŋe/tà/ñkwëε/nkwòŋotswë/,
ñně/sá'a/mbwo/lá'ngie/pó/kúbe/mà/wób/,
ngyò/à/nú'u/wób/ntse

b) **Linguistic:** John/stayed/until/appeared/**empty farm**/trying to/tell

people/that/they/change/habits/their/so/he/immerse/them/water.

c) **Literal:** John suddenly appeared on an empty farm telling people to change their ways and come so that he can immerse them in water.

Element of Interest: **le désert**

B. DESCRIPTION

Context of Production: The preaching of John the Baptist
Possible Constraints to Translation: Absence of an appropriate TL equivalent expression for **désert**

C. EXPLANATION

Translator's Method

Microstrategy: Cultural Substitution

Macrostrategy: Domestication

Translation Theory: Communication Theory

Literary Translation Approach: Sociolinguistic approach
 Given that there is no equivalent word for 'desert' in Ngiemboon, the translator uses the cultural substitution technique to describe what a desert looks like (empty farm) in order for the target audience to have the same understanding as the source audience. This is achievable through the sociolinguistic approach.

Excerpt 2

A. IDENTIFICATION

ST: Il était avec les **bêtes sauvages**, et les anges le servaient.

Gloss:

a) Ngiemboon: Pâ/**menòɔn**/zǝ/gwó/wó/Mecýó'/Ssé/ne/ńdíe/yé

b) Linguistic: with/**animals**/only/he/was/there/servants/God/were/looking/him

c) Literal: He was there with **animals** and the servants of God looked after him

Element of Interest: **bêtes sauvages**

B. DESCRIPTION

Context of Production: The Temptation of Jesus

Possible Constraints to Translation: Limited target language vocabulary

C. EXPLANATION

Translator's Method

Micro-strategy: Omission

Macro-strategy: Domestication

Translation Theory: Communication theory

Literary Communication approach: Sociolinguistic approach

The translator uses omission at this level as some ST lexical items have been omitted in the TL. '**les bêtes sauvages**' is rendered as '**menòɔn**' which loosely translated means '**animals**'.

Excerpt 3

A. IDENTIFICATION

ST: Il s'éleva **un grand tourbillon**, et les flots se jetaient dans la barque

Gloss: Ngiemboon: atsǝ/**máamáa**/**fóm**/ńnéŋe/tà/ńzye/lécu'/ntse/ne/ńbæe/ńkúu/tséé/kanú'

Linguistic: a/**big/strongwind**/stayed/until/start/blow/water/was/shake/enter/inside/boat

Literal: A big strong wind blew up, and water began to enter into the boat

Element of Interest: **un grand tourbillon**

B. DESCRIPTION

Context of Production: Jesus Calms a Storm

Possible Constraint to Translation: Absence of an appropriate TL equivalence

C. EXPLANATION

Translator's Method

Micro-strategy: Explicitation

Macro-strategy: Domestication

Translation Theory: Functional equivalence theory

Literary Translation Approach: Deconstructionist approach

To enhance the understanding of the TL reader, the translator has resorted to paraphrase through explicitation in the expression 'a big strong wind' as the word 'strong' is not found in the ST. This is probably due to the presence of the expression "whirlwind in Ngiemboon, which would have been considered appropriate.

Excerpt 4

ST: les esprits impurs sortirent, entrèrent dans **les pourceaux**

Gloss:

Ngiemboon :messé/tepòŋ/leenńké/fóo/ná/nyìŋ/ŋwé/ńkwé/ńkúu/nà/**mekúnóɔn**

Linguistic:spirits/evil/then/went/from/person/that/left/entered/in/**pigs**

Literal: evil spirits then left that person and went in the **pigs**

Element of Interest: **les pourceaux**

B. DESCRIPTION

Context of Production: Jesus heals a man with evil spirits

Possible constraints to translation: None

C EXPLANATION

Translator's Method

Micro-strategy: Literal translation

Macro-strategy: Foreignization

Translation Theory: Philological theory

Literary Translation Approach: Formalistic approach

To achieve the closest natural equivalent and a better understanding of the

SL message in terms of meaning, the translator has opted for literal translation in the TL. Many African societies rear pigs. Little surprise that the concept is very much present in the TL culture. The little rendering is in sync with the formalistic approach, since the SL form has merely been replicated in the TL.

