

## **TRANSLATION: ESSENTIAL VEHICLE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Translation is a vehicle for the transmission of information in the world. Man is constantly faced with socio-cultural, economic and physical realities challenges around him. He constantly seeks to confront and resolve them and that is the reason he wants intercultural communications that come to help him to improve his situation. Translation plays a mediating role between different societies and cultures inhabiting different locations and places of the world. It is through interaction that man learns new ideas and concepts of other people, and simultaneously shares his thoughts with fellow humans. This study which belongs to the field of translation is a study of the potential roles that translation can play in human development. The objective of this paper is to investigate how the activities of translation can help in achieving Millennium Health Development goals for the Nigerian society, and other developing countries of the 3rd world.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Good health is one of the essential features of human rights. But unfortunately mortality among women and children has continued to bedevil our society. As a result of illiteracy, poverty and some cultural beliefs and practices, many government developmental programs directed towards the health of women end up not achieving their goals. A report from the Mary Stopes International shows that “despite improvements in health among developing countries, there has been little success in reducing a toll of women’s lives which results from child bearing”(6) From the above facts the mortality rate among women at childbirth has remained sadly high. And Dr. Dere Awosika, the National Coordinator and chief Executive of the National Program on Immunization confirms this fact in the (Forward) of the brochure of the National Program on Immunization when she says “that while the impact of Immunization on the reduction of childhood morbidity and mortality has been remarkable, it is yet to reach its full potential”. One important point here is that many development programs in the developing countries especially in West Africa are imposed on the people because they do not actually participate in their planning. This shows that development should be initiated and originated from the poor and rural population who will then sensitize their citizens to be fully involved in these programs.

Jonathan Desen Mbachaga observes that “it therefore means that, simply developing programs that focus on disease eradication without building the means necessary for their delivery will lead us nowhere...”(201). From the above points one sees the need to translate some of these programs on health into indigenous languages so as to make them available to rural dwellers. It is also obvious that the services of translators and interpreters have become indispensable in the realization of the objectives of the National Development Programs. Sensitizing the people on the developmental programs exposes them to the benefits and disadvantages that may accrue from them. This in turn will ensure active involvement and

participation of individual groups and stake-holders in the development process. According to the National Health Policy, “the goal of the National Health Policy shall be a level of health that will enable all Nigerians achieve socially and economically productive lives” (9) This policy agrees with the popular diction that “a healthy nation is a wealthy nation”. But these laudable objectives of our governments cannot be realized if their plans do not involve the people and especially the rural dwellers.

Commenting further on the need for involvement of the rural people in the development programs, Dennis Tegh quoted in Jonathan Desen Mbachaga, submits that “it is the lack of involvement of the people in deciding for themselves what the priority areas of development should be that has been a major distraction in the quest for sustainable development (204). Dwelling further on this, Okoye J. C. posits that:

Information dissemination is vital to the success of any meaningful development process, since people or societies change as a result of exposure to new information. The ease with which people receive information depends largely on the cultural relevance of the information. Rural communication strategies properly designed to spread relevant Development information to the target population through the right communication media, is crucial to the success of rural transformation in Nigeria. (6)

National Program on Immunization (NPI) which is a fundamental stake holder of the National Health Policy remains one of the most effective tools for reducing infection during and after pregnancy, and reducing morbidity and mortality in children. It has been fighting Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPDS) such as tuberculosis, poliomyelitis, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, neo-natal tetanus, measles, yellow fever, hepatitis b and CSM (forward, National Program on Immunization). This program is sponsored by the Federal, States, Local governments, the World Health Organization and other foreign partners.

#### The Effects of Illiteracy and some Indigenous Cultural Practices on National Development Programs

Allio Khalio shows that many development programs in Chad did not succeed until the government realized that it was necessary to involve the citizens especially from the rural areas and the hinterland. She soon started doing transmission on the National Radio Network in the local languages of these small ethnic groups in order to effectively reach them. Some of these projects failed because of the oppositions they had encountered from the rural population. Most of the problems stemmed from illiteracy among the rural population that was not adequately sensitized on the need for the programs set up to bring about developmental progress in the society (240). Translation of documents therefore becomes relevant in the administrative machinery of every government that wants to bring about the development of local industries and facilitate the operations of international associations.

