FUNCTIONALIST THEORIES AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO YORUBA BIBLE TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT

Bible translators are generally genuinely concerned that their work be properly understood by target readers and one of the major concerns of translation theory and practice centres on the successful process of mediating texts from the Source Language to the Target Language. This paper examines translation, apart from being an act of language communication, a basic tool of cultural transmission but demonstrates that there can be real correspondence between form and function which is a practical outcome of the functionalist approach to translation.

It is observed among Yoruba readers of the Holy Bible that there are different versions of the same Bible particularly in the choice of words and in the structure. The Bible being the most translated book in the World, prompted us to critically examine what really motivated the translation of the Holy Bible into Yoruba language, the different trends and particularly the relevance of the terms used by the culture of the Yoruba people: all in a bid to ascertain whether the different versions still end up having the same realization among the Yoruba in Nigeria.

The functionality of words and terms in the translations of the Bible into Yoruba language is discussed. This paper equally discusses the underlying principles of functionalist theory as employed by Yoruba translators of the Holy Bible, that is, the relationship between form, context and meaning. (250 words)

Keywords: Functionalist Theory, Yoruba language, interpretation, Holy Bible, Translation, Relevance

INTRODUCTION

Translation has been described as the written conversion of a text from one language - Source Language (SL) into another language called Target Language (TL). It is concerned with both theory and practice (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958; Nida, 1964; Newmark, 1988 etc). It is indeed the art of rendering the meaning of a written text into another language in a way that the author intended the text (Newmark, 1988: 5). Even though, translation is interdisciplinary in scope, it is highly language specific and one of the obstacles to having a comprehensive translation theory is that of getting a deep insight to what meaning is. Newmark (Ibid, 6) is of the view that the purpose and nature of translation theory is to identify and define a translation problem and to indicate all the factors that have to be taken into consideration in solving the problem identified, to list all the possible translation procedure and finally to recommend the most suitable translation procedure. The dilemma of the best method of translating is a difficult one. According to Jerome (395AD) quoted by Venuti (2004:24).

It is difficult ... when something is well put in another language, to preserve this same beauty in translation. If I translate word for word, it sounds absurd, if I, out of necessity, alter something in the order of diction, I will seem to have abandoned the task of a translator.

Brief History of Bible Translation:

The lack of ability to speak the languages in which the Bible was originally written and continual changes in the languages we speak have necessitated the translation of the Bible. Bible translation is the art and practice of
rendering the Bible into languages other than those in which it was originally written. Indeed, both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible have a long history of translation. Bible translation is not a translation type in its own right but it is a translational activity not substantially different from the translation of other literary texts belonging to a culture that is removed from the target text in time and space. Bible translation is a normal translation in that it requires profound factual knowledge in addition to cultural and linguistic knowledge. The Bible translator and Bible translation critic need a very good and appropriate approach such as the functionalist approach and must have the command over translation competence.

According to Encyclopaedia Britannica (2009), the Jewish Bible, the Old Testament, was originally written almost entirely in Hebrew, with a few short elements in Aramaic which later became the lingua franca of the area, and for liturgical reasons it became necessary for the Jewish communities of the region to have the Torah, or Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible), translated into the common language from the traditional Hebrew. By the mid-3rd century BC Greek was the dominant lingua franca, and Jewish scholars began the task of translating the Hebrew canon into Greek. The Greek version of the Jewish Bible came to be known later (in Latin) as the Septuagint. The Hebrew Scriptures were the only Bible the early Christian church knew, and as the young religion spread out through the Greek-speaking world, Christians adopted the Septuagint. In the meantime, many of the books of the Christian Bible, the New Testament, were first written or recorded in Greek and others in Aramaic. In 405 AD, St Jerome finished translating a Latin version that was based in part on the Septuagint, and this version, the Vulgate served as the basis for translations of both the Old and New Testaments.