CATEGORY 2: MATERIAL CULTURE

Excerpt 5

A. IDENTIFICATION

ST:Je ne suis pas digne de me baisser pour détacher la **courroie de ses souliers**

Gloss: Ngiemboon : mèn/fó/tè/ku'u/mbɔɔ/lérwé'e/ssé,
ńkyé'/menkyo/melɔɔn/mé/wó

Linguistic://even/not/worthy/to/bend/down/untie/ropes/shoes/his

Literal: I am not even worthy to bend down and untie the **ropes of his shoes**

Element of Interest: la courroie de ses souliers

B. DESCRIPTION

Context of Production: The preaching of John the Baptist

Possible Constraint to Translation: Absence of an appropriate TL equivalence of some lexical items

C. EXPLANATION

Translator's Method

Micro-strategy: Cultural substitution

Macro-strategy: Domestication

Translation Theory: Functional equivalence theory

Literary Translation Approach: Sociolinguistics approach

The SL expression 'Lace' ('courroie' in French) has been substituted to 'ropes' because of the absence of an equivalent expression of 'lace' in the Ngiemboon language. This is in a bid to enhance the understanding of the Ngiemboon Bible readers.

Excerpt 6

A. IDENTIFICATION

ST: Quelques jours après, Jésus revint à **Capernaüm**.

Gloss :Ngiemboon: É ɕə/lyɛ'/shyó'ó tsó wó/,Yěsô/
gín/rmbiɛ/Kapernawúm.

Linguistic:

After/days/some/Jesus/again/return/**Capernaum**

Literal: Few days later, Jesus returned to **Capernaum**.

Element of Interest: **Capernaüm**

B. DESCRIPTION

Context of Production: Jesus's miraculous works (He heals a paralyzed man)

Possible Constraints to Translation: Translator's knowledge of the notion of invariants

C. EXPLANATION

Translator's Method

Micro-strategy: Borrowing

Macro-strategy: Foreignization

Translation Theory: Skopos theory

Literary Translation Approach: Formalistic approach

In a bid to preserve the local colour of the name 'Kapernawúm', the translator has resorted to borrowing to directly transfer it from the SL to the TL. This may be due to the notion of 'invariance' in the translation of names from one language to another

Excerpt 7

A. IDENTIFICATION

ST: Personne ne coud **une pièce de drap neuf à un vieil habille**

Gloss: Ngiemboon: Ngiemboon : ńgwó/nyìŋ/le/łogó/
mmó/nzso/swé,ńdɔg/ńtsé/lepýé/ná/nzẁiŋe/nzsoẁó

Linguistic:can/someone/not/use/thing/dress/new/to/patch/hole/on/old/dress

Literal: someone cannot use **part of a new dress to patch a hole on an old dress**

Element of Interest: Une pièce de drap neuf à un vieil habille...

Possible Constraints to Translation :

B. DESCRIPTION

Context of Production:Jesus's teachings on fasting

Possible Constraints to Translation: Contextual difficulties

C. EXPLANATION

Translator's Method

Micro-strategy: Explicitation

Macro-strategy: Domestication

Translation Theory: Skopos theory

Literary Translation Approach: Deconstructionist approach

Several expressions in the target language text are noticeably absent in the source language text, with the 'skopos' being to render the message clearer and readily understandable to the target language readers of the Holy Bible.

Excerpt 8

A. IDENTIFICATION

ST: Ils arrivèrent à Jérusalem, et Jésus entra dans le temple.

Gloss: Ngiemboon: Pó/gua/tà/ńkúu/Yerósale/ Yěsô/
gua/ju'ɛ/Ssé

Linguistic:They/went/until/reach/Jerusalem/Jesus/went/place/God

Literal: They arrived Jerusalem and Jesus went to **the place of God**

Element of Interest: **le temple**

B. DESCRIPTION

Context of Production: Jesus goes to the temple

Possible Constraint to Translation: Absence of an appropriate target language equivalent expression

C. EXPLANATION

Translator's Method

Micro-strategy: Explicitation

Macro-strategy: Domestication

Translation Theory: Communication theory

Literary Translation Approach: Deconstructionist approach

The difficulty to find an appropriate term in the TL due to limited vocabulary facilitates the use of explicitation to achieve the closest natural equivalence in the TT. The SL concept "temple" has been explained in the TL (place of God) because of the absence of a one-on-one TL expression.

Excerpt 9

A. IDENTIFICATION

ST: On vous livrera **aux tribunaux**, et vous serez battus de verges dans **les synagogues**

Gloss: Ngiemboon: Mé/gegÿo/lɔgɔ/gw̃i/gua/ju'/gie/mé /tsó'te/ntsar/wó/é/cúa/gw̃i/mbɔɔ

/tsɛɛ/mendá/cú'tè/pà/Yuda

Linguistic: They/will/take/you/go/place/that/they/settle/disputes/there/and/beat/you/even/in/houses/meeting/of/Jews

Literal: They will take you to **the place where they settle disputes** and even beat you in

the meeting houses of the Jews

Element of Interest: **aux tribunaux ; les synagogues**

B. DESCRIPTION

Context of Production: The persecution of those who preached the Gospel

Possible Constraint to Translation: Absence of appropriate TL equivalence of some expressions

C. EXPLANATION

Micro-strategy: Explicitation

Macro-strategy: Domestication

Translation Theory: Communication theory

Literary Translation Approach: Deconstructionist approach

The SL intention is reflected in the TLT through the explicitation technique as the translator uses more words in the TL to convey the message in SL. 'Tribunaux' is rendered as 'the place where they settle disputes' and 'les synagogues' as 'the meeting houses of the Jews.'