Illiteracy and some cultural practices contribute to the factors that inhibit developmental progress among human beings especially in the rural areas. This fact is illustrated in the actual implementation of the immunization program especially within the rural areas in Nigeria. Some of the inhabitants refuse to get immunized or allow their children to get immunized as a result of their cultural beliefs. Interviews carried out by the writer on Mr Okonkwo Cyprain and Mrs. Odomena Gladys, Immunization Officers of Awka South Local Government on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2016 reveal that some of the problems they encounter are

linguistic and some indigenous cultural practices. On one of their visits to a Fulani settlement in Isiagu Awka South Local Government, all the women fled on sighting the male immunization officers. It was later explained that they were not supposed to interact with other men except their husbands. Also they can only admit that they are pregnant only before their husbands. They also refused to allow their children to be immunized against polio and other diseases because they had the erroneous belief that immunization is a way of making them impotent and infertile. Some even believe that it was the whiteman's way of introducing diseases into their bodies.

Ajayi and Crowther show that "Most of the Fulanis... were cattle breeders who followed a wandering way of life. Now and then, linked with other peoples, some of them had settled and grown used to living in towns" (264). We can deduce from this that most of the Fulanis who live together in their settlement at Isiagu, in Awka South Local Government of Anambra state of Nigeria, are Muslims cattle breeders and live in isolated enclave away from the actual inhabitants of the land.

Therefore, in order to get them immunized and make them take the Tetanus Toxoid injection, the workers on the Immunization program had to go and get a female interpreter. She then came and educated the women and their leaders on the need for them to be immunized before the delivery of their babies. It was only after their traditional rulers, leaders and people had been mobilized and made to see the advantages of the program that they were convinced and compelled the women to get immunized. They trust visitors who speak their language and team up with them to sensitize their people on such programs.

### **The Origin of Translation**

Many scholars and historians never seem to agree on the origin of translation but what is important is that the need for communication is at the origin of this phenomenon. We can attest that the interpretation and translation practices have always existed but it is only from the sixties that translation began to attract the attention of many people (Hurtado Albir, (9). The plurality of languages and multiplicity of people in the world make interpretation and translation indispensable to all human societies. Interpreters primarily existed before translators because traders, merchants, explorers and army generals had always found it necessary to enlist the assistance of people with such special abilities in their different missions and endeavors (C. Andronikof in Seleskovitch Danica (6).

Today, interpretation and translation are becoming essential in communication between people of different cultures. Danica Seleskovitch shows that interpretation involves communicating another person's ideas and feelings in such a way that it is completely understood by another person in any language it is conveyed in (7). According to Jean Delisle "translation can therefore be defined as the operation by which the relevant signification of linguistic signs is determined through reference to a meaning as formulated in a message, which is then fully reconstructed in the signs of another language"(53). They are actually processes of decoding a message from one language into another: interpretation is oral while translation expresses the information from the original text to the target language in a written form. It is remarkable from the above definitions that interpretation, as well as translation refers to activities which promote the dissemination of ideas and information between various people in a society. The interpreter and the translator should primarily, be good listeners, intelligent readers and careful observers in order to excel in their mediating roles between the speaker, the author and their final audience.

Scientific and technological inventions like electricity, newspapers, computers and the internet continue to break down communication barriers that previously prevented the diffusion of information in the world. It is for this reason that many information and knowledge are today available in various nations of the world even in distant countries. Through these vehicles of information people especially from the poorer and the under developed nations can access, apply scientific and technical innovations to improve the lives of their own societies. This brings about development in socio cultural, political and economic aspects of life of the people. This remark of Pratima Dave Shastri supports this idea when he says that:

The modern age is the age of translation. The electronic explosion has demolished the barriers of time and space. The world has become a global village. Knowledge is just a click away. Translation has established itself as a powerful tool for communication. It acts as a unifying force, and a means of national integration (xi).

Studies reveal that development has been understood from different perspectives in Social Sciences. However, this paper would love to adopt the definition made by James Speth, in a report of the UNDP, SHD where he said that sustainable human development means:

Development that not only generates economic growth but distributes its benefits equitably; that regenerates the environment rather than destroys it; that empowers people rather than marginalizing them. It gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities, and provides for their participation in decisions affecting them (10).

By this information, the terms "human development" involve all processes that promote the development of man and that motivate him to develop his intelligence and creative abilities. This paper will discuss first the importance of literary translation before showing the significance of the pragmatic / technical translation.

### **The Importance of Translation in International Organizations**

According Bassnett-Mcguire, activities of learning had flourished through translation in England in the Ninth century when King Alfred (871-899) came to translate many ancient texts written in Latin, into the vernacular, which then was English. His aim of translating these texts was to help his subjects to recover from the trauma and the devastations they had suffered from the Danish invasions (50-51). These translations encouraged the activities of learning because the ideas and virtues of these writings were made accessible to all the people who could read.

Before and even during the Renaissance period translations of religious texts like the Bible and classical literary texts was in bloom. Peter Salomon also found that the Pleiades, guided by Pierre de Ronsard and other Humanist writers took advantage of translation to enrich the French poetry and language (32). Many literary works were translated by several writers because of their importance in moral instruction. Heylen Romy also noted in his book *Poetics and The Stage: Six French Hamlets* that "translations enable the transfer of literary devices and models from one literature or culture to another and thus enrich, developing literatures in need of poetic models or renew established literatures that find themselves in crisis >> (10-11).

It is also evident that the ideas of literary writers such as Homer, Aristotle, Shakespeare, Racine, and other classical writers become accessible to many people through translation. It

is also noteworthy that our own citizens of West Africa origin such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Buchi Emecheta, Camara Laye, Mongo Beti, Sembene Ousmane, Mariama Ba, Aminata Sow Fall and others came to disseminate their ideas and philosophies in the world through literary translation. Literary translation is relevant in the promotion of socio-cultural activities between the countries of West Africa and in the world.

Onuko Theodora reaffirms this fact when she revealed that many writers had done excellent translations even without any specific method. She further showed that the works of some writers like Chateaubriand who had translated *Paradise Lost* by Milton in the Eighteenth century, Charles Baudelaire, who had translated the works of Edgar Allen Poe, an American poet of the Nineteenth century could all attest to this fact. André Gide also had great success in his translation of Shakespeare's Hamlet in the Twentieth century, and so on (28). Formerly, the translation of literary texts played very important roles in the educational activities because linguists and some teachers taught their students grammar and rhetorical figures through translation. Teachers had used translation to deepen the knowledge of Greek and Latin, (erudite languages) and science to learners. Pratima Dave Shastri confirms this fact in this way:

Actually, the concept of language teaching began with 'Grammar translation method', where the rules of grammar, and the vocabulary items of Latin were memorized and each sentence was translated from Latin into the mother-tongue and vice versa... It has certain drawbacks hence the method was rejected. But even today, translation is a good technique to teach a language and to evaluate the language proficiency of the learner (1-2).

We also believe that literary translation can help Nigerian writers and those from other African countries to enhance, revitalize their works, their native languages and ameliorate some socio-cultural realities of their countries. It should be noted that some international organizations such as the European Union value and continue to promote the translation of literary works to enhance intercultural relationships among citizens of their countries. Forrest Alan illustrated this point by remarking that "The idea of giving financial support for the translation of literary works is not new, UNESCO and the Council of Europe having undertaken the schemes with varying degrees of success "(348) .

The transmission of literary and cultural ideas proves effective for the transformation and the civilizing of diverse societies. Today, there are many difficulties of segregations, ethnic and racial conflicts which in turn, engender misunderstandings, wars and violence not only in West Africa but also throughout Africa. Consequently, there is little progress among these countries. Literary translation can be an ideal instrument to encourage and promote mutual understanding between the countries located, especially in West Africa. More literary works written in European languages should be translated into some major local languages, others should be written in other vernacular languages in order to educate and sensitize the rural dwellers on their rights, the importance of their being actively involved in programs that will promote the conditions of their life, some of which are already in the government developmental programs. It is appropriate for the propagation of socio-cultural facts among the peoples of the world. The African people should be made aware of the fact that the task of development is not exclusively the business of government but involves everyone in society. True development is realized only when all areas of man: the physical, the mental and the spiritual are involved.

## The Role of Technical Translation in Globalization

However, today we are witnessing a time when the increasing demand for translation of technical and scientific texts draws the attention of teachers and translation theorists. Jean Delisle reveals that the circumstance has changed in consideration of what was obtained in previous centuries. According to him “the increasing importance of international relations after the Second World War and the adoption of policies on language issues by bilingual nations such as Canada sparked a phenomenal growth in the volume of translation” (2). Obviously, increased integration and co-operation for international relations, after the Second World War necessitated more services of technical translators for effective resolution of linguistic issues among international organizations. To cope with this increase, translators grouped themselves into national and international associations to participate in trade exchanges.

Also some theorists and linguists created schools and theories that seek to promote the practice of translation. The proof of this is the appearance of the Semiotic theory of Alexander Ljudskanov, Linguistic theory of Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet, and the Interpretive theory by the group of l’Ecole Supérieure d’Interprètes et de Traducteurs in Paris, whose founders are Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer (Jean Delisle, 31-47). The multiplication of commercial exchanges between countries and the deliberations of international organizations such as UNO (the United Nations Organization) the (EU) European Union, (AU) African Union, (ECOWAS) Economic Community of West African Countries have made interpretation and translation activities indispensable in their meetings to the extent that they have become professions practiced by specialists. Automatic or machine translation has been introduced into the profession in order to facilitate the work of the translator and accelerate the dissemination of information which enhances its availability to improve conditions of development worldwide. Nations realizing, their need for co-operation and integration now seek closer ties with other countries in order to safeguard their future. Roger, Albert-Hesse and Jost buttress these ideas by remarking that:

There are no longer any remote islands or isolated people. An ever –denser web of criss-crossing links and mutual dependence enfolds all nations. It is now increasingly necessary for them to turn passive inter-dependence to deliberate solidarity which can make their diversity a source of continuous and mutual enrichment and so that of each one may be increasingly sustained by its many links with the others (6).

This part of our study focuses on the role of pragmatic or technical translation, that is to say the texts on technological and scientific subjects in globalization. There is a considerable growth of written documents in specific areas studies which attracts the attention of translation theorists. And Christiane Durieux argues that translating these texts justifies their own systematic approach not only because of their technical content, but also because the language used is often different from the current language (24). This fact certainly requires the training of translators who will be able to decode those texts written in specialized languages. We are witnessing this in a period of globalization that promotes the dissemination of information, thus making translation of paramount importance. Ojiakor Ngozi and Nwachukwu Obiakor show that “in the modern era, globalization came into being after the Second World War to achieve the plan of the ‘world leaders’ to break down the borders for fostering trade relations”(147). And this has promoted information dissemination and this is not surprising since the world has turned into a global village and events that happen in distant places are transmitted instantly to other parts of the world.

Globalization is a phenomenon that promotes trade, extensive dissemination of information and leads to the progress of more friendly relationship between countries in the world. It has also given a strong boost to multilingualism, and otherwise to interpretation and translation. Translation is relevant in international trade that helps the development and industrialization of a diversity of countries. To circumvent the difficulties of obtaining necessary information on the way of their progress, individuals and organizations now resort to the services of interpreters and translators. Alan Forrest revealed the importance of translation in some international organizations in this manner:

Linguistic obstacles to the attainment of the European single market are overcome as far as legislation is concerned, by the translation of texts into languages designated as "official and working languages" of the, European Union Council ... (quoted in Ajulo et al, 340).

