



Rendition of some cultural elements in the dubbed version of Jesus Film into Bulu

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ABSTRACT

The present article explores the cultural distinctions between developing African languages and languages of wider diffusion, focusing on challenges in community translation and interpreting involving both language groups. Using The Story of Jesus—Bulu/Boulou Language and its dubbed version, A documentary taken from the Gospel of St. Luke, the life of Jesus, our study was motivated by geographical, historical, and linguistic disparities among the audiences of both movies which could lead to many cultural constraints. The central issue addressed pertained to the translation of culturally specific terms and their impact on the original message of the movie, aligning with the evangelistic mission of the Jesus Film Project. This inquiry led to one primary goal: evaluating the translation strategies' efficacy in serving the evangelization purpose. To address these questions, we used Newmark's categorisation of cultural words, his communicative theory and the Skopos theory of Hans J. Vermeer. Our analysis revealed that, to engage a new audience, translators often make use of domestication, allowing for audience identification with the content. However, not all elements should be domesticated, as this might alter the essence of the original text; some aspects should remain foreign to facilitate audience to appropriate a new culture. Our analysis concludes that, while domestication was predominantly used, it often occurred in a balanced manner, employing both foreignisation and domestication strategies, often relying on multimodal and intratextual elements.

INTRODUCTION

One of the methods which is on the rise as far as transferring information from languages of wider diffusion to those of limited diffusion or from developed languages to less developed ones is audiovisual translation. However, one big challenge is the transfer of culture from one language to the other. Culture from Newmark viewpoint is "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses particular language as its means

of expression." Therefore, the fact that culture is specific to a particular community makes it sometimes difficult to be rendered adequately into another community while equally transferring the exact message. One of the domains which is rooted into cultures is the religious domain and the ways it is experienced in different contexts. Culture words related to ways of greeting, symbolic natural elements, and deities are generally specific to each community and sometimes specific to eras. This is the case with Christianity. Most aspects take their source

from Judaism and the Jewish culture. Areas and other cultural aspects described are mainly related to Israel, ancient Rome, Greece etc. Therefore transferring them into our era and for the African audience who do not completely share the same realities can sometimes be a complex task. It is true that the Bible and other Christian documents as well as christian movies have been translated into African languages however, the goal of the Jesus Film Project is not only to translate but to evangelise. This entails convincing hearts, bringing people to understand and to accept what is being preached. As a result the strategies and techniques used should be aimed at not merely translating but at attaining their goal. It is on this basis that we embark on the analysis of the movie *A documentary taken from the Gospel of St. Luke, the life of Jesus* and its dubbed version in bulu, *The Story of Jesus—Bulu/Boulou Language*.

The following research question was raised;

- To what extent have the translation strategies and/or procedures serve the evangelization mission of the translated movie?

The above research question led to the following research hypothesis;

- Faced with geographical, historical and linguistic gap between the source movie and the bulu context, the translators faced a number of cultural constraints which they managed by merging both domestication and foreignisation strategies to achieve their mission.

This research therefore sets out to analyse the different techniques used by the translators to domesticate and/or foreignise the movie into the bulu culture.

This article is limited to two movies. The first movie is *The Story of Jesus – Bulu/Boulou Language*. It is a two-hour, one minute, forty-three second movie. The movie is dubbed into bulu according to the gospel of Luke and made available by Jesus Film Project. The second movie is entitled *A documentary taken from the Gospel of St. Luke, the life of Jesus*. It is a two-hour, seven-minute and fifty-three-second movie by Inspirational Films, Inc. and made available by Jesus Film Project. The bulu version has been dubbed from the English version. Only the portion of the movie common to both videos will be analysed. This work is focused on the bulu language.

This research uses two research instruments: observation and text analysis. In order to analyse the data, this research will adopt descriptive qualitative research design. Two sampling techniques will be employed, these are: convenience sampling and purposive sampling. In addition to this, we will resort to the communicative theory of translation by Peter Newmark.