Category C: Organizations, Customs, Activities, Procedures And Ideas

Excerpt 10

A. IDENTIFICATION

ST: Il guérit beaucoup de gens qui avaient diverses maladies ; **il chassa aussi beaucoup de démons**

Gloss: Ngiemboon: Yěsô/gÿo/meguɔ/ntíntí/ná/pàa/tà ñgyɔɔn/mag/ñgíñe/ñjwon/messé/tepòn/éfóo/ná/pàa/ñk

w̃ɛɛ

Linguistic: Jesus/made/illness/all/types/on/people/many/finish/and/drove/evil/from/people/out

Literal: Jesus healed all types of illnesses **and drove evil spirits from people**

Element of Interest: **il chassa aussi beaucoup de démons**

B. DESCRIPTION

Context of Production: Jesus performs miracles

Possible Constraint to Translation: Ensuring a coherent flow of ideas in the TLT

C. EXPLANATION

Translator's Method

Micro-strategy: Modulation

Macro-strategy: Domestication

Translation Theory: Communication Theory

Literary Translation Approach: Sociolinguistic approach

In order to ensure coherence in the target language, there was need for the translator to change the focus of the text, hence the use of modulation: using one sentence (TL) in place of two (SL). The communicative theory of translation and the sociolinguistic approach also ensured the communication of the message to the target language readers seamlessly.

Excerpt 11

A. IDENTIFICATION

ST: Il vit Lévi, fils d'Alphée, assis au **bureau des péages**

Gloss: Ngiemboon: Á/ne/ñgíñe/ñgyá/Lěvi/míñ/Alfe/á/ñnéñe/ju'/gie/mé

/kwé/ncùb/pà/Roma/wó

Linguistic: he/while/working/saw/Levi/son/Alphaeus/he/seated/place/where/they/take/tax/people/Rome/there

Literal: While he walked, he saw Levi, Alphaeus'sson seated in an **office where the Romans pay their taxes**

Element of Interest: bureau des péages

B. DESCRIPTION

Context of Production: Jesus Calls Levi

Possible Constraint to Translation: Absence of an appropriate target language equivalence of some expressions

C. EXPLANATION

Translator's Method

Micro-strategy: Explicitation

Macro-strategy: Domestication

Translation Theory: Communicative theory

Literary Translation Approach: Deconstructionist approach

The SL intention is reflected in the TLT through the explicitation technique as the translator uses more words in the TL to convey the message in SL. The ST expression '**bureau des péages**' is rendered as '**an office where the Romans pay their taxes**' in the TT. This may be due to the absence of an appropriate target language expression.

Excerpt 12

A. IDENTIFICATION

ST: Herod donna un festin à ses grands, aux chefs militaires et aux principaux de la Galilée

Gloss: Ngiemboon: Herôd/tõñ/mekẽm,/ñtón/metándá/pàlyó'ncù/,mbɔɔ/memáa/pàa/tsɛɛ/

Ngwòn/Galilea

Linguistic: Herod/called/notables/called/chiefs/warriors/and/big/people/in/territory/Galilee

Literal: Herod called for notables, warlords, and important personalities in the territory of Galilee

Element of Interest: Ses grands, aux chefs militaires...

Table 2. Frequency of Occurrence of Cultural Realia in the Translation of the Book of Mark from French into Ngiemboon

S/N	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY/12	PERCENTAGE
1	Ecology	4	33.3
2	Material Culture	5	41.7
3	Organizations, Customs, Activities, Procedures and Ideas	3	25
Total		12	100

Table 3. Frequency of Usage of Micro-strategies (Translation Techniques) and Macro-strategies

S/N	TRANSLATION TECHNIQUE	FREQUENCY/12	PERCENTAGE	Macro-strategy
1	Explication	5	41.7	Domestication
2	Cultural Substitution	3	25	
3	Omission	1	8.3	
4	Modulation	1	8.3	
Sub-total			83.4	
5	Borrowing	1	8.3	Foreignization
6	Literal Translation	1	8.3	
Sub-total			16.6	
Total			100	

B. DESCRIPTION

Context of Production: Celebration of Herod's birthday

Possible constraint to translation: Getting the right target language expression

C. EXPLANATION

Translator's Method

Micro-strategy: Cultural substitution

Macro-strategy: Domestication

Translation Theory: Functional equivalence theory

Literary Translation theory: Sociolinguistic theory

To achieve the closest natural equivalent of the SL message in terms of meaning, the translator uses cultural substitution in the TT to translate '**Sesgrands et aux chefs militaires**' as '**notables, warlords**'.