Certainly the role of the technical translator is enormous since he is the mediator between the author and the recipients, the vehicle through which he/she spreads his/her pieces of information that may be of very sensitive nature. This is why objectivity and fidelity are necessary in the execution of his work. Technical translation refers to the translation of texts of technological or scientific documents such as medical manuals, legal matters, commercial brochures, political and administrative materials that concern human development in all spheres of life. According to Delisle Jean: "It covers, among all other things, newspaper articles ,general correspondence, non technical brochures, tourist information, and official reports and documents-in short general texts dealing with topics like pollution, fitness, consumer affairs, drugs, leisure, economics or sports"(10).

The message of pragmatic text is often necessary for everyday occurrences. The objective of the technical and scientific manuals written is the accuracy of the information because they seek above all to inform their public about the socio-cultural facts, political and economic. Knowledge of codified languages is highly relevant in the translation of such pragmatic texts because of the objectivity and accuracy of the characteristics of the concepts contained in them. This type of translation requires not only the threefold process of interpretive translation, but also the extensive documentation on the topics of the text, knowledge of specific terminologies, encyclopedic knowledge of the author and the historicity of the original text.

Jean Delisle shows the qualities of this kind in this way:

The pragmatic text differs from the literary with the following: it is denotative rather than connotative, it is concerned with a more or less objective reality, its primary goal is to communicate information, it generally admits (of) only one interpretation, it sometimes written in a "codified language", it has an immediate and short lived use, and it tends be didactic (17).

In his capacity as intermediary between the author and his audience, the translator should act with caution and consideration as he is the vehicle through which the author disseminates his information that may be of very sensitive or delicate nature. To illustrate the seriousness of the lack of these qualities in translation, Gerding -Salas noted that:

Through experience, I have learned that the consequences of wrong translations can be catastrophic especially if done by lay persons and mistakes made in the performance of this activity can be obviously irreparable. Just think of what could happen in cases of inadequacy in knowledge areas

such as science, medicine, legal matters, or technology ... It is quite clear that a poor translation can not only lead to hilarity or to minor confusion, but it can also it can be a matter of life and death (4).

Jean Delisle reiterates these ideas when he remarked that "the translation of such writing is fraught with danger, because both what is said and what is merely implied must be rendered in the target language." (10). Translation and interpretation promote national consciousness and unity. Without the massive mobilization of the citizens, some national policies end up being reduced to mere statement rather than worthwhile national project for implementation.

## CONCLUSION

One important point here is that many development programs in the developing countries especially in West Africa fail because the people especially those from the rural areas know little about them so do not actually participate in their planning nor in their execution. Translation can play significant roles in different aspects of development especially in sensitizing the people about those programs and getting them to learn some of the technical and scientific skills involved in executing them. It makes divers cultural, political, environmental, geographical and social facts accessible to the individual to improve the poor circumstances of his life. The practice of translation unites peoples of various languages thereby encouraging tolerance and socio-cultural interactions in the society. And the new knowledge acquired through translation can create within the individual awareness and potentials which in turn help him to discover the benefits that he can derive from other people's cultures. Technical translation proves relevant to the dissemination of information for industrialization and human development. Development actors can introduce new technologies and knowledge, which will in turn instruct and industrialize rural societies. Translation is used to distribute information to the majority of the population so as to promote development and progress in the society. It promotes national consciousness and unity within the society. Without the massive mobilization of the citizens, some national policies end up being reduced to mere statement rather than worthwhile national projects that are implemented. Translation and interpretation are realistic modalities for achieving national and multinational integration. These activities are capable of creating a great impact on the lives of people in a multilingual society like Nigeria. They enhance and promote knowledge among people because they help to sensitize and mobilize the masses in the programs planned to bring about development and progress in the society. For government development programs to be effective, they should be understood and appreciated by all members of society. This is why a fairly extensive dissemination of information is essential for any country looking for progress and development for her citizens.

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