This research will help translators and interpreters delving into community interpreting and translation specially in dubbing to know challenging areas in working into African languages and adequate means to adopt when faced with cultural aspects.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Audio-visual translation

Luyken et al. (1991) in Ayonghe (2014) defines Audiovisual Translation (AVT) as, “the process by which a film or television programme is made comprehensible to a target audience that is unfamiliar with the original’s source language”. Ako (2013) further defines AVT as an “inter-semiotic translation which operates at either intralingual or interlingual levels. It is simply the translation of all forms – radio, television, internet – of audiovisual material”.

AVT can be subdivided into three main subtypes which are subtitling, dubbing (also known as lip-sync) and voice over. Voice-over is an audiovisual technique in which a voice offering a translation in a given target language (TL) is heard simultaneously on top of the source language (SL) voice. With regard to the soundtrack of the original program, the volume is reduced to a low level that can still be heard in the background when the translation is being read. (Díaz-Cintas and Orero, 2006). According to Valdeon Subtitling (2022) “allows the viewer to listen to the original soundtrack while reading a written version in the target language, typically at the bottom of the screen. Subtitling can also be used for the translation of written elements in the original movie”, and, in fact, is often used for this purpose”. Dubbing is a creative process of adapting the source language (SL) text/script/verbalized message to the target language (TL) script/soundtrack. In the process of adapting, the SL soundtrack is completely substituted with a TL equivalent. The SL soundtrack is therefore totally inexistant. Dudding is a complex process, for it to be perfect there should be it is a synchronization of the translated script, the soundtrack, and the lip movements of the speakers/characters on the screen; at the same time, it implies transferring the SL text into another language (TL) (Nicolae, 2018).

Translating culture

Nida (1964) characterizes translation as a procedural means of constructing meaning that a target language reader can comprehend. However, In the context of translation projects, various challenges confront translators, and one notable obstacle is the translation of cultural terms. This difficulty arises from the inherent disparities between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) due to cultural distinctions. Cultural words demand special attention to ensure that the translator preserves their meaning while making them comprehensible to TT readers. Cultural translation, as discussed by Maitland, involves the challenge of transferring the full scope of meaning from the source text to the translation, considering shifts in time, place, and culture. According to Newmark, cultural words can be categorized into five groups, these are: ecology, material culture, social culture, social organization, gestures. Ecology pertains to geographical features unique to a

particular culture's homeland, encompassing elements like plants, animals, winds, plains, and hills. These ecological terms are distinguishable from other cultural terms as they are generally devoid of political or commercial connotations. Material culture encompasses the everyday objects that people use in their country of origin, which can significantly influence communication within their culture. These includes foods, clothing, elements of houses and towns and means of transportation. Social culture covers aspects like types of work, leisure, various forms of music. Social organization, as a cultural category, pertains to how things or individuals are addressed and the appropriate level of formality in the target culture. Political, administrative, religious, and artistic terms, as well as hierarchical ranks found in some countries. In the realm of gestures and habits, Newmark suggests that they should be categorized as cultural words when there's a distinction between their description and function, especially in cases where ambiguity exists in the target culture.

Huo Guy comes in to completes in a way Newmark's list. His paper was geared towards the sociocultural context, which for him encompasses historical, local, customary, and religious cultural dimensions. As different historical developments have given rise to diverse cultures, communication challenges often arise between nations and countries. According to him, English allusions, for instance, frequently draw from the vast reservoir of English literature, notably from Shakespeare, making them familiar to native speakers who employ these allusions unknowingly in everyday discourse. The development of local culture is profoundly influenced by a combination of geographical factors, the natural environment, and social customs, among other elements. Within this context, local cultural disparities are notably characterized by the absence of shared cultural connotations for equivalent terms in two languages. Customary culture comprises a spectrum of aspects such as greetings, compliments, apologies, forms of address, euphemisms, and taboos. Religion, as an inherent facet of human culture, manifests through various dimensions, encompassing religious beliefs, values, rituals, taboos, and more.

Domestication and Foreignization

Two distinctive translation strategies can be employed in translation: domestication and foreignization. Domestication seeks to create a translation that adopts a clear and fluid style to minimize the foreignness of the text for the target language reader. It aligns the text with the linguistic and cultural values of the target culture, effectively making the reader feel as if they have entered the foreign text. Conversely, foreignization involves strategies that retain the foreign flavor of the original text. This approach is embraced as it allows the reader to experience the distinctiveness of a foreign text, preserving significant traces of the original text's foreignness. (Wenfen, 2010).