After having presented the data and analyzed them through the descriptive studies (DTS) model, the next section focuses on the presentation of findings. This is done qualitatively and in tabular form, since the frequency of occurrence of translation techniques, theories and approaches are analyzed.

Presentation of Findings

Findings on the frequency of occurrence of cultural realia, as well as the frequency of usage of translation techniques and strategies, theories and approaches are the focus of the ensuing paragraphs. Table 2

The table above shows that the most frequently occurring cultural realia aspect in the New Testament

Book of Mark are ecology (33.3 %), material culture (41.7 %) and organizations, customs, activities, procedures and ideas (25%). Thus, in the translation of cultural realia in this biblical book (Mark) from French into Ngiemboon, the translator is invited to lay more emphasis on material culture, followed by ecology, for the message to be transmitted seamlessly for the understanding of the target language readers. This is not to say that s/he should not focus on the other elements. Table 3

Findings show that a total of six micro-strategies have been used to translate the Bible from French into Ngiemboon, with explication recording the highest frequency (41.7%) followed by cultural substitution (25 %), with the rest (omission, modulation, borrowing and literal translation) recording 8.3 % respectively. The high percentage recorded by explication and cultural substitution can be explained by the absence of appropriate equivalents of some expressions in the target language. The translator has to paraphrase through explication or substitute to enhance the understanding of the target language readers.

This equally implies the pre-eminence of domestication (83.4 %) over foreignization (16.6%), as the translator has to take the text closer to the target language audience to ease their understanding. Table 4

Findings reveal that in a bid to better replicate the biblical message to the Ngiemboon community, the translator, while translating from the French language, is supposed to focus on communicating the message for the understanding of the target audience, rather than

Table 4. Frequency of Usage of Translation Theories

S/N	TRANSLATION THEORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Communication theory	6	50
2	Functional Equivalence theory	3	25
3	Skopos theory	2	16.7
4	Philological theory	1	8.3
Total		12	100

attempting to produce the meaning of individual words and expressions. This explains the 75 % recorded by the communication and the functional equivalence theories (that is, 50 and 25 % respectively). This is equally in sync with the literary theories of translation, where the sociolinguistics and deconstructionist approaches have the lion's share of percentages (83.2, that is, 41.6 respectively). This is due to their focus on the meaning of the message.

CONCLUSION

This study has assessed the translation of cultural realia in the New Testament Book of Mark from a non-indigenous language (French) into an indigenous language (Ngiemboon). The study is based on the affirmation that the translation of cultural realia can be very challenging, as the translator is confronted with the task of not only identifying the cultural elements in the bilingual corpora, but equally determining the constraints faced by the translator as well as the techniques and strategies used in overcoming them.

The study falls within the purview of translation quality assessment (TQA) and is inspired by House's (2002) text-based approach, which compares phraseological pairs of the source and target language texts with a view to discovering syntactic, semantic, stylistic and pragmatic regularities of transfer. Thus, for this study, a total of twelve (12) excerpts relating to cultural realia from the New Testament Book of Mark were selected from the source language (French) and the target language (Ngiemboon) with a view to assessing the quality of the translations, with particular focus on the constraints faced by the translators and the strategies used to overcome them.

An analysis of the data reveals that the translators faced a myriad of constraints ranging from the limited target language vocabulary, the need to understand the notion of invariants to render aspects like the names of towns and persons from a European to an African language, difficulties relating to context as well as ensuring a coherent flow of ideas, and finally, constraints related to the absence of appropriate target language

equivalents to render some concepts and expressions into the target language text. The latter constraint posed the most challenge to the translators of the Holy Bible, particularly the New Testament Book of Mark, from French into Ngiemboon. That is why the translators resorted mostly to explicitation and cultural substitution to enhance the understanding of the target language audience, the readers of the Bible in the Ngiemboon language. The high incidence of domestication (above 80%) especially corroborates Smalley's thesis of inevitable shifts in the translation of the Bible from a European language like French to an African indigenous language like Ngiemboon owing to linguistic and cultural differences. Notwithstanding, one can therefore safely conclude that the translators of the New Testament Book of Mark have recorded agreeable success in translating the somehow inaccessible concepts and expressions into Ngiemboon through the strategy of domestication, as this has enhanced the understanding of the Ngiemboon religious community.

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