**Foreignization and Domestication as Strategies in Translation and the Translation of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* into French**

**Cyril Anyabuike**
Department of Linguistics and Literary Studies,
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

**Abstract**

The translator as a professional is at liberty to choose any strategy of translation while exercising his function. The goal that propelled him into action as well as the possible effects of the work on his target audience are some of the factors that could inform his choice of strategy. Consequently, he may adopt domestication or foreignization as a strategy while translating. In this work, we examined the two concepts – foreignization and domestication with a view to placing them in their proper perspectives. We also examined the strategy adopted by Michel Ligny while translating *Things Fall Apart* into French. We concluded, after due analysis, that the translator opted for foreignization. We suggested that a glossary and footnotes should be added to make the French version of the text more accessible to the Francophone reading public.

**Key words:** translation; foreignization; domestication; translation strategy; cultural values

**Introduction**

The translator is one professional that has made enormous contribution to the growth and dissemination of knowledge around the world. With his keys, the translator unlocks the "prison of language " (Wendy Lesser, 2002)". The noble service the translator gives which man rarely appreciates has made it possible for humanity to access valuable ideas hitherto hidden in foreign languages. This has led to unprecedented development in the various areas of human endeavor. The social, cultural, religiou s, economic, and political sectors have massively benefited from the invaluable services of the translator. It is undisputable that Greek and French philosophers have greatly influenced the thinking of men through their philosophies and the theories they propounded. The different world leaders that used these theories to advance the cause of humanity in their various societies did not read about these ideas in the original languages they were expressed. The ideas were made available to them in their various languages through the activities of translators.

Routledge Encyclopedia of translation studies quoted Schleiermacher (1813) as having said in a lecture entitled "On the different methods of translating " that there are only two methods of translating. According to him, the translator may either choose foreiginzation as a strategy or he may go for domestication. In the course of exercising his onerous task, the translator may choose to respect the linguistic and cultural norms of the target audience or he may jettison them and stick to the linguistic and cultural patterns of the source text. The former is what is usually referred to as domestication while the latter is

foreignization. Each of these strategies comes with a lot of implications for the target audience in particular and the target culture in general.

The target audience is more at home with any translation in which domestication is adopted as a strategy. This is because he only deals with familiar linguistic and cultural elements which make reading and understanding very easy. The target culture, however, may have little or nothing to gain from this strategy as the status quo is maintained.

Foreignization, on the other hand, is a strategy that alienates the target audience from the translated work. This is because foreign cultural elements are usually present in the translated work which often makes reading and understanding much difficult. It is only the target culture that gains from this strategy since the linguistic component is often enriched with foreign lexical items.

Given the relevance of these two strategies in the translation business, we have undertaken, in this study, to examine the concepts of foreignization and domestication as strategies in translation. To have a firm grasp of the topic being discussed in this paper, we shall first examine holistically the concept of translation. After this, we will take a look at the meaning of foreignization and domestication. We will review the translation of some aspects of *Things Fall Apart* so as to highlight the strategy adopted by the translator in doing his work. There will also be discussion based on our findings. Finally, there will be recommendation and conclusion.

**The concept of translation**

The Chambers 21st Century dictionary (revised edition) defines translation as "a word, speech, written text that has been put into one language from another". The above definition highlights the product of the professional activity called translation. The act of translating involves a process that requires skill, training and experience (Morry Sofer, 2004, p.15). To fully grasp this concept, there are two seemingly different perspectives that should be examined. Some view the exercise as a purely linguistic exercise while others approach it from the cultural angle. Jakobson (2004) argues that:

> Most frequently, however, translation from one language into another substitutes messages in one language not for separate code units but for entire messages in some other language, such a translation is a reported speech; the translator recodes and transmits a message received from another source. Thus, translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes.

