

NEWS TRANSLATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE OFFICIAL AND THE REGIONAL LANGUAGES IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA

Adewuni Salawu

Department of French, Faculty of Arts,
University of Ado-Ekiti, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria
r.salawu@yahoo.com

The journalistic translation in South-West Nigeria lies in the challenge it offers to the professional news producers in radio and television as an instrument of linguistic and cultural transfer. News and newspaper reviews are available to people in Yorubaland in English, which is the first source of information and then in Yoruba, which is the translated version from English and a second source of information. The study aims at investigating the preference in the choice of language for the reception of news and newspaper reviews and the reason for the choice. Questionnaires were administered. Face-to-face interviews were also conducted. At least 36% of the respondents preferred the news and newspaper reviews in Yoruba, for the culturally coloured content. The study concludes that culture is a vital element to be considered during translation and the quality of a translation should also be assessed from the consumer's point of view.

La traduction journalistique dans le Sud-Ouest du Nigeria repose dans le défi auquel font face les producteurs de nouvelles à la radio et à la télévision comme étant un instrument de transfert linguistique et culturel. La lecture des nouvelles et des journaux est disponible en anglais pour des gens en pays Yoruba de l'Ouest du Nigeria, comme étant la première source d'information. Cette lecture est aussi disponible en Yoruba étant la version traduite de l'anglais et constituant une deuxième source d'information. L'étude vise à étudier la préférence dans le choix de la langue pour la réception des nouvelles et la raison de ce choix. Des questionnaires ont été administrés. Les interviews face-à-face ont été également réalisées. Au moins 36% des répondants préfèrent les nouvelles en Yoruba à cause des tournures culturellement colorées de cette langue. L'étude conclut que la culture est un élément essentiel à prendre en considération lors de la traduction et que la qualité d'une traduction devrait aussi être évaluée vis-à-vis du point de vue du consommateur.

0. INTRODUCTION

South-West of Nigeria¹ is predominantly inhabited by the Yoruba² and the most widely spoken, read, and written Nigerian language in the sub region is

¹ Most states in South-West Nigeria have at least a radio and television stations be it federal or state. They also have at least two radio stations. The time of news and newspaper reviews varies depending on the state and they are available both in English and Yoruba. Examples: BCOS Radio one, BCOS Radio 2, and Radio Nigeria.

² One should begin by mentioning first of all that the use of the term Yoruba to designate those groups using the Yoruba language is relatively recent. The name Yoruba was, in fact, how the people of Oyo, established at the north of the region, were called. They were also known as "Yoruba proper", that is, the original people before the term was applied to others. The appellation Yoruba, also used to describe their common language, within which several dialects might be distinguished, spread gradually to the different groups, even though they kept their own personality. According to Biobaku, the influence of the Anglican Mission (Church Missionary Society or CMS) was crucial in the use of the term because, although originally based in Abeokuta, that is, among the Egba, it was called from the beginning "Yoruba Mission" in accordance with their plans to evangelize the interior (Munoz, 2003:14)

Yoruba. English, an official language in Nigeria³, was the favored language until the promulgation of Nigerian languages policies that gave them the opportunity to be studied up to University level. Today, Nigerian languages in general and Yoruba in particular seem to compete favorably with spoken English, even in offices. It is a development that has prompted the introduction of a Yoruba version of the news and newspaper reviews in radio and television stations in Yorubaland in Nigeria. Since then, the journalistic translation has become important. This study therefore attempts to evaluate the translation of news and newspaper reviews from the consumers' point of view. It is a practical way of assessing the quality of translation.

1. MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

English language became established as a means of communication in Nigeria during the colonial rule. It stood as a unifying factor in the country. Then in Yoruba families, English was the most widely spoken language among the educated. In recent times, the situation became different with the spoken Nigerian languages taking the lead, even among the educated. The widespread translation of news and newspaper reviews from English to Nigerian languages is one of the consequences. This situation attracted the curiosity of some scholars such as Amechi Ihenacho (1979) who reported the languages groupings in West Africa both officials and non-officials. Yoruba language is classified as one of the Kwa languages. Ekundayo Simpson (1985) evaluating translation from an European language into a Nigerian language, specifically focused on the translation from English to Yoruba. Translators and producers of programmes at the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, Lagos, were given questionnaires and interviewed. Tape recordings were also made. According to his findings, the translation of news into Yoruba targeted the 'illiterates', 'semi-illiterates' and the 'adults who are less literate'. After evaluating the work of translators in the radio station in Lagos, he preferred to call them producers rather than translators. His findings may no longer be tenable today because there is a change in parameters. News in English is no longer translated into Yoruba only for those who do not know English but for the generality of those that speak Yoruba. The percentage of competent people who speak, read, and write English has drastically increased (table 2), giving them the choice of news in English or Yoruba. This study is trying to suggest a different approach to the evaluation of the work done by the producers using consumers' judgment. Therefore, the quality of the translation will be based on the satisfaction of the consumer.

The departing point in the method of investigation is purely observation which is simple a traditional scientific approach. A two-way method of data collection is adopted involving questionnaires and face-to-face interviews with consumers of news and newspaper reviews. The sample of study consists of 20 questionnaires distributed to news consumers. The 25 people interviewed covered different age groups, different levels of education and different social groups. People interviewed

³ Nigeria is an English speaking country in West Africa. South-West Nigeria includes states of Oyo, Oshun, Lagos, Ogun, Ekiti, Ondo, and Kwara where Yoruba is the regional language and where it is taught at all levels of education.

were selected randomly among the bilingual English and Yoruba speakers in Akinyele Local Government of Oyo State. The main parameter is the preference in language for the reception of news and newspaper reviews. The reasons for the choice of the respondents were considered as parameters. Finally, data collated were analyzed and interpreted.

2. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Out of 20 questionnaires distributed randomly to people irrespective of age and education, only 18 were received back and collated. A total number of 25 people registered for face-to-face interview were also interviewed.

3. QUESTIONNAIRE

Data collated show that 50% of the respondents of the questionnaires ranged between 20 to 40 years of age while 50% were between 41 and 60 years of age. It follows that the respondents were mature enough to know what they wanted when choosing a language of preference. The two languages of study are Yoruba, the dominant language of South-West Nigeria, and English, the official language in Nigeria. Out of the 18 respondents to the questionnaires distributed, 11 could read and write the two languages while 14 could speak both languages. Also 17 respondents had access to news in English, 14 to the news in Yoruba that is the secondary source of information and 14 to the news both in English and Yoruba (table 3). In this study, we are much more concerned with the behaviors of the 14 who speak and have access to the news in both languages (tables 2 and 3). News on the radio and television is written and broadcast in English. The translated version in Yoruba follows some minutes later. On how these news are translated, Ekundayo Simpson in a similar study investigated among newscasters, found that:

...the translators who present news in Yoruba work from their own handwritten manuscripts, whereas the original English-language version is well-typed out before presentation, and given all the trappings of administration, the writer's name, typist's reference and so on (Ugboajah, ed. 1985:139).

Simpson goes further to question the credibility of the translation and the translators of the news whom he preferred to call producers (Ugboajah, ed. 1985). The argument put forward by Simpson is not enough evidence to discredit the translation of the news into Yoruba language. The quality of a translation is not tied only to the linguistic competence of the translator, as observed by Simpson (Ugboajah, ed. 1985:134), but to the nature of the text and also to the satisfaction of the consumer. This will be a good parameter to measure the quality of the translation while compromising not the linguistic standard. In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to choose freely their preferred language for news while stating the reasons for their choice ranging from the accurate delivery of the message, the familiarity of the language, the love of the linguistic arrangement in the language, cultural inclination, and others. Out of the 14 who speak and receive the news in English and Yoruba, 9 preferred the news in English for the accuracy of