The first complete English-language version of the Bible dated from 1382 and was credited to John Wycliffe and his followers. But it was the work of the scholar William Tyndale, who from 1525 to 1535 translated the New Testament and part of the Old Testament that became the model for a series of subsequent English translations. All previous English translations culminated in the King James Version (1611; known in England as the Authorized Version), which was prepared by 54 scholars appointed by King James I. Meanwhile, new translations of the Bible into English proliferated in the 20th century. Among the more recent Protestant Bibles are the Revised Version (1881–85), a revision of the King James Version; the Revised Standard Version (1946–52) and the New Revised Standard Version (1989), which are widely accepted by American Protestants; The New English Bible (1961–70) and The Revised English Bible (1989). Among the Roman Catholic Bibles are a translation by Ronald Knox (1945–49, The Jerusalem Bible (1966), The New Jerusalem Bible (1989), and The New American Bible (1970) (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2009). To increase the level of literacy and the further spread of Christianity worldwide, the Bible was translated into many local languages totalling about 1800 languages with Africa recording not less than 522 languages including Yoruba.

The Yoruba Language and People

Yoruba, one of the Kwa languages (Ihenacho, 1979:61; Le Courrier, 1990:49) is spoken in sub-Saharan Africa by almost 25 million people mostly in Nigeria, Benin Republic, Togo, Brazil and Cuba (Atlas of World's Languages, 1994). The Yoruba language, like many other African languages, is a tonal language, a system unknown to Europe, and is accompanied by drumbeat for long-distance communication in Africa (Le Courrier, 1990:48-49). Tone is indispensable in the pronunciation of Yoruba words and for the grammatical structure of a sentence. There are three tones: low, medium, and high. It plays an important role in understanding a Yoruba text (Delano, 1965).

The Yoruba language belongs to the Kwa-sub-group of African Niger-Congo family of languages which is centred around the Niger-Benue confluence to which the Edo, the Igbos, Idoma, Ebira, Igala and Nupe belong. Today, there is a total demarcation. Until the 19th century, there was no single word for the group, but were known by their different sub-ethnic names such as Awori and Ijebu who lived close to the Coast, the Egba, Ijesha and Ekiti in the forest zones and the Oyo and the Igbonima in the Savanah (Ojo and Nwachukwu 2005:77). In the present day Nigeria, the Yoruba live in the States of Lagos, Osun, Oyo, Ogun, Ekiti and Ondo. They are also found in Kwara, Edo and Kogi States and the Republic of Benin. The Christian missionaries played a prominent role in the development of the Yoruba language most especially in the area of the Yoruba written literature.

The Yoruba Bible

The spread of Christianity necessitated further translations of both the Old and New Testaments into so many languages including Yoruba. There have been massive growth and development in translation studies as a result of the World growing ’smaller’ and the growth in translation studies. Bible translation has been paralleled by developments in communication studies and linguistics. Indeed the Yoruba Bible translation has made substantial role in the development of Yoruba language and culture. This is also what happens in all other languages (Delisle and Woodsworth, 1995:7-24)

In Africa, the need to spread the Christian religion led to the development of local languages at the literacy level and the establishment of European languages. Africans
who participated in the translations of their scriptures became skilful translators and experts in both English and regional languages. The history of religion and the Bibles cannot be well understood without due recourse to the impact of translation. One of the precursors of Bible translation who single handedly translated the Bible into Yoruba as *Bibeli Yoruba* (Yoruba Bible) was Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the first African Bishop of the Niger Delta who not only began the translation of the Bible into Yoruba but also supervised a Committee of Europeans and Yoruba to ensure the translation of the complete Bible into Yoruba in 1884 (Bible society, 2007: 13-14). Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther played a leading role in the development of Yoruba language. He published the first *Yoruba Grammar* in 1843 and in 1875, an acceptable Yoruba orthography was produced. The translation of the Bible into Yoruba language is a reflection of the socio-political, economic and spiritual life of the people. He also wrote a book on grammar and vocabulary of the Yoruba language (Crowder, 1977: 117). With this development, vernacular alphabet was developed and its use facilitated interactions between visitors and natives and this helped to preserve the local languages from being overwhelmed by the forces of lingua franca (Sanneh, 1987).