The view of the linguist could be represented as follows:

$$\text{CODE}\mathbf{A} \xrightarrow[\text{translator}]{\text{message}} \text{CODE}\mathbf{B}$$
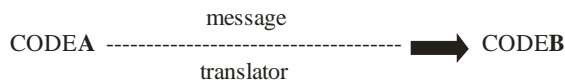
To the linguist, therefore, translation is a process whereby a professional called a translator gets the message expressed in the first language and expresses the same message in the second language. The emphasis according to this school of thought is on the *language* and the *message*. Jakobson, however warns that the translator should not think that he has

succeeded once he finds equivalent linguistic units for those in the first language. For him, the message is more important than the linguistic units used in expressing it. That is why he referred to any translation as "a reported speech" expressing "two equivalent messages in two different codes". The position of the translator in the above diagram should also be noted. The translator stands between the two linguistic codes as a mediator. He gets the message from the source language (CODE A) and transmits same to the target language (CODE B).

There is also a second group of experts that view the act of translating as the passage from one culture to another (Cordonnier, 2002, Mounin, 1963, Sumner Paulin, 1995, and Wuilmart, 1990). Valero Garces (2005) also shared the same view when he highlighted the mediatory role of translation as follows:

> In some settings and under certain conditions translations Participate more actively in the communication process, Producing oral or written tex   ts in which forms and words are manipulated to extend further understanding across cultures.

The above view brings to focus another important aspect of the translation process. Translation, viewed from this perspective, is not only a linguistic exercise but also a cultural one. Translation could be a purely linguistic affair if we are in the sci-tech domain where cultural considerations are not very relevant in determining appropriate terminologies to be used while working on a given document. However, if literary, religious, commercial or administrative documents are in focus, certainly cultural considerations must play a great role in the translation process. This is because what is fashionable in one linguistic community could be ridiculous in another. Concepts may acquire different meanings as they move from one speech community to another. For instance, an average European knows that the moon is the natural satellite of the Earth or any other planet. He may also see the use of moon to refer to *month* as too archaic. The story is not the same in the Igbo community of Eastern Nigeria where the two meanings of moon expressed above are very much used by every member of the community on a daily basis.

The above implies that a good translator should not only be familiar with his two working languages but also should be conversant with the two cultures in contact. The level of understanding demonstrated by the translator in these two key areas will no doubt influence his choice of translation strategy at any given time. In the next segment of this work, we will examine the meaning of foreignization which is one of the strategies being discussed.

**Foreignization in translation:** Some experts also refer to it as foreignizing strategy which was the exact term used by the initiator of the idea, the German philosopher and theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher. In a lecture entitled " on the different methods of translating" Schleiermacher (quoted in Baker,2004) argued that:

> There are only two. Either the transl ator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader toward him. Or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author toward him.

A translator "leaves the reader in peace and moves the author toward him" (foreignization) when he maintains, according to Baker, (2004)

> a close adherence to the foreign text, a literalism that resulted in the importation of foreign cultural forms and the development of heterogeneous dialects and discourses.

This strategy is further clarified by Wiersema (2004) who described it as the translation that "changes the contents of the text from familiarity to foreignness….. (Keeping more foreign elements in the target text)". Adopting this strategy, therefore, implies that the translator for some compelling reasons may have more words from the source text reintroduced into the target text. This strategy could be adopted to serve some cultural or political agenda, (Baker, 2004). As our analysis will later show in this work, a translator may choose this method just to portray his level of faithfulness to the goals already set by the author of the source text. The fact, however, remains th   at no matter the reason for opting for this strategy; foreignization no doubt results in difficult translation for the target readers (Baker, 2004, Chuang, 2010). Some experts also argue that foreignizing strategy enriches the target culture and broadens the cultural horizon of the target readers. (Baker, 2004, Wiersema, 2004).

