# THE USE OF PRINCIPLES AND THEORIES OF TRANSLATION IN LANGUAGES TRANSLATION: A CASE STUDY OF YORUBA LANGUAGE

**Banjo, A. E.**
*Department of Primary Education Studies*
*Tai Solarin College of Education, Omu-Ijebu, Ogun State, Nigeria*
*E-mail: bisban60@yahoo.co.uk*

**Jibowo, A. V.**
*Department of Curriculum Studies and Instructional Technology*
*Olabisi Onabanjo University Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria*

## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the use of language is for communication and understanding of messages which lead to harmonious cohabitation of people of such environment. A translator and an interpreter are expected to be either bilingual or multilingual in order to attain success. Efforts have been made by many people to make effective and successful translation such as Bishop Ajayi Crowther and others. Translation is based on the principles of the source language-target language and subject matter. Some people are with the notion that some theories and principles are the best for translation, but this study observed that no approach is the best, rather the effective translations depend on the reflection, situations and the needs of the people for which they were made.*
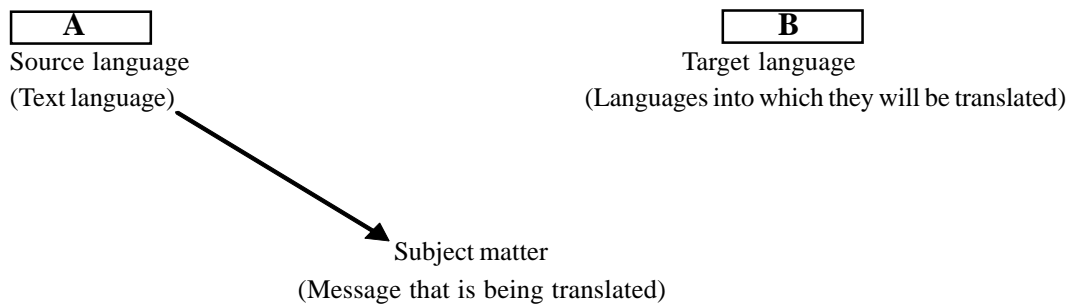*Keywords: Principles, Theories, Translation, Languages, Yoruba*

## INTRODUCTION

Languages are designed for the purpose of communication (Lyons, 1977). In any society communication and understanding of messages are also very important which lead to harmonious living of the co-habitants of such an environment. Human language is purposively to communicate ideas, emotions, feelings, desires, to co-operate among social groups, to exhibit habits etc. which are translated along a variety of channels (Sotonwa, 1997). When the reality of a foreign language barrier stares at people the usual way round is to look for an interpreter or a translator, who will interpreter or translate for them.

A potential translator and interpreter must possess oral and written competence in at least two or more languages and at a high level of education of the languages concern. This is why translators or interpreters are either bilingual or multilingual for them to attain success. A translator is linked to have the attribute of written form of a language which also deals with a literate society, while an interpreter deals with oral transmission of messages from one language to another. Meanwhile, it has been debated whether or not translation is possible without betraying the original text. Bishop Ajayi Crowder had done a good work in his pioneering efforts (1843-1844) the Bible Society of Nigeria, the International Bible Association etc. for translating the English version(s) of the Holy Bible to Yoruba.

Conventionally, communication is a two way process involving a speaker and a hearer, and language is involved. In order for a translator to perform his act of translation successfully, he should meet three requirements. He should be familiar with the sources language, the target language, and the subject matter.

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┌─────────┐                          ┌─────────┐
│    A    │                          │    B    │
└─────────┘                          └─────────┘
Source language                      Target language
(Text language)                      (Languages into which they will be translated)
          ╲
           ╲
            ╲
             ╲
              ➘  Subject matter
                 (Message that is being translated)
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***Language knowledge of the Translator:*** The translators is expected to have the basic knowledge of the two languages, like phonemic structure (sound system, the syllable structure of the two languages). He should also be familiar with tones, word formation in Morphemes and Lexical semantics, grammar, sentence structure syntax, structure meaning and sentences

***Example:***   English:     Olu saw Bayo in the house, but did not greet him
               *Yoruba:*      *Olu ri Bayo ninu ile, sugbon ko ki i.*

***Understanding the written or text messages:*** Meaning is very significant during translation process (Cotterell and Turner, 1989). Therefore, a translator should be able to understand the meaning of the text in relation to

(i)     The environment of the writing
(ii)    Writers cultural background
(iii)   Writer's society and his people.

***Principles of Non substitution of ideas:*** The translator should not give any meaning to the word or sentence in general. Substitution of ideas or meaning affects the actual message of the text.

***Language and culture:*** Language is a reflection of the culture of the people and culture builds up the language. The knowledge of the culture of both the source and target language help the translator to translate culture related words appropriately. Although, the translator encounters problems in translation especially on (i) language competence, (ii) semantics, (iii) lexical semantics (meaning of words), (iv) structure, (v) symbols and, (vi) style of writing.

***Style in writing:*** Style is when a translator uses prose or poetic language to convey his/her ideas.

The term "translation" is defined as the act or process of changing word that is written or spoken into another language. Again, translation is the neutral (Hornby, 2001) term used for all tasks where the meaning of expressions in one language (the source language), whether the medium is spoken, written or signed (Crystal, 1997). Translations can be described as a task or an act of giving meaning to expression from one language version to another. When giving professional consideration to personnel's that work with human language, a clear distinction is drawn between interpreters and translators: while interpreters work with the oral language, translators work with the written form of the

language. There is also a consensus opinion among social linguistics and psychologists that it is unusual to find one person who is equally functional at both as an interpreter and a translator. While the task of interpreting is considered to be suitable for the extrovert personalities the translating task is said to befit the introverts (Sanya, 2002).

## THEORIES OF TRANSLATION

Translation theory is the study of proper principles of translation. Based on a solid foundation of understanding of how languages work and theory recognizes the different languages encode meaning in different forms guide translators to find appropriate forms of each language. Translation theory includes principles of translating figurative, language dealing with lexical mismatches, rhetorical questions etc. Noss (1987) identifies two theories of translation as Direct translation or "literacy translation" and oblique translation 'literacy translation' refers to the registered terminologies with specific usage and function: "literacy" may refers to meanings derivable from written items.

1.      *Literal Translation:* This is word for word translation from a source language to a target language

|             |          |                     |
| ----------- | -------- | ------------------- |
| *Example:*  | English: | It is raining heavily |
|             | Yoruba:  | *Ojo n ro gan-an*   |

2.      *Oblique Translation:* This indicates that it is possible that due to structural or metalinguistic divergences, certain stylistic forms cannot be transposed without a total breakdown of the structures. At this juncture, the translation would resort to oblique translation.

|            |          |                     |
| ---------- | -------- | ------------------- |
| *Example:* | English: | As soon as he came  |
|            | Yoruba:  | *Lesekese bi o se de* |

The oblique may be in free modulation and fixed modulation. The example reflects the fixed modulation, where the translation is according to the rules suggested by the source language. Came is verb in the sentence used as example so 'de' is also translated as a verb.

3.      Equivalence method involves using different stylistic and structural means which give rise to two different renditions of the same text. Example is in the use of exclamation

|            |          |              |
| ---------- | -------- | ------------ |
| *Example:* | English: | What a pity! |
|            | Yoruba:  | *O ma se o!* |

But equivalence has one problem of fixation. This is a phenomenon usually associated with proverbs, adjectival clauses and phrases etc. This can create a problem for a translator who does not have sufficient knowledge of the two languages involved in his/her work.

4.      *Adaptation:* This refers to a situation whose equivalent in the target language is practically non-existent. As a result, an equivalent has to be created to eliminate any form of embarrassing scene. A translator has to consider the element of cultural society.

|             |          |                                  |
| ----------- | -------- | -------------------------------- |
| *Example:*  | English: | He kissed his daughter in the mouth |
|             | Yoruba:  | *O ki enu bo omo  naa ni enu.*   |

In an African context, a translator has to adapt another word in lieu of the real translated word for it can be culturally offensive. Thus the process of adaptation demands that the

translator must be knowledgeable about his/her environment and the prevalent cultural bias of the target audience in order to give local colour of his/her translation (Sotonwa and Iteogu 2002).

## CONCLUSION

With a good translator neither of these approaches can be entirely ignored. No one procedure could be termed the best method, rather a good translation depends on the purpose for which it was made which in turn reflects the need of the people to whom he is translating. It is also important for a translator to pay attention to lexis, word combination, content in order to match the intended out come of the target language.

From all that have been discussed, no one approach to translation is the best rather; the success of a translation depends on the purpose for which it was made and to reflects. The needs of the people for whom it was made. In essence, what is proved best for a particular situation may be found unsuitable for another. Since translation is all content embracing there is need for a desired successful translator to make use of contents at an appropriate situation and level of translation.

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