Some translation techniques or procedures

Transference: Transference involves transferring a word or phrase directly from the source language into the target language without with minimal or no modification. Transference, as described by Vinay and Darbelnet, is also known as loan words, transcription, or borrowing.

Shifts or transpositions: Shifts or transpositions refer to altering the grammatical structure, word order, or sentence structure in translation to convey the intended meaning.

Modulation: Modulation involves changing the point of view, tone, or expression of a text while preserving its overall meaning.

Recognised translation: A recognised translation is using an established, accepted translation for specific terms or phrases, especially when there's a recognized equivalent.

Reduction and expansion: Reduction and expansion involve simplifying or elaborating upon the source text in the target language, often to achieve a smoother, more natural translation.

Combining Translation Procedures: Couplets, Triplets, and Quadruplets: In translation, according to Newmark, "couplets" involve the fusion of two procedures to address a single problem. In practice, a translator can use two or more procedures simultaneously to tackle a particular challenge. "Triplets" refer to the combination of three procedures, and "quadruplets" involve integrating four procedures to resolve a single issue.

Adaptation: Replacing a cultural element from the source text with one from the target culture.

Calque: Literally translating a foreign word or phrase.

Generalization: Employing a broader or neutral term.

Multimodality and intratextuality in translation

Multimodality, as defined by van Leeuwen (2005 cited in Jewitt, 2009), signifies the amalgamation of diverse semiotic modes within a communicative construct or event. It entails an approach that recognizes communication and representation as extending beyond language, emphasizing a broad spectrum of communicational forms people employ, such as images, gestures, gazes, postures, and more, and the intricate relationships between these modalities (Jewitt, 2009). Jones (2021) further comes in with the notion of multimodal discourse analysis which represents an approach to examining communication that shifts the focus from solely linguistic elements to the utilization of various modes of expression in shaping meaning. This is useful as it completes the

understanding of some elements which might not have been adequately translated.

According to Sharrock (2019) Intratextuality is a critical term used to explore the relationship between the parts and the whole in texts, including issues of unity (and disunity), the relationship between digressions and their surroundings, interactions between disparate parts of texts (such as ring composition), juxtapositions that may reflect surprisingly on their neighbours, or any structural issue within a single work of literature.

(Shamim & Riaz, 2023; Farrell, Sharrock & Morales, 2002.)

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Wallmach and kruger's work

Wallmach and Kruger suggest a detailed translation study methodology. They recommend selecting a corpus and gathering initial details on the source and target texts to establish the research problem and hypothesis. Then, defining the basis of comparison (*tertium comparationis*), a set of variables for the comparative analysis, the translator proceeds to analyze at both micro and macro textual levels. This comprehensive analysis enables the researcher to assess the translation's quality upon completion. This was used to bring out background information related to the movies - information necessary in our analysis.

The communicative theory

The Communicative theory of translation is one of the two translation concepts proposed by Peter Newmark. He was an English professor of translation at the University of Surrey. He was one of the main figures in founding translation studies in the English-speaking world since 1980s. For him, translation should have the same effect on the target language readers as the original text has on the source language readers (Newmark, 1982 in Zu, 2015). Therefore, in transmitting a content from a SL to a TL, the translator should take into consideration the "culture, language and pragmatic way of target language, rather than a faithful reproduction of the original text." It is in line with this that during the translation process, the translator has to an extent a free license during a translation process "to explain the original text, adjust the form and style, eliminate the ambiguity, even to amend the original mistake". Having in mind the need to communicate to particular group of people, the translator might sometimes be compelled to break the limitation of the original context. That is what could not be said in the original context may be needed in the target context for correct understanding. Communicative translation is usually applied to the translation of news reports, textbooks, public notices and many other non-literary works.

The purpose in communicative translation is to communicate and to effectively communicate, one needs to use the means that is appropriate to the audience they want to get to no matter the price this

might call for. Likewise in choosing which subtype is suitable for the bulu community, if the aim is to communicate, then the mode that best facilitates the message to be passed across should be adopted.

The Skopos Theory

The Skopos Theory, developed by Hans J. Vermeer, emphasizes that the purpose or "skopos" of a translation should guide the strategies used. Originating in the 1980s and refined in the 1990s, it advocates tailoring translations to meet the specific communicative needs of the target audience rather than replicating the source text verbatim. Pioneered by scholars like Nord, the theory asserts that the translation's purpose is paramount, formalizing the entire translation process. It underscores the central role of the target audience, emphasizing the dynamic and context-bound nature of translation. Overall, the Skopos Theory has significantly influenced contemporary translation studies by highlighting the importance of purpose and audience consideration in the translation process.

Overview of empirical works

In the realm of film, Merz (2021) asserts that visual components often hold greater significance than spoken language as the primary mode of communication. However, when examining the Jesus film, a peculiar situation emerges; while spoken language is translated into various local languages, the visual elements remain consistent with the original. This underscores the vital role of visual language in communication and highlights the potential for miscommunication when the film is presented to audiences beyond its intended viewership. This visual challenge forms the central issue in cross-cultural film ministry. Merz further emphasizes that the Jesus film is a widely recognized tool for evangelization but is susceptible to miscommunication, particularly when presented to audiences unfamiliar with Western culture. The complexity arises from the task of enabling the audience to understand and connect with the film and its narrative. A culturally contextualized film, adapted for the target audience, can act as a bridge between African culture and transnational Christianity.

While this to an extent is true, it has however some limitations. The goal of the translated version is not to completely erase the original version, instead, it aims at bringing the target audience, understand the origin of what they are watching, the visible differences and embracing it. That is the role of translation; bridging gaps between cultures not erasing one culture totally. Changing the cinematographic culture would mean changing many other cultural elements which would produce another story. This therefore further shows the challenge faced by the Jesus Film Project Translators who had to maintain the original cinematographic setting and still find a way to communicate the message to different cultural audience. Changing the whole movie would eventually defeat one of the purpose of

dubbing which according to Ni Putu et al. (2022), is to create the illusion that the characters are truly speaking the target language.

Another researcher who worked on the domain of cultural translation is Dick (2019). He mainly brings out Maitland's perspective on cultural translation as being grounded in the premise that diverse cultures possess distinct characteristics that render their meanings inaccessible to outsiders. This assumption underscores the challenge of transferring the full scope of meaning from the source text to the translation, as the source text is akin to a foreign land, its meanings transformed by shifts in time, place, and culture.

In her viewpoint, the translation process is not a mere transfer of meaning from one language to another. Rather, it involves the "reader-translator" actively engaging with the text-for-translation. In face of any translation, an aspect of the translator will be felt. This based on his understanding of the source text and culture and equally his understanding of the target text and culture coupled with the various decisions he will deem right before any cultural element.

She continues by highlighting that translation's objective is to bridge the gap, conquer the remoteness between languages and cultures, but they never truly obliterate the gap. Nevertheless, Dick (2019) offers a nuanced perspective that somewhat challenges Maitland's viewpoint. On one hand, he acknowledges the validity of Maitland's emphasis on the distinctiveness of foreign texts and the limitations faced by readers-translators when dealing with texts from ancient, culturally distant societies. There will always be dimensions of meaning that elude our full understanding. Nevertheless, he points out that texts themselves contain various clues, some more explicit than others, revealing the intended meanings. Intelligent readers theoretically have the capacity to discern these meanings and intentions, but our human limitations constrain us from comprehending

them entirely. To honor the "otherness" of these texts and to mitigate the influence of our ideological biases, it is crucial to resist the temptation to overly domesticate the content of these texts during reading, interpretation, translation, and application to our lives.

METHODOLOGY

This article analysis the rendition of cultural word from English into bulu, from foreign judo-christian culture to an two main concepts which are: cultural word and translation techni. Following the research questions, objectives and hypotheses, two approaches were used: the empirical approach and the comparative approach. The empirical approach enables us carry out a textual analysis of both transcriptions with the aim of identifying different cultural words in the English movie *A documentary taken from the Gospel of St. Luke, the life of Jesus* and their translation in the Bulu movie *The Story of Jesus – Bulu/Boulou Language*. In order to achieve this, Newmark's categorization of cultural words and his communicative theory were used to analyse the cultural areas that could stand as constraints and the procedures adopted by the translators to render them into the target language.

After analysing the various areas of cultural constraints, the results enabled us to adopt a comparative approach. Through this approach, some excerpts of both movies were examined. The results were then interpreted in order to answer the research questions and eventually validate or invalidate the research hypothesis.

Below are a purposive selection of some cultural elements analysed in the movies. These were chosen as they adequately help in representing the other elements and therefore can be used as a sample.

Ecology

| Source text | Element of interest | Target text | Literal translation | Technique(s) |
|---|-----------------------|--|---|-------------------------|
| Fauna elements | | | | |
| Consider the ravens ... of how much more worth are you than the birds | Raven Birds | Tame yen a ne anon ... ke mia dan anon beta da'an | Look at the birds... you are above birds | Generalisation |
| Anyone will untie his ox or his donkey and take it out of the stalk to give it water on the Sabbath... | Ox donkey stalk | Mia bôte medu'an mô't ase a bili éjakas nge nya a tii nje mose sabbat a ke ve je bidi ... | You men of lies, each one of you has a donkey, will he not untie it on the day of Sabbath to give it food | deletion and adaptation |
| Than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle | camel | Amu e ne tyi'ibi na njakas elotan abé ôndôndo | Because it is easy for an animal to pass through the door of a needle | Generalisation |

In the first example, we have the use of generalisation to represent “raven”. It would have been difficult to maintain raven as they are a rare species in Cameroon. Therefore, the choice to chunk up to birds since they are a species of birds.

In the second example, only donkey is being rendered as “animal”. “Ox” is deleted. Oxen are not really common in the bulu community. Intratextuality might have helped the target audience to know they refer to animals as there is the notion of taking them from the stalk and giving them water but as to which kind of animals they are, it would have been difficult to identify. Hence, the choice to delete it. “Stalk” is adapted. In some Cameroonian villages, domestic animals are tied to trees and untied to be fed. Therefore instead of searching for “stalk” in bulu, the translator chose to adapt. Though in a way it may reduce the full meaning, the message is however the

same due to intratextuality; most often domestic animals are the ones that can be kept, and fed as stipulate nbthe ful sentences.

In the third example we still have the use of generalisation due to the inexistence of camels in the southern region of Cameroon. Therefore the use of “ejakas” which can refers to both “donkey” and any animal that is used to travel. Even though by generalising, the target audience might not get the degree of the comparism since not all animals have the height and size of a camel, multimodality however helps to better understand. As Jesus is about to speak of the camel, some camels are passing by and at that moment Jesus turns his head, looks in the direction of the camels, and then starts his sentence. Here we see the dominance of domestication.

Gestures and habits

| Source text | Element of interest | Target text | Literal translation | Technique(s) |
|---|--|--|--|------------------------|
| Greetings and welcoming ceremonies | | | | |
| You did not welcome me with a kiss... | Welcome me with a kiss | ô nji wubane ma ve tame yene | You did not hug me when you saw me | Adaptation |
| I came into your home. You gave Me no water for My feet you provided no olive oil for my head | No water for my feet No olive oil for my hair | Ma ke nyiin nda jôé, ô nji ve me mendim ya sôbe mebo. ô nji ke ve'ele wo'o me mbon nlô | I entered your house you did not give me water to wash my feet. You did not try to anoint my head with oil | calque and explication |
| Peace be with you. And You | Peace be with you | Mvo'é e be wo. A wo fe | Peace be with you. And you too | Calque |

In the first example, the translator adapted “kiss” by “hug” which is more common in the bulu community. People are generally welcomed with a hug not with a kiss. Even when it comes to the feet the woman was kissing, the translator maintains “hugging my feet”. Though the image shows her kissing and hugging the feet at the same time, this would not affect the meaning. If the word “kiss” was maintained, this aspect of culture might not be understood by the bulu community as it is not a habit for a man to welcome another with a kiss or to offer water to wash their feet unless he is from a dirty environment.

In the second example the translator made use of calque by using the exact terms of the of the source text. Additions are to explain the use of the

water and the oil. However, here the target audience might not know the purpose behind the giving of the water and oil for someone when they come to your house. This is nevertheless a form of foreignisation as the audience will just have to learn how to behave when you come to a Jewish house; one must give you water to wash your feet and oil to anoint your head.

In the last example the translator made use of the same structure as the source text. Multimodality intervenes here to enable the target audience understand that this is a form of greeting as Jesus just arrived somewhere and that is the first thing he tells them and they respond. Here, we have a blend of domestication and foreignisation.

Social organisation

| Source text | Element of interest | Target text | Literal translation | Technique(s) |
|---|---------------------|--|---|--------------|
| Jesus attributes | | | | |
| Oh, Master , we worked hard all night long... | Master | A tate bi jae ya ju ngum alu... | Eh father we lost a whole night | Adaptation |
| Don't bother the Teacher any longer. | Teacher | Te beta ndeñele ñye'ele | Do not disturb the master/ teacher any more | Adaptation |
| Rabbi , <u>comm</u> and your <u>disciples</u> to be quiet. | Rabbi | A ñye'ele jô e beye'é bôé na be tabe bivo'o | Master/ teacher tell your learners to remain calm | Adaptation |

Throughout the movie, Jesus has different appellations. Some called him “master”, others “Rabbi”, others “teacher”, and others “prophet”. In bulu however, the first three mentioned appellations are rendered as “ñye'ele” which refers to a teacher or master. Nevertheless, depending on the circumstance, the appellation may vary. In the first example, “master” is rendered as “Lord” in bulu. And in the scene, we see Jesus who just finished

preaching and then asked some fishermen to go and fish again. Their response which is like a plea justifies the use of “Lord” instead of teacher or master. Therefore, in translating the different appellation, the translator took into consideration the context as shown by the multimodality. Here, we see more of domestication.

| Source text | Element of interest | Target text | Literal translation | Technique(s) |
|---|--------------------------|---|---|--------------|
| God's attribute | | | | |
| You shall worship the Lord your God . | Lord your God | W'aye kañe tate Zambe wôé | You will worship your Lord/father God | Calque |
| For this reason the Holy Child will be called the Son of the Most High God . | Son of the most high God | A mone wa ye bia ba ye ya lone mone zambe | The child you will give birth to will be called child of God | Deletion |
| But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right Side of Almighty God | Almighty God | Ataté éyoñe ji Mone mô't a ye tabe si e mbonnôm ya ngule Zambe | As from now the child/son of man/person will sit at the right of the mighty/ strong God | Calque |

When referring to God, in many instances, there are additions of adjectives or attributes to describe him. This is seen in the above table. While in some cases the translator chose to delete those adjectives, in other instances he simply calqued them. In the second example above, the segment « son of the the source text are translated as employed. The “tate” means both “father” and “Lord” and the word

most high » is omitted. This is due to the absence of an adjective in bulu to render as “most high”. In bulu, “Zamba” already means the supreme God hence no need for any other information to mention that. So the translators just domesticated the appellation. In the first and third examples however, the terms used in

“ngule” equally has different meaning depending on the context. It can mean “strength” “might” “authority”. They thus both fit into the context.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

From the above analysis, we see that the translators made use of domestication more. However, though we have several instances of domestication, some are in the form of couplets either by using both foreignisation and domestication strategies, or by relying on multimodal and/ or intratextual elements to bring the target audience appropriate the source culture.

The goal as seen above being to evangelise, to convince, to touch the hearts of an audience foreign to the present culture, the use of domestication is appropriate. This enables the audience not to be completely alienated to what they have in front of them. They feel concerned; they recognise themselves inside the movie in a way. The inclusion of foreignisation is mainly due to the fact that, the source culture cannot completely be wiped off. Though the target audience needs to feel involved in the story before them, there are equally some aspects they need to incorporate, learn, and appropriate from the source culture. That is why there are many instances of complete borrowing and partial borrowing. This blend of both strategies in the some utterances can act as a way of bringing the target audience to embrace something new. For example, using borrowing and explicitation at the same time would give room for a strange word to be heard and the explanation to be got. And most words are borrowed from French which is the target audience first language. So despite the disparity between both, they are however both used.

This blend is further extended with the help of multimodality and intratextuality which act as foreignisation. The appearance of some animals accompanied by a borrowed word leads to the learning of a new term and of course of a new aspect of the new culture. Likewise some borrowed or calqued terms find their meaning later in the movie when reused. This therefore validates our hypothesis.

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