The *Bibeli Iroyin Ayo Pelu apokirifa* (Good new Bible (with Apocrypha), was published by the Bible Society of Nigeria, Lagos, in 2005 and edited by Rev, Father Anthony Dewale Ojo and Archbishop of Ibadan Diocese, Felix Alaba Job. The version is written in a modern day/contemporary Yoruba language spoken in everyday conversation and in a clear and simple Yoruba language. According to the editors, the version was translated directly from Greek while the Old Testament was translated directly from Hebrew language taking cognizance of the fact that these languages have their differences in morphology, phonology and syntax. This version is a translation directly from Greek (New Testament) and Hebrew (Old Testament). It was therein explained how the source languages (Hebrew and Greek) form their words and how the target language (Yoruba) also forms its own words to make sentences. The reason for this is that every reader of the version should clearly have a clear feeling and understanding of the biblical message. The translation presents a range of “functionalist” approaches to translation.

**Functionalist Theory of Translation**

Several translation theories have been developed and theorists develop their approaches to translation and its criticism according to the translation models created by them (Holmes 1988:67-80). In fact, the 1980s was characterised with the introduction of many approaches to translation studies collectively called functionalist which brought a paradigm shift in the system. The functionalist approach is instrumental in turning culture into one of the principal concerns of modern translation theory and methodology and this way, language plays a vital role in its wider social and cultural contexts by forging and sustaining cultural practices and social structures (Talgeri and Verma, 1988). Functionalist Approach is the approach that sees translation as a communicative action carried out by experts in intercultural communication. The translator plays the role of a text producer aiming at some communicative purpose (Nord, 2001:151).

One of the proponents of the Functionalist Theory is Christine Nord who has published extensively on what Functionalist theory is and its relevance to translation studies. In agreement with Van Vermeer who formulated the *skopos* theory in which function or aim is the key concept in translation. Nord believes that the situation under which a target text is produced is different from that of the source text in terms of time, place and sometimes medium. Thus, the meaning of a text is found beyond the linguistic code in its extra textual situation. The approach believes that the function of a text in the target culture determines the method of translation. The functional ideal which Nord proposes in the place of equivalence-based approaches depends on the alternative *Skopos* suggestions that (Nord, 2002: 92-3) the translator interprets the source text not only with regard to the sender’s intention but also with regard to its compatibility with the target situation. The target text should be composed in such a way that it fulfils functions in the target situation that are compatible with the sender’s intention. Also, the text world of the translation should be selected according to the intended target-text function. In addition, the code elements should be selected in such a way that the target-text effect corresponds to the intended target-text functions.

According to Sigrid Kupsch-Losereit (1985:172), Nord does not completely abandon attributions of guilt. However, “translation errors”, as she terms them, are not so much “mistakes” as “non-functional translations”. There are various offences against translation: “1. the function of the translation, 2. the coherence of the text, 3. the text type of text form, 4. linguistic conventions, 5. culture- and situation-specific conventions and conditions, 6. the language system”. The Functionalist approach seeks to liberate translators from an excessively adherence to the source text looking at translation as a new communicative act that must be purposeful with respect to the translator's client.

The Functionalist approach has a lot to do with the interpretative approach which deals with the conversion of the linguistic meaning from the source language to sense. This means the link between the non-verbal thought (which is consciously grasped and expressed in another language regardless of the words or terms used in the original language text. Here, the translation is
Based on sense and not on words or what is known as the linguistic structure. Also, Vermeer (1994:6, 11) advises that translation should focus on meaning and not on words. In the translation of Holy Books where the concern should be on faithfulness, the translator is not fulfilled with mere linguistic transfer of the message, but also with the conditions and determinants of the source language text production and those of the target Language text reception. The functionalist theory, like the interpretative approach, is based on the principle of hermeneutics, which is the science and methodology of interpreting texts and it is an endeavour to establish an integral communication of meaning whatever the form of the words employed between two different languages. Hermeneutics is very relevant to the translation of the Bible because the translator has to fully understand and accurately interpret the source language text and transfer information and decisions based on his linguistic and cultural knowledge as well as experience of the translator about the text to be translated. It is however to be noted that understanding and interpreting the meaning of any translation discourse involves three factors which include the author, the text and the reader and since translation involves decoding of the original discourse and encoding of the target discourse, both carried out by the translator, adequate interpretation is a strong requirement for judging whether a piece of translation succeeds or fails. Interpretative approach is a significant approach that has been used by Bible translators.