In his article published in 2004 entitled, *Globalisation on today's translation: A discussion of the effect of globalisation on today's translation,* Wiersema strongly advocated for this strategy, arguing that "future translations need to be as foreignizing as possible within the limits of reasonable acceptability". The article which was very revealing, however, did not specify what these "limits of reasonable acceptability" are. Having given clarity to the concept of foreignization in translation and having examined the merits and demerits of this strategy, we will now take a look at the concept of domestication, the second strategy of translation.

**The concept of domestication:** As Schleiermacher (cited in Baker, 2004) pointed out earlier, the translator that goes for this strategy "leaves th   e author in peace as much as possible, and moves the reader toward him". This implies that the translator makes the text more accessible to the reader through the application of domestic literary norms.  With this strategy, the target reader has so much to gain for his task of accessing information has been simplified but the target culture is not enriched in any way.  Economic consideration "heighted by current cultural and political development" as well as the desire to fulfill some "evangelical, professional or imperialist agendas" could be at the centre of the desire to adopt the domesticating strategy (Baker, 2004, p. 241).

**Review of the translation of some aspects of '** *'Things Fall Apart'*:  In this segment, we wish to highlight the translation of some aspects of ' *Things Fall Apart''* to enable us determine the strategy adopted by the translator.

All the seventy-one names of persons in the book were not translated. In the same way, the names of villages in the book were not translated. This is very understandable in view of the divergence between the French and Igb o cultures. Besides, proper nouns are usually not translated.

On the translation techniques adopted by the translator, we observed that he principally made use of two translation techniques – borrowing and literal translation. The borrowing is of two types – loan words and calque.

**Loan words**: There are many Igbo words found in the text, some of which have French equivalents. They include; Udala, Egwugwu, Ochu, Nne, Iba, Inyanga, Eneke, Agbala, Amadiora.

**Calque**; There were instances where Igbo words and phrases were adopted and literally translated into French eg,

| Igbo words / phrases | Source text (English) | Target text (French) |
|---|---|---|
| ọnwa abụọ maọbụ atọ | Two or three moons (p. 4 line 6) | Deux ou trois lunes (p. 11 line 1) |
| Umuọfia kwenu | Umuọfia kwenu (p. 8 line 7) | Umuọfia kwenu (p. 19 line 3) |
| Izu asatọ | Eight market weeks (p. 17 line 13) | Huit semaines de marché (p. 33 line 28) |
| ọgụ afọ na iri | Twenty and ten years (p. 91 line 4) | Vingt et dix ans (p. 157 line 15) |
| ọchụ amaghi ama | Female ochu (p. 91 line 15) | Ochu femelle (p. 157 line21) |
| Mgbe nwoke bụ nwoke | When men were men (p. 141 line 21) | Où les hommes étaient des hommes (p. 243 line 21) |

Apart from borrowing, it is also very obvious that the translator made extensive use of the technique of literal translation. The very first and last sentences of the source text were literally translated. Examples:

*Source Text:* Okonkwo was well known through out the nine villages and even beyond.
Target Text: Okonkwo était bien connu à travers les neuf villages et même au-dela.

The two sentences above are the first sentences of both the source text (English) and the French translation. The last sentence of the French ve rsion was also rendered literally. All the proverbs in the source text were translated literally. The French equivalent of the proverb below could have been found but it was translated literally like the others.

Igbo proverb: Awọ adighi agba ọsọ ehihe n'efu.
Source text; A toad does not run in the day time for nothing. (p. 15)
Target text: Un crapaud ne court pas en plein jour pour rien. (p. 30).

**Discussion on findings:**Our discussion in this segment will be in two parts. First, we shall identify the strategy adopted by the translator who did the work. Secondly, we shall analyze the possible effects of this strategy on the target readers.

With regard to the translation strategy adopted by the translator, a careful observation will reveal that this work is a clear case of the translator "leaving the reader in peace, as much as possible and moving the author toward him" (Baker, 2004, p. 242). Michel Ligny, the translator appeared to have perfectly understood what motivated Chinua Achebe in producing his first book, *Things Fall Apart*. The book was written principally to showcase the cultural values of the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria, which the author felt had not been properly presented to the world. It was as if the author of the source text gave the translator the same Igbo spirit that propelled him into action and energized him as he produced the first novel. Michel Ligny, therefore faithfully gave to the francophone world a carbon copy of the novel written by Chinua Achebe . *Le monde s' effondre*is therefore a translation where the translator opted for foreignization as a translation strategy. The numerous Igbo words found in the translated text as well as the constant recourse to literal translation attest to this fact.

Michel Ligny may have given to the francophone world a certified true copy of the original work written by Chinua Achebe but this may not have been without some negative consequences on the target readers. Certa inly there are some options he opted for that made the comprehension of some of the lines a little difficult or even impossible. For instance, it will take a little time for the average francophone reader to associate *la lune*with *le mois*or *vingt et dix* with *trente* while it will be almost impossible for the same readers to associate the following translations with their real meanings in Igbo culture.

| French Translation | Meaning in Igbo culture |
|---|---|
| Huit semaines de marché | Trente deux jours |
| Ochu femelle | Homicide involontaire |
| Où les hommes étaient des hommes | Quand les hommes étaient courageux |

We also have a number of Igbo words that are in the translated work and these are words whose equivalents exist in French. They include:

| Igbo word | French Equivalent |
|---|---|
| Egwugwu | La mascarade |
| Ochu | L' homicide |
| Nne | La maman |
| Iba | Le paludisme |
| Inyanga | L' orgueil |

There were many Igbo proverbs in the text. All were translated literally including one that has clear equivalent in French.
Proverb: Le crapaud ne court pas en plein jour pour rien.
French equivalent: Il n'y a pas de fumée sans feu
After carefully analyzing the entire work which Michel Ligny did, one cannot but assert that the translator carefully took all the steps he took to achieve his purpose. From all indications,

the translator had just one passion and that was to give to the francophone world the original work which the author himself presented to the Anglophone world.

Foreignization as translation strategy may be good but some of us feel, like George Herbert, the 17th Century English writer, that "all must not be veiled while he that reads divines, catching the sense at two removes" There is no doubt that the target readers have been having serious problems as they read the book. Pronouncing the borr owed words could be very difficult. That is why I would also differ slightly with Wiersema (2004) who argued that with foreignization, "the text reads more fluently". What we saw in the course of this analysis also proves that it is not always true as he said that with this strategy, "the target te    xt is more correct.

We do not think that there is anything wrong with the desire to achieve some level of faithfulness in translation. It is, however, our contention that the target reader should not  be sacrificed on the altar of faithfulness. His interest should also not be forgotten in the translation process.

Consequently, further steps ought to have been taken to make the work of the final consumer (the target reader) lighter. To achieve this, two things could be done. A glossary should have been provided at the end of the book to explain the exotic words. If the first option is not taken, a footnote could also be provided each time these words occur for the same purpose.

**Recommendation:**

Following the observation we made in this work, we wish to recommend as follows;

1. The inclusion of a glossary at the end of the French version of the work to explain the foreign words borrowed from the source text.
2. The addition of footnotes to explain the same words if the first suggestion is discarded.
3. We also wish to strongly suggest that a glossary be added each time a translator adopts a foreignizing strategy. The insinuation that the meaning of exotic words can easily be assessed through the internet may    not always be true especially with the languages that are not fully developed.

**Conclusion:**

In this work, we examined the two translation strategies, foreignization and domestication with a view to ascertaining the one adopted by Michel Ligny in translating *Things Fall Apart* into French. We explained that the translator that adopts domesticating strategies makes the translation more accessible to the target audience by using target language structures while in the case of foreignization, the translator extensively uses lexic   al items from the source text, thereby making comprehension difficult for the target readers. We observed that Michel Ligny used foreignizing strategy. We, therefore, recommended that a glossary or footnotes could be added to the French version to explain the numerous Igbo words found in the translation and to make the text more accessible to the target readers.

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