the message and 5 preferred it in Yoruba because the message was culturally painted (table 4). The 5 respondents who chose to receive the news in Yoruba represented 36% of the 14 who have access to news in both languages. It is a good and practical revelation to all translators to take account of cultural connotations during translation. In fact, the desire to see Yorubas using the local language in their daily activities could be traced back to the time of the Holy James Johnson. He supported the use of local languages in school not only because of cultural vanity but because he wanted to hasten advancement in learning (July, 1968). Johnson's position was opposed by Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowder who opted for English as the only and best method to teach in the Niger Mission. Ajayi was supported by eminent people of ideas such as Blyden, Horton, Lugard, Fraser, Guggisberg (Ayandele, 1970:156-157).

A section of the questionnaire treats issues of accessibility and the preference of the respondents to the newspaper reviews in the radio and television. The collation of data show that 11 respondents had access to newspaper reviews in English and Yoruba but 7 chose to have the review in English for purpose of clarity while 4 preferred it in Yoruba mostly for the cultural implication and time convenience (tables 4 and 5). The respondents who prefer the newspapers review in Yoruba represent 36%, which is incidentally the same percentage for the consumers of the news in Yoruba (Table 4). This percentage is remarkable for its cultural coloration in a century overwhelmed by the virtues of globalization where English is becoming the language of the global village. In a world where the fast spread and use of English have become a source of concern, a voluntary preference of 36% of respondents because of culturally loaded content is significant.

4. FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW

The face-to-face interview was richer in information. The respondents had the opportunity to ask questions and make further comments to support their answers. It was a relaxed section. Both men and women adults of different age class and education, different professions with the ability to speak, read and write both languages were randomly chosen for the interview. The face-to-face interviews gave the opportunity to touch the sensibility of the respondents, which led to get their actual language of preference. All of them had access to news and newspaper reviews on radio and television both in English and Yoruba. A total of 44% of those interviewed preferred the news in English and 36% preferred the newspaper reviews in English leaving 56% and 64% preferring the Yoruba version. The choice of the Yoruba version is linked to the clear message colored by cultural satisfaction.

5. CONCLUSION

English, the official language was accepted as the language of communication among West African intellectuals and as a unifying factor. Ironically, today without being forced, intellectuals are coming freely, motivated by their cultural desire to listen to news and newspaper reviews translated from English to Yoruba. The percentages of preference (tables 4 and 6) to news and newspaper reviews in Yoruba for an adequate message culturally colored are a practical support of the

school of thought that gives more considerations to cultural elements in translation and the study of human activities. The questionnaires and face-to-face interviews were practical tools to evaluate the quality of translation from the consumers' point of view which is a determinant factor in the polysystem and skopo theories of translation (Lavault-Olléon, 2004). With a range of 36% to 64% preferring the Yoruba language version of the news and newspaper reviews, despite the level of education of the respondents, it implies that the journalistic translation in the radio and television is of a good standard and recommendable. This observation justifies the conclusion of Serghei, G. Nikolayev (2001) that says "...it is always preferable to translate from foreign into native" as the news producers are of Yoruba origin.

REFERENCES

- Ayandele, E. A. 1970. *Holy Johnson, Pioneer of African Nationalism 1836-1917*, London, Frank Cass & Co.
- Ihenacho, Amechi. 1979. The Role of Translation and Interpretation in West Africa. *Babel*, Vol. XXV, No. 2, 1979. 59-72.
- July, Robert. W. 1968. *The Origins of Modern African Thought. Its development in West Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, London, Faber & Faber, pp.1-512.
- Lavault-Olléon, Elisabeth. 2004. Traducteurs, traductologues, theories et pratiques: petit état des lieux. In *Traduire*, No. 203, 2004, 7-24.
- Munoz, L. 2003. *A living tradition. Studies on Yoruba Civilization*. Ibadan: Bookcraft Ltd.
- Nikolayev, G. Serghei. 2001. The importance of knowing your local vernacular. *Translation Journal*, Vol. 5, No.1, 2001.
- Simpson, Ekundayo. 1985. Translation in Nigerian mass media: a sociolinguistic study. In *Mass Communication, Culture and Society in West Africa*. Frank Okwu Ugboajah (ed.). New York: Hans Zell Publishers, 134-152.
- Ugboajah, Frank Okwu, (ed.) 1985. *Mass Communication, Culture and Society in West Africa*. New York, Hans Zell Publishers.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Table 1
Respondent personal data