**Functionalist Approach and Bible Translation.**

Functionalist Theory has contributed in no small measure to the translation of the Yoruba Bible, particularly the *Bibeli Iroyin Ayo* (2005) version. The translation of the Bible evolves as the most successful book in human history. There are several reasons for the prominence of the Holy Bible among several world religious literatures. First, the content of the Holy Bible touches the core of man's origin, existence and essence. The Bible provides answers to man's essence on earth, where man goes after death. The Bible is so unique in that the available copies are translated versions from the original. However, there is a proof that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament Bible was in use at the end of the first century A.D. The Greek version, called the Septuagint emerged in the third century. The Latin version called the Vulgate was translated by Saint Jerome and coincidentally, he was the first translator to translate the entire Bible into Latin language. John Wickliffe (1320-1382) translated and produced the first English version of the Bible. His goal was to make the Bible accessible to mankind in the language they understand apart from Greek and Latin languages. This is basically the main objective of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther in translating the Bible into Yoruba from the King James Version.

Translating as an activity and translation as the result of this activity are inseparable from the concept of culture. The most peculiar difficulty in the task of translating the Bible into Yoruba has traditionally been the dilemma between the historical and synchronic approaches in the analysis, description and translation of the Source Language culture into the receiving culture. Most importantly, the Bible in its original untranslated form is a collection of ancient writings spanning many cultures and many decades. The sixty-six books into which the Bible is divided represent “a greater variety of literary styles that can be derived from other piece of literature in the history of mankind (Snell-Hornby et al. 1998:275).

The strategy of translating the word of God in the local languages, and teaching people within the local cultures helped in the propagation of Christianity. Not only are languages, corresponding cultures and word-meaning important in translation, the approach stemming probably from the theory also matters. There are indeed a lot of complexities involved in translations into languages with grammatical systems different from the Indo-European languages. For instance, in the translation from Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and even English into a language such as Yoruba, the theory of dynamic equivalence was widely useful and adopted for clarity purposes. This theory was actually set to reckon with the meaning, the content and not the form, with simplicity, clarity and explicit explanation of difficulties. However, translating the Bible is not without some problems. One of the major problems in Bible translation is that English word is exactly the equivalent to some of the Greek words which may mean different things to different people. The onus is now on the translator to choose the best equivalent in each situation. English, like Yoruba, has two present tenses (perfect and continuous). There is also the problem of understanding the ancient language in which the Bible is written as Yoruba Bible translators mostly rely on the English version as the source text.

We have to note just as Nord (1997:21-28) writes, translation is a particular type of human "action", or more strictly speaking “interaction” between two or more agents, which is first and foremost intended to change an existing state of affairs (minimally, the inability of certain people to communicate with each other) involving a source text.

The approach in the translation here, that is, *Bibeli Yoruba Iroyin Ayo*, is "functional" because it relates to the “expectations, needs, previous knowledge and situational conditions” of the receiver for whom it is intended, that is, the Yoruba people. As Nord (1997:27) insists: “the prime principle determining any translation process is the purpose (Skopos) of the overall translational action”, adding that: “[t]his fits in with intentionality being part of the very definition of any action”. To underline her point, she cites Hans Vermeer’s (1989:20) who comments that: Each text is produced for a given purpose and should
serve this purpose. The Skopos rule thus reads as follows: translate/interpret/speak/write in a way which enables your text/translation to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want, which enables your text/translation to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function. Since no two languages are the same linguistically and culturally, translating the Bible into Yoruba, which does not have a long literary tradition, presents some knotty problems to the translator. It is a well known fact that Bible scholars are still researching into the ancient Israel and the near East in order to have deeper historical and cultural context out of which the Bible emerged. Many years ago in Nigeria, the understanding of the biblical cultural value has grown deeper, especially in respect to the importance of Yoruba translation of the Bible to the identity of the receiving culture. In Bible translation, there must be communication of the sense with clarity and power particularly when it is read aloud. For instance, the Bibeli Iroyin Ayo pelu Apoknifa, the Holy Bible in Yoruba common language, has an emotive quality that makes an impact on the listener. The translators of this new Yoruba version makes conscious efforts to provide a text that can easily be understood by the average reader of modern Yoruba. The translators have used the vocabulary and language structures commonly used by the average Yoruba person. The concern of these Bible translators goes beyond the concerns of vocabulary and sentence structure, they also concern themselves with historical and cultural barriers to understanding the Bible and translate terms shrouded in history or culture in ways that can be immediately understood by the contemporary reader. For instance, the translation of terms of weights or measures in precious metals such as shekels of silver, denary are rendered in a language understood by the reader or explained as footnotes. The Jewish lunar calendar, for instance, fluctuates from year to year in relation to solar calendar used today; hence the Hebrew dates have to be communicated in a way that corresponds to modern readership. For example, modern Bibles use terms such as January, March, June as the case may be or early Spring, in Summer, etc and since ancient references to the time of the day may differ from modern methods of denoting time terms that correspond to the modern day ‘o’clock can be used or terms such as ‘at dawn the next morning’, or ‘as the sun began to set’, which will be comprehensive to all readers. Also, there are a lot of terms and words that carry a great deal of cultural meaning that was obvious to the original readers but needs explanation in their own cultures. For example in Luke 23:48 the Bible records: ... and the people that came to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned  (King James Version) ... and when the crowd that came to see the crucifixion saw all that happened, they went home in deep sorrow (New Living Translation- Life Application Bible) ... nigba ti gbogbo eniyan pejo, ti won wa woran, ri ohun ti o sele, nse ni won pada, ti won kawo leri pelu ibanuje. (Bibeli Iroyin Ayo)

In Yoruba culture for example, where there is any sorrowful scene, what people do is to hold their heads and not ‘to smite their breasts’ as in Jewish tradition. Beating of the breast will not have the same meaning to a Yoruba reader of that Bible; one can beat his chest in Yoruba land when he is proud of something he has done. The Yoruba version is the partial equivalent of the Life application Bible which records that the people went home in deep sorrow; it expresses the feeling but not the action.

Also, in the ancient Bibles, some metaphorical languages used are often difficult to understand by contemporary readers. Functional methods have to be used in the translation to illuminate the metaphor. For example, in Song of Songs 1:15, it is recorded ... Thou hast dove’s eyes (Revised King James Version)  ... Your eyes are soft like doves (new life application Bible)

In both the Life application Bible, and Bibeli Iroyin Ayo, metaphors change to simile in order to make the meaning clearer to the contemporary reader. This is an attempt to overcome some barriers of history, culture and language that have kept people from reading and understanding the word of God. The first translation produced by Reverend Ajayi Crowther has since been subjected to modification as sponsored by the United Bible Society of Nigeria. In 1959, the New Testament Bible was reviewed in order to integrate new changes into it to make it more functional. Some words were replaced with new ones and new interpretations were given to them. Let us consider the following instances:

a. And he said unto them, when I sent you without purse, and scrip, lacked ye nothing? And they said nothing.  (Luke 22:35). (King James Version).

O si wi fun pe, Nigbati mo ran yin lo laini asuwon, ati apo, ati bata, oda ohun kan da nyni bi? Nwon si wipe, Rara.  (Luku 22: 35) (Bibeli Mimo)

O wa so fun won pe, ‘Nigba ti mo ran yin nise ti mo si so fun yin wipe ki e maa mu apo –owo ati igba baara lowo,
Here, the *Bibeli Iroyin Ayo* makes the message clearer by the use of modern Yoruba words and clear interpretation of the words. For example, ‘*asuwon*’ is an ancient word for *apo-owo*, (purse) and *oda* (lack) is an old word for *aini*. Not every reader of Yoruba would have an understanding of the words used and may therefore give it a wrong interpretation and action. The question form in *Bibeli Mimo*, that is, *Oda ohun kan da yin bi?* (lacked you nothing?) is an archaic form of Yoruba and may not be understood by a Yoruba child of the modern day. The direct question *Ki ni ohun ti e se alaini?* (What do you lack?) is more functional. It can be taken that the Functionalist model used in *Bibeli Iroyin Ayo* provides for a clearer translation for the terms.

b. Wither shall we go up? Our brethren have Discouraged our heart, saying, the people is greater and taller than we (…) (Deuteronomy 1:28). (King James Version).

Nibo li a wa o gbe goke lo? Awon arakunrin wa ti *daiyaja* wa, wipe awon enia na sigbonle ju wa lo .... (Deuteronomi 1:28).

Kini a fe lo se nibe? Ojora ti mu wa nitori oro ti awon arakunrin wa so fun wa, ti won ni awon ara ibe lagbara ju wa lo. Ti won si sigbonle ju wa lo.. (Diutaronomi 1 :28, Bibeli Iroyin Ayo).

The additional information in the *Bibeli Iroyin Ayo* makes the message clearer to the receiver. *Sigbonle* alone may not be adequate for the English greater and taller. *Ti won ni awon ara ibe lagbara ju wa lo, ti won si sigbonle ju wa lo…* is a complete capture of the source text message in the target language and this is part of the additions, subtraction and alterations Nida (1964) proposes to adjust the form of the message to the characteristics of the structure of the target language and to produce an equivalent communicative effect.

c. In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth and the earth was without form, void and darkness was upon the face of the deep and Spirit of god moved upon the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:1 KJV)

*Ni atetekose*, Olorun da orun on *aiye*. Aiye si wa ni juju, o si sofo, okunink si wa loju ibu, Emi Olorun si nrababa loju omi (Genesisi 1:1 Bibeli Mimo)


In the Ajayi Crowther’s translation of 1885, “nothing” in Luke 22:35 was initially translated as “ndao”, while “discouraged our heart” in Deuteronomy 1:28 was rendered as “daiya fo” instead of rewesi or mu ojora ba... and “east side” translated as “agbasi”. These words have experienced new changes representing good improvement in the Yoruba version of the Bible translation. It is to be noted here that the Yoruba version of the Bible produced by Bishop Ajayi Crowther represents a place where two dialogues take place; dialogue between culture and ideology. Bible language cannot be regarded as a value free language; rather, it is shaped by cultural and ideological assumptions that are hinged on Judeo-political beliefs and societal practices as applicable to the Jews and the Gentile nations. Linguistic meanings are inseparable from ideology. This provides an avenue to criticize Rev. Ajayi Crowther’s choice in his Yoruba translation of the Bible. For instance,

Behold, a *virgin* shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. (Mathew 1:23)

Klyesi, *wundia* kan iyo loyun, yio si bi omokunrin kan, nwon o ma pe oruko re ni Emmanueli, itumo eyi ti ise, Olorun wa pelu wa. (Matheu 1:23).

The above translation of the word “virgin” is adequate. The target reader will not lose the intention of the original if Reverend Crowther had rendered it as “omobinrin kan”. Actually, “omobinrin kan” may not necessarily be referring to a virgin in the Yoruba concept. There is no objection that could be levelled against Crowther’s translation procedure in the above text. His strategy is quite a novelty for Yoruba readers of the King James Version and hence carries an avant-garde impression of the Source-Text in the Target Text. The Yoruba Bible, particularly the *Bibeli Irohin Yoruba*, recognizes the importance of women even though, there is the male dominance even in Yoruba culture just as it is presented in the Jewish tradition. One of the Biblical ideologies is reflected in the translation of male dominance to represent all mankind. Let us consider the following texts:

a. And behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. (Revelation 22:1)

Klyesi, emi mbo kankan; ere mi si mbe pelu mi lati san an fun *olukuluku* gege bi ise re ti ri.(Ifihan 22:12)
Olukuluku actually means each individual and it can be either male or female.

b. Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for when thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest does the same things. Romans 2:1) KJV

Nitorina alairiwi ni iwo okunrin na, eniken ti o wu ki o je ti ndajo: nitori ninun ohun ti iwo nse idajo elomiran, iwo nda ara re lebi: nitori iwo ti ndajo nse ohun kanna (Romo2:1) Bibeli Mimo

Ko si awawi Kankan fun o, iwo ti o nda elomiran lejo, eniken ti o wu ki o je. Nnkan gan-an ti o n tori re da elomiran lejo ni o fi n da ara re lebi. (Romu 2 :1) Bibeli Iroyin Ayo

From texts (a) and (b) the translation of the word “man” as “olukuluku” is adequate and denotes “everybody” as against “male dominated community”. In (b) text, the translation of “man” as “gbogbo enia” is adequate and denotes “all human race” as against “male dominated community”. In (b) text, the translation of “man” as “okunrin na” is male specific. This however, refers to all mankind in Bible language, tradition and ideology. Bibeli Iroyin Ayo, using the Functionalist Approach removes the confusion over the male dominance. Iwo takes care of whoever is the receiver either male or female. The above texts, that is, (texts a and b) single out man from attempts of collectivization and generic reference to men and women. Bishop Ajayi Crowther, though a male translator, overcomes the temptation of replacing the cultural value attached to “man” whether negative or positive, in his Yoruba translation of the Bible. Instead of translating “man” as “okunrin ati obinrin” in (a) and (b) texts in the Target Language, Crowther obliterates the distinction in the Yoruba version into “generic” terms “olukuluku”. “gbogbo enia” as Target Language equivalence, an approach that is more functional. A major challenge that the Yoruba translator of the Bible may face is determining how to translate accurately the ancient biblical text that was originally written in a context where male-oriented terms were used for humanity generally.

The translator has to respect the nature of the ancient context while also trying to make the translation clear to a modern audience that tends to real male-oriented language as applying only to the male. Often, the original text, though using male masculine nouns and pronouns, clearly intends that the message be applied to both men and women. One example is found in the New Testament epistles, where the believers are called ‘brothers’ (adelphoi). Yet it is clear that these epistles were addressed to all believers male and female, so instead of maintaining only the male term, the Life Application Bible translated it as ‘Brothers’ and ‘Sisters’ in order to represent the historical situation more accurately. We have to emphasize however that all masculine nouns and pronouns to represent god have been maintained in subsequent translations, this is because the essential traits of God’s revealed character can only be conveyed through the masculine language expressed in the original text of scripture. The standard usage is attested to by many verses in the Bible as revealed in the following:

(c). Will a man rob God? (…), in tithes and offering. (Malachi 3:8).

Enia yio ha ja Olorun li ole? (…) Nipa idemewa ati ore. (Malaki 3:8).

Nje o seese fun eniyan lati ja Olorun ilole? (…) Nipa idamewa ati ore yin ni. Malaki 3:8

Bibeli Iroyin Ayo.

The use of Eniyan has completely removed the ambiguity of ‘man’ as recorded in the English King James Version.

(d) Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly nor standeth in the way of sinner nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. (Psalm 1:1). KJV

Ibukun ni fun okunrin, na ti ko sin ri ni imo. Awon enia buburu, ti ko duro li ona awon elese Ati ti ko si joko ni ibujoko awon elegan. (Orin 1:1).Bibeli Mimo

Ayo mbe fun eni naa ti ko gba imoran awon eni buruku, ti ko siba awon elese rin, ti ko si ba awon elegan kegbe. (Orin Dafidi 1:1 Bibeli Iroyin Ayo)

(e). Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, if any man love the world, the Love of the father is not in him. (1 Thessalonians 2:15).

Ema se feran aiyé, tabí ohun ti mbe ninun aiyé. Bi eniken ba feran aiyé, ife ti baba ko si ninu re (Johanu Kini 2:15).

The translator’s proper contextual interpretation readily comes in as a necessary tool for proper transfer of the word in bold into the Target Language in order to enhance the Yoruba reader’s interaction with the same intention and situation of the text’s universe of discourse.

Findings, Results and Conclusion

We discover that the translator’s role in the translation of the Bible into Yoruba is not an easy task. Whatever method or approach is adopted, translators may encounter challenges in the translation process either because of a particular translation unit or because of a gap in the translation’s knowledge or skills, it is when this
happens that translation techniques, that is, procedures used by the translator to solve problems that emerge when carrying out the translation process with a particular objective in mind are activated.

Bishop Ajayi Crowther's language in his Yoruba translation of the Bible is, beyond suspicion though, standard, the diction is not as clear to modern readers of the Yoruba language as we have it in Bibeli Iroyin Ayo in which we have a successful transfer of the source text's linguistic luxury and musicality. The nature of the Bible market today is responsible for the proliferation of modern versions. As we have seen, a source-oriented translation makes for greater demands on the reader but the translation based on functionalist approach which is a target-oriented translation is very useful for readers of Yoruba Bible. On this point, we can also conclude that the Yoruba translation of the Bible has benefitted from Christine Nord’s functionalist model which serves as a guide in determining which source text elements are preserved and which elements will have to be adapted in the translation process.

REFERENCES


The Holy Bible, King James Version (2003), translated as Bibeli Mimo by The Bible Society of Nigeria.