Age group		Sex		Education	
20-40	41-60	Male	Female	Primary-Post Secondary	Graduate – Post graduate
9	9	12	6	10	8

Table 2
Languages Data

	Speak	Write	Read
English	18	17	17
Yoruba	14	12	12
English/Yoruba	14	12	12

Table 3
Accessibility to media

	News	Newspapers review
English	17 (94%)	16 (89%)
Yoruba	14 (78%)	13 (72%)
English/Yoruba	14 (78%)	11 (61%)

Table 4
Preference of language

	News	Newspapers review
English	9 (64%)	7 (64%)
Yoruba	5 (36%)	4 (36%)
Total	14 (100%)	11 (100%)

Table 5
Reason for the choice of language

	Cultural (News)	Content (News)	Cultural (Newspaers review)	Content (Newspapers review)
English	2	7	0	6
Yoruba	5 (100%)	5 (100%)	4 (100%)	4 (100%)

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW

Table 6
Preference of language

	News	Newspapers review
English	11 (44%)	9 (36%)
Yoruba	14 (56%)	16 (64%)
Total	25 (100%)	25 (100%)

Table 7
Reason for the choice of language

	Cultural (News)	Content (News)	Cultural (Newspapers review)	Content (Newspapers review)
English	0	10	0	9
Yoruba	14 (100%)	12	16 (100%)	15

APPENDIX C

PREFERENCE OF LANGUAGES IN THE RECEPTION OF NEWS AND NEWSPAPERS REVIEW IN SOUTH-WEST OF NIGERIA

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is purely and basically an academic exercise and its success depend largely on your cooperation and support. Every information obtained here will be regarded as being personal and treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thanks for anticipated cooperation

Sincerely yours,
Salawu Adewuni

Please, fill or tick the appropriate box.

- Name of the respondent:
- Age: 20—30 ☐ ☐
31—40 ☐ ☐
41—50 ☐ ☐
51—60 ☐ ☐
Adult ☐ ☐

3. Sex: Male [] Female: []
4. Educational background
 Primary []
 Secondary []
 Post-secondary []
 Graduate []
 Post-graduate []
5. I can speak:
 Yoruba [] English [] French []
6. I can write:
 Yoruba [] English [] French []
7. I can read:
 Yoruba [] English [] French []
8. News are available to me on radios and TVs in:
 English [] Yoruba [] French []
9. I prefer listening to News in:
 English [] Yoruba []
 a. If English, why? Because.
 - I understand perfectly what it said in the News. []
 - I am just familiar to English language []
 - I love only the linguistics arrangements in English []
 - I love the cultural implication []
 - I am better carried along []
 - Other comments
 b. If Yoruba, why? Because.
 - I understand perfectly what it said in the News. []
 - I am just familiar to Yoruba language []
 - I love only the linguistics arrangements in Yoruba []
 - I love the cultural implication []
 - I am better carried along []
 - Other comments
10. I have access to newspapers reports in:
 English [] Yoruba []
11. I prefer the newspapers reports in:
 English [] Yoruba []
 a. If English, why? Because
 - I understand perfectly what it said in the Newspapers. []

- I am just familiar to English language []
- I love only the linguistics arrangements in English []
- I love the cultural implication []
- I am better motivated []
- Other comments

b. If Yoruba, why?

- I understand perfectly what it said in the Newspapers. []
- I am just familiar to Yoruba language []
- I love only the linguistics arrangements in Yoruba []
- I love the cultural implication []
- I am better motivated []
- Other comments

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION