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## RECALIBRATING BIBLICAL DISCOURSE INTO AFRICAN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES THROUGH REWRITING

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### ABSTRACT

Bible translators, especially those involved with translating the bible into African indigenous languages have become the torch bearers of evangelism and the proliferation of Christian literature in many communities. Thus, translators face the arduous task of expressing the often inaccessible, ancient and eternal message of the bible into local languages. Translating biblical concepts, ideas, rituals with efficacy such that the native audience experience the same evangelical effect, is the challenge that many bible translators are constantly called upon to grapple with. A poor rendering of biblical concepts, rituals, etc. may lead to 'de-evangelization' instead of evangelization, which is the main thrust of bible translation. This study therefore sets out to find out how the New Testament Book of Mark has been translated from English into Mokpe. Has the Book been translated or re-written, and if so, how? The study has as objective, to: (1) explain the relevance of rewriting in the translation of biblical discourse from English into an African indigenous language like Mokpe, and (2) to provide the strategies that have been employed to translate the bible from English into Mokpe through the strategy of rewriting. The study employed a corpus-based and analytical research design. 10 (ten) phraseological excerpts were selected from both the source and target texts and analyzed following Fairclough's three dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Findings reveal that the following micro-strategies were used to recalibrate or rewrite biblical discourse from English into Mokpe, with varying frequencies of occurrence: transposition (30%), modulation (50%), calque (10%), and substitution (10%).

### KEYWORDS

Translation, Bible Translation, Biblical Discourse, Rewriting



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## Introduction

It is an incontestable fact that bible translation has and continues to receive unquestionable attention in the history and mission of the Christian church in Africa and beyond. Thus, one would not be wrong to compare the proliferation of biblical discourse in different languages to the collapse of the Tower of Babel, which gave rise to a multiplicity of languages in the whole wide world. Mojola (1999:203) notes that the translation of the bible into many African indigenous languages is “fundamental to the life and growth of the church, to the task of theology and the need to contextualize Christian message, thus making it relevant to the needs of receptor cultures and communities.” This has incontestably placed translators at the forefront of Christian evangelism, as increasingly, they are tending to become the first theologians in any language or Christian community. Translating the bible from English into an indigenous language is neither a mundane activity nor a mean feat. In fact, translators are invested with the arduous task of grappling with the complex problem of the need to express the often inaccessible, ancient and eternal message of the bible into their local languages. More so, bible translators are constantly bedeviled with the challenge of how to translate biblical concepts, ideas, rituals, etc. with efficacy, such that the native audience experience the same evangelical effect. Thus, translators are faced with the task of replicating the source language message faithfully, clearly, accurately, with native genius. Mojola (1999:203) notes that the role of the translator in disseminating Christian literature cannot be gainsaid since he is the one who “enters new territory, names it, demarcates it, and thereby delimits to a certain extent, the nature of biblical discourse in the local language. Walls (1996:26) equally notes the importance of translating the bible in our local languages by observing that ‘translation and incarnation are inextricably intertwined.’ He supports his thesis in the following words:

*Christian faith rests on a divine faith of translation: “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Any confidence we have in the translatability of the Bible rests on that prior act of translation. There is a history of the translation of the Bible because there was the translation of the Word into flesh.*

The main purpose of translation is to ensure both relevance and intelligibility as we navigate from the source language to the target language text. This dual obligation becomes even more pressing when translating biblical discourse into our local languages, with the sole purpose of converting more souls into Christianity. It is worth noting that an out-of-place rendering of biblical concepts, lexis, phrases, etc. may lead to ‘de-evangelisation’ rather than evangelization which is the leitmotiv of bible translation. That is why bible translators are deemed to be at the cutting-edge of upholding the great commission of spreading the gospel. This study therefore seeks to find out how the New Testament book of Mark has been translated into Mokpe through the strategy of rewriting. This study therefore has the following research questions:

## Research Questions

1. How relevant is rewriting in the translation of biblical discourse from English into an African indigenous language like Mokpe?
2. How has rewriting been used to translate biblical discourse from English into Mokpe.

## Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to find out how biblical discourse has been translated into an African indigenous language through rewriting. It has the following specific objectives:

1. To explain the relevance of rewriting in the translation of biblical discourse from English into an African indigenous language like Mokpe.
2. To determine the microprocedures that have been employed to translate the Holy Bible from English into Mokpe through the macrostrategy of rewriting.

### Literature Review

In order to provide answers to the above research questions and hence, meet the above objectives of the study, it will be necessary to first of all probe the core concepts of translation, bible translation and rewriting.

#### What is Translation?

Like other disciplines, translation has, as a field of study, attracted definitions from many researchers and scholars. It is not the purpose of this study to provide a comprehensive array of definitions posited by different scholars. What is worthy of note is the fact that contemporary translation studies can be attributed to three paradigms in the definition of the discipline: the linguistic paradigm, the cultural paradigm as well as the social and psychological paradigm. They are presented in the ensuing discussions.

The linguistic paradigm demonstrates the role of translation from the standpoint of language. Here, translation is regarded as the exchange of message between languages. One of the exponents of the linguistic paradigm is Catford. He defines translation as *the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by textual material in another language (TL)* (1965:20). According to Catford, the theory of translation is concerned with a relationship between languages, hence it is unreasonable to study translation without considering its relationship with linguistics. He believes that translation should be guided by linguistics. These ideas are well expressed in his book where he notes that any theory of translation must draw upon a theory of language, a general linguistics theory (1965:1). It should be observed that Catford views translation from a purely linguistic point of view, suggesting that it is performed exclusively through languages.

Another pro-linguistic scholar, Newmark (1988, 2001:5) defines translation in the following words: *A craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language* (1988:1). He also insists on taking into consideration the source language author's intention during the process of translation in the following words: *Often, though not by any means always, it is rendering a text into another language in a way that the author intended the text* (1988, 2001:5).

Other theorists who followed the trail of the linguistic scholars are Nida & Taber (1969:12). They viewed translation in the following words: *Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language, the closest natural equivalent of the source language (SL), first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style.*

Catford, Newmark, as well as Nida & Taber can be credited for being the precursors of the linguistic theory of translation, as their suggestions and insights triggered a wave of propositions by other theoreticians along the same linguistic lines. However, their definitions were purely linguistic and failed to take into consideration other aspects that influenced language as a whole and translation in particular. Thus, trailing the blaze of the linguistic theory put forward by Catford and Newmark, Larson (1984:1) defines translation in the following words:

*Translation consists of studying the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation and cultural context of the source language text, analyzing it in order to determine its meaning, then reconstructing the same meaning using the lexicon and grammatical structure which are appropriate in the receptor language and its cultural context.*

Larson's definition contains elements from Catford's and Newmark's definitions. However, the latter definition is more specific, highlighting aspects that must be taken into consideration by the translator: lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation and cultural context, to recreate and reconstruct meaning.

Coming on the hills of the linguistic paradigm of translation is the cultural paradigm. One of the leading theoreticians of this school of thought is the Belgian scholar, Lefevere. In his works, Lefevere views translating as a process of rewriting: *Translation is of course, rewriting of the original text* (1992, 2004a:12). Thus, according to Lefevere, as a social phenomenon, translation is inevitably influenced by ideology and the poetics of society. The translator is therefore urged to rewrite the text according to the requirements of society.

Lefevere also concurs with Haetius who defines translation in the following words:

*A translation...is a text in a well written language which refers to and represents a text in a language which is not as well known. This to mind, is the most productive definition of a translation made within the tradition and represented here, simply because it raises many, if not all of the relevant questions at once (Lefevere, 2004:4).*

It is obvious from the above definition that though Lefevere also views translation from the point of view of language transfer, he does not fail to point out the important influence of cultural aspects on translation. This is especially the case when he refers to 'tradition.'

Still along the lines of the cultural paradigm, Reiss (in Venuti 2000:160) defines translation in the following words:

*Interlingual translation (translating from one language to another) is a bilingual mediated process of communication, which usually aims at the production of a TL text that is functionally equivalent to a SL text. Translation is a process of communication: the objective of translating is to impart the knowledge of the original to the foreign reader.*

It should be observed that Reiss has not explicitly used the term 'culture' in his definition, but has referred to 'culture' implicitly by making reference to the 'foreign reader.'

For his part, Duff (1989:5) considers language and culture as two interwoven concepts. He defines translation as follows:

*As a process of communication, translation functions as the medium across linguistic and cultural barriers in conveying the messages written in the foreign language. It functions as the bridge to carry the message (meaning) from the source language to the receptor language.*

Duff therefore views translation from a functional perspective, as performing both linguistic and cultural functions by facilitating communication between linguistic and cultural entities.

Another researcher, Bassnett, is noted for her contribution in cultural translation. In her opinion, translation should not only be viewed as a purely lingual activity but also as a kind of communication intra-culture and inter-culture. In other words, translation is not a mere linguistic transfer but a cross-cultural activity. She therefore proposes that cultural aspects should be taken into consideration for the study of translation, especially for source and target language equivalence (1998, 2000:3).

From the forgoing discussion, it is obvious that the linguistic and cultural paradigms complement each other in enhancing the debate on translation theory. Both paradigms are of utmost importance in establishing the interface between language, culture and translation. However, translation is a complex activity that is not only limited to linguistic and cultural transfer. Contemporary translation studies also deals with the translation of different text types or discourse genres. This is especially the case with the translation of the bible into our African indigenous languages. This logically leads to the third paradigm in the definition of translation.

Exponents of the social and psychological paradigm reveal new insights and ideas on research in translation. This explains the place of bible translation in present-day research on the discipline. Thus, the social psychology theorist, Apter (2006:5-6), views translation as follows:

*...Translation is connected not only with our culture, society, economy, and politics, but also with our psychological conditions. It is an indispensable part of our life. On the one hand, it reforms the organizations, reconstructs our culture...It is a means of repositioning the subject in the world and in the history, a way of denaturalizing citizens and a significant medium for subject reformation and political change.*

Apter's view on translation seems to suggest that far from being a mundane activity, translation cuts across almost all aspects of social life ranging from culture, society, economics, politics, psychology and even religion. It is equally decipherable from Apter's view that translation can bring about meaningful change in society as it can be a medium of 'reformation and change.' The importance of bible translation in reforming and bringing change in different communities and societies can therefore not be over-emphasized. The concept is therefore worthy of attention.

### **Bible Translation**

Bible translation simply implies the translation of the bible into various languages. It is worth noting that most of the existing translations of the bible in our local languages were not based on the original language source texts, that is, Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic original source texts but on other translations of the major languages of colonial powers. It will therefore not be misleading to talk of translation of translations. That is why this study sets out to look at whether the bible has been translated or merely been rewritten from English into Mokpe, and if so how? In order to enhance understanding of this field in the area of translation, this study provides literature on the different perspectives on bible translation and the role of the bible translator.

## Different Perspectives of Bible Translation

A lot has been said about Bible translation, with different viewpoints and perspectives emanating in the process. Some of these perspectives are presented in the ensuing discussion.

Larson (1991:1335) proposes four stages in the translation of the Bible. These stages, according to him, mark the movement from the missionary translator to the normal model of a translator translating into his own language. The stages are presented as follows:

- The missionary translator: At this stage, it is incumbent for the missionary translator to learn the target or receptor language as well as its underlying culture, inevitably requiring informants/assistants/helpers indigenous to that culture. Most of the first Bible translations in Africa are said to have been done during this period.
- The missionary translator with native assistants: At this stage, the missionary translator acts as the principal translator. However, realizing his limitations as well as inadequate grasp and command of the receptor or target language, he chooses to work with dependent or auxiliary translators. Whereas the missionary translators were in most cases illiterate, the dependent or auxiliary translators were usually literate and could be permitted to prepare the first draft translation in some cases. Decisions on the final form of the target/receptor text were invariably made by the missionary translator.
- Dependent translators working in their own languages with assistance from missionary advisors/exegetes marks the next stage. Here, the text is wholly translated and drafted by translators who are indigenous to the receptor/target culture and language, albeit with limited training and education. There is therefore, the dependence on missionary advisors/consultants/exegetes to ensure quality control of the translation. Decisions on the final form of the target/receptor text are often influenced by the input of the advisor/exegete.
- Independent translators working in their own languages is the fourth and final stage of Bible translation, according to Larson. At this stage, most of the decisions on the final form of the text are made by the translators themselves, who are mostly well trained in their required areas of specialization. They do not accept the words of the missionary, missionary advisor/exegete or consultant as gospel truth, and are knowledgeable enough to take responsibility for the quality of the final text. Independent translators are willing to receive technical help and advice from experts, as well as input from various groups of reviewers, etc. However, the final responsibility for the text resides with them.

For his part, Barrick (2005) views the Bible as a literary work of art and urges translators to try as much as possible to recapture the literary essence of the Bible in their translations. According to him, it is these qualities that affect the reader. Thus, he notes that “the goal of a Bible translator is to reproduce the literary effects as clearly as possible within the limitations of a different language” (2005:10). He notes that for a translation of the Bible to be effective, it must have the following qualities:

- Clarity: Literary excellence in Bible translation involves vocabulary and syntax that are clear and convey correct connotations. Barrick observes that clarity is not something that happens just because a translation is made available in the reader’s receptor language. Daniell (1994:251) refers to clarity as “a plain style,” particularly a Christian plain style, that “feels very easy: that is part of its craft...” Therefore, all Bible translators should endeavour to attain clarity in the target language text by making their rendering plain and easy to understand.

- **Vividness of Expression:** In order to attain literary excellence in Bible translation, a translation needs to demonstrate retention of concrete and visual vocabulary. This criterion is related to the primacy of imagery in poetry (ibid, 247-248). The repetition of key words in the Bible is another element involved with vividness of description that translators need to focus on. This is because most often, due to constraints in the receptor language as well as context that demands a different meaning, translations sometimes obscure a key word, leaving the target language readers bereft of the original purpose and intent of a biblical passage (text).
- **Literary Ambiguity:** Christian literature is replete with the potential for multiple meaning, openness of application and preservation of the element of mystery. Borrich (2005:5) maintains that “bible translation should retain this aura of ambiguity that engages the mind and keeps its attention, rather than limiting the force of the imagery to only one aspect of the allusion.” Thus, a clear and plain style does not necessarily imply the elimination of the mysterious or ambiguous. Some scholars have, however noted that retention of excessive ambiguity can be counter-productive. Wilkins, a 17<sup>th</sup> century vicar and scholar observes that “*obscurity in the discourse is an argument for ignorance of the mind...The more clearly we understand anything ourselves, the more easily can we expound it to others*” (1646:254). The Bible translator should, therefore, be able to maintain a balance between ambiguity and perspicuity.

The thoughts of other scholars have been expressed not in terms of the different stages of Bible translation nor the qualities that a good translation must possess. They have rather looked at Bible translation from a more holistic perspective. It is worth looking at some of them.

Voorhies (1999:590) looks at Bible translation from a cultural perspective and terms it “...*principles of holistic Christian transformational development.*” He states that people and their culture have intrinsic value. Bible translation too respects this because it respects and focuses on people’s heart language and their identity within their own culture. Pitman (2002:113) concurs with Voorhies about the need for a people’s intrinsic cultural value to be considered when he observes that “*Bible translation as mission focuses on finding terms and concepts in the recipient culture and language. This makes Jesus and His followers into Africans for African hearers, makes them Chinese for a Chinese audience...*”

Closely related to language and culture in Bible translation is the concept of translatability. Thus, Shaw (cited in Kirk 2022:1) succinctly puts it in the following words:

*The concept of translatability of God’s word is at the heart of Bible translation. This ensures that God’s word is available to all people groups in the language of their heart. This commitment to people ensures that God’s message to people is couched in their own language and culture... (2022:1)*

Thus, while giving premium to translatability, considering a people’s language and culture in Bible translation is equally of utmost importance. That is why this study seeks to find out how biblical discourse has been recalibrated from English into Mokpe through the macro translation strategy of rewriting, using the New Testament Book of Mark as case study. The concept of rewriting is therefore, the focus of the ensuing discussion.

## What is Rewriting?

Just like any other translation, bible translation has not been made in a vacuum and therefore cannot be said to be an isolated activity. Scholars of the manipulation school even affirm that translation has often served a special purpose or many purposes at the same time, and each time it has been shaped by a certain force, power and so on. The bible has been translated to serve the evangelical purpose of spreading the word of God to a wider audience. The question is, how has the bible been recalibrated into Mokpe so that the Bakweri community gets the Word? Shuping (2013:15) concurs that since (bible) translation is done for a particular purpose, “translation takes the form of rewriting since it is done under certain constraints and for certain purposes. Therefore in order to fit that purpose, rewriting is bound to happen during the process of translation.”

The concept of rewriting saw the light of day in Lefevere’s (1992, 2004:12) collection of essays. The latter introduced the concept of “refracted text” in 1981. By this, he was referring to texts that have been processed for a particular audience (children, for example) or adapted to a certain poetics or a certain ideology (cited in Gentler (2004:137). In the case of this study, the bible was written for the ‘Christian audience.’ Simply translating biblical discourse may not meet the evangelical target of processing the message for a particular (Christian) audience. In 1982, Lefevere used the term (refraction) to mean the ‘adaptation of a work of literature to a different audience, with the intention of influencing the way in which that audience reads the work.’

This latter conceptualization of the term ‘refraction’ has a bearing on bible translation, given the fact that biblical message (unlike literature for instance) does not come across clearly and should therefore be read in a particular way. In 1985, the term ‘refraction’ was replaced by ‘rewriting,’ for which Lefevere referred to any text produced on the basis of another with the intention of adapting that other text to a certain ideology or to a certain poetics, and usually to both (Hermans, 2004:127). This assertion lends credence to the use of rewriting in bible translation, since various versions of the bible have been produced (translated) on the basis of earlier versions, with the intention of adapting them to the Christian ideology or should we say, “the poetics of Christianity.” Bible translation therefore, is not a pure, simple and transparent linguistic matter but involves aspects such as power, ideology and poetics, which are ingredients of rewriting. No doubt Lefevere (2004:9) considers translation (and by extension bible translation) as “*the most obviously recognizable type of rewriting ...*” It is therefore the intension of this study to find out how rewriting has been used as a strategy to pass across biblical discourse from English into Mokpe. This logically leads to the next aspect of the work, the theoretical framework.

## Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by the polysystem theory. This theory was developed by Even-Zohar, an Israeli culture researcher in the 1970s. Thus, according to Even-Zohar, translated literature is a system operating in the larger social, literary and historical systems of the target culture. The relevance of Zohar’s thesis to bible translation cannot be questioned, given that different versions of the bible have been translated over time (history), to cater for persons from different social and literary backgrounds.

Coming on the heels of Zohar, were other theoreticians who also viewed polysystem along the lines postulated by the latter. Prominent among them are Cowie and Shuttleworth (1997:176) who defined the concept in the following words:



*The polysystem is conceived of as a heterogeneous hierarchized conglomerate (or system) of systems which interact to bring about an on-going, dynamic process of evolution within the polysystem as a whole.*

The fact that the bible exists in several (that is, heterogeneous) versions to cater for different persons of the Christian community (that is, hierarchized conglomerate) equally lends credence to the relevance of the polysystem theory not only to this study but to bible translation as a whole. Thus, Even-Zohar's polysystem theory can be credited for moving away from the isolated study of individual texts to the study of translation within the cultural and literary systems in which it functions.

The relevance of the polysystem theory to this study can therefore not be over-emphasized, especially when one considers the fact that the Bible, which is a collection of sacred writings of the Christian faiths, possesses the characteristics of theology, history and literature. Moreover, the continuous translation of the Bible is definitely the process of the interpretation of different target languages and cultures which not only make impact upon the different nations' cultures but also helps to forge their language systems. It is therefore the purpose of this study to show that the Bible has been re-written from English into Mokpe, drawing from Lefevere's strategy of rewriting.

### **Methodology**

This study seeks to find out how the Holy Bible, particularly the New Testament Book of Mark has been translated from English into Mokpe. It should be observed that it is not the entire book, but relevant sections of the English as well as Mokpe versions that is the focus of scientific enquiry. The study is therefore corpus-based and essentially qualitative albeit having some elements of quantitative research. Thus, data was collected through a content analysis that involved an in-depth and targeted reading of both the source language text (SLT) and the target language text (TLT). A total of 10 selected phraseological items in the source text and their target language translation form the basis of linguistic and scientific investigation.

Given its corpus-based nature, the study made use of analytical research procedures, with collected data (excerpts) analyzed through the Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Model. The CDA model warrants revisiting in view of its relevance to the present study.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Model**

According to proponents of the CDA model, language is viewed as social action and language use as mainly concerned with practices rather than mere grammatical structures. Thus, as a sociocultural theory of language, CDA proposes a symbiotic relationship between the social context, the functional organization of language and the discursive production of the relation of power. This is in consonance with the translation strategy of rewriting for which the dominant characteristics of ideology, poetics and patronage seem to suggest the manipulation of language to achieve specific purposes. Thus, discourses are seen as the result of the enacting, performing or operationalizing of social or institutional practices. Hence, one can rightly affirm that the various translated versions of the bible have been provided to meet certain social and institutional practices. To demonstrate the interface between translation, the polysystem theory and critical discourse analysis, Cowie and Shuttleworth (1997:176) talk about "a heterogeneous hierarchized conglomerate of systems..." This interface had earlier been broached by French critical linguists Jacques Derrida and Michael Foucault (as indicated by Allan, in Nakutunda-Togbao, 2008:66) in the following words:

*Language and discourse are not transparent or neutral means for describing or analyzing the social and biological world. Rather, they effectively construct, regulate and control knowledge, social relations and institutions...*

The views expressed above by the two critical linguists clearly explain the leitmotiv of Bible translation and hence, justify the use of the CDA model as a methodology for this study: to construct, regulate and control knowledge, social relations and institution.

Another Scholar, Johnstone (2002:8) views discourse from a social constructivist view, describing it as “the social construction of reality.” This view sees texts as communicative units embedded in social practices. Johnstone’s (2002:9) views on discourse can best be summarized in the following words:

*...Discourse then is both shaped by the world as well as shaping the world. Discourse is shaped by language as well as shaping language. It is shaped by the people who use the language as well as shaping the language that people use. Discourse is also shaped by the medium in which it occurs as well as it shapes the possibilities for that medium...Discourse also shapes the range of possible purposes of texts*

This study is more concerned with the text-oriented approach to discourse analysis which in the words of Johnstone, views texts as “communicative units embedded in social and cultural practices.” The study therefore employs the following three-dimensional approach of CDA put forward by Fairclough: i) a spoken or written language text (in this case, selected excerpts of the Bible in the SLT – English and TLT – Mokpe), ii) discourse practices involving the production and interpretation of the text, and iii) larger social context contributing to the creation of meaning. This logically leads to the presentation and analysis of the excerpts.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

Before the data presentation and analysis, it is worth reiterating that the language under investigation is Mokwe, spoken by the Bakweris who hail from the Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. The focus is mainly the source language text (English) and the translated version (Mokpe) of the New Testament Book of Mark. The Bible was translated from English into Mokpe by the Bakweri Language and Literary Association (BALALIA), whose headquarters is in Buea, in collaboration with Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL). The translated version of the Books of Mark and Luke came out in 2017. The translation of the entire Bible into Mokpe is still on-going.

Ten (10) excerpts from the New Testament Book of Mark were selected and then analyzed following Fairclough’s three dimensional approach to linguistic analysis and then their translation into Mokpe justified. Most of the excerpts were selected from Mark Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4. The excerpts were selected after an in-depth reading of both the English (ST) and the Mokpe (TT) versions of the Bible. The reading revealed a marked change of grammatical category as one reads through the SLT and TLT. The researcher therefore, proceeded with a random selection of the excerpts to find out whether these shifts occur in most of the instances or not, as can be illustrated in the following excerpts:

## EXCERPT 1

### A. A spoken or written language text

- 1.1 ST: The Preaching of *John the Baptist*
- 1.2 Portion of the Bible: Mark 1: 1 (Title)
- 1.3 Element of Interest: John the Baptist

### B. Discourse practices involving the production of the text

- 1.4 Context of Production: Text introduces John the Baptist's message of the Good News to the Christian community.
- 1.5 TT (Mokpe): Hwèohwelì hwe ama *Yòanirz'è e Mòlühwirzeli*
- 1.6 Meaning: The preaching of *John, the one who baptizes*
- 1.7 Rewriting strategy: Transposition

### C. Larger social context contributing to the creation of meaning

- 1.8 Rewriting has occurred as there is a change of part of speech or grammatical category from an adjective (John the Baptist) to a noun (John, the one who baptizes). This transposition may be due to the absence of the lexical item 'baptist' in Mokpe. The rendering is quite understandable and does not in any way diffuse the intent of the ST message.

## EXCERPT 2

### A. A written or spoken language text

- 2.1 ST: So John appeared in the desert *baptizing and preaching*
- 2.2 Portion of the Bible: Mark 1:4
- 2.3 Element of interest: baptizing and preaching

### B. Discourse practices involving the production of the text

- 2.4 Context of Production: The text provides the mission of the coming of John the Baptist
- 2.5 TT (Mokpe): *Yòwanirz'èà mà ja o mòrzamjèlì lühwirz'è hwatò, nàlì hwa ohwèya eya ya lohwa*
- 2.6 Meaning: John appeared in the desert *to baptize people and to tell them the word of God*
- 2.7 Rewriting strategy: Transposition

### C. Larger social context contributing to the creation of meaning

- 3.8 There is a change of perspective as we navigate between the SLT and the TLT. The focus of the former is on the action of John the Baptist (baptizing and preaching) while the target language text focuses on the purpose of John the Baptist's coming: to baptize people and to tell them about the Word of God. Also, the target language text is more explicit as it uses lexical and phraseological items (like 'people' and 'the word of God') that are not found in the source text.

## EXCERPT 3

### A. A written or spoken language text

- 3.1 ST: ...When four men arrived carrying *a paralyzed man*
- 3.2 Portion from the Bible: Mark 2:3
- Element of interest: a paralyzed man

### B. Discourse practices involving the production of the text

- 3.4 Context of Production: The text introduces one of the miracles of Jesus (healing the lame)

3.5 TT (Mokpe): ene hvonda ndi hwatò hwanì hwa mà jaane *mòtò məkə ema a ma əkirze e nyambeyà njembu*

3.6 Meaning: It's then that four people came with a man suffering from the disease of paralysis

3.7 Rewriting strategy: Modulation and even explicitation

### **C. Larger social context contributing to the creation of meaning**

3.8 There is a change of focus. Thus, while the ST focuses on the disease, the TT focuses on the man, the sufferer of the disease. There is lexical economy in the ST whereas the TT is more explicit and brings out the fact that the man was actually suffering from this dreaded skin disease. The intention is probably to make the TL reader to fully appreciate Jesus's miraculous act.

## **EXCERPT 4**

### **A. A written or spoken language text**

4.1 ST: ...My son, *your sins* are forgiven

4.2 Portion from the Bible: Mark 2:5(b)

4.3 Element of interest: The whole text

### **B. Discourse practices involving the production of the text**

4.4 Context of production: Jesus made this statement when He saw the faith of the paralyzed man

4.5 TT (Mokpe): *ηmanà wà amì, na ma o lakirze meòhwe me aηgə*

4.6 Meaning: My child, I have forgiven your wrong doings

4.7 Rewriting strategy: Modulation (including substitution)

### **C. Larger social context contributing to the creation of meaning**

4.8 There is a change of focus from 'sin' to the act of 'forgiveness' as we navigate from the SLT to the TLT. Thus, it is the singular act forgiveness by Jesus that brings about the man's (sinner's) total liberation from his dreaded skin disease. The implication from the Mokpe translation is that it is sin that brings about damnation (diseases) and the forgiveness of sin that brings about liberation. Also note the substitution of the ST expression 'your sins' to 'meohwe me aηgə' (your wrong doings) in the TLT. This is in a bid to enhance the reader's understanding, as the concept "sin" does not exist in the target language.

## **EXCERPT 5**

### **A. A written or spoken language text**

5.1 ST: A discussion about *fasting*

5.2 Portion from the Bible: Mark 2:18 (Topic)

5.3 Element of Interest: Fasting

### **B. Discourse practices involving the production of the text**

5.4 Context of Production: Jesus dispels the Pharisee's utopian idea about fasting through His teachings.

5.5 TT (Mokpe): *Mijowelì li hvomènəmòkiyà njàò*

5.6 Meaning: Questions pertaining to the *feeling of hunger*

5.7 Rewriting strategy: Substitution/Explicitation

### **C. Larger social context contributing to the creation of meaning**

5.8 The SL lexical item ‘fasting’ has been substituted in the SLT with the expression ‘mokiya njao,’ which means the ‘feeling of hunger.’ There is need for this substitution because the expression ‘fasting’ probably does not exist in the Mokpe language. Also, the idea of staying deliberately hungry for a spiritual purpose is captured in the explicitation.

## EXCERPT 6

### A. A written and spoken language text

6.1 ST...And you will have authority to drive out demons

6.2 Portion from the Bible: Mark 3:15

6.3 Element of interest: The whole text

### B. Discourse practices involving the production of the text

6.4 Context of production: Jesus was telling His disciples about the power they will have by staying with Him

6.5 TT (Mokpe): À mà hwa gba ènginyà o li hvaya hwèlingè hwe hwòwe

6.6 Meaning: He gave them the power to drive out evil spirits

6.7 Rewriting strategy: Transposition (with the substitution of some lexical items)

### C. Larger social context contributing to the creation of meaning

6.8 There is a noticeable shift of perspective with respect to tenses as we move from the SLT to the TLT. Thus, while the former text is in the future tense (‘and you will have authority...’), the latter text is in the simple past tense (‘À mà hwa gba ènginyà’ translated as ‘he gave them the power...’). The shift in perspective does not in any way dilute the sense or the intended meaning. There is also substitution in the rendering of some lexical items. For instance, the ST ‘authority’ has been substituted to ‘power’ in the TT. This is also the same with ‘demons’ substituted with ‘evil spirits,’ without diluting the sense.

## EXCERPT 7

### A. A written and spoken language text

7.1 ST: The parable of *the sower*

7.2 Portion from the Bible: Mark 4:1 (Topic)

7.3 Element of interest: The sower

### B. Discourse practices involving the production of the text

7.4 Context of production: Jesus was preaching about the Word of God

7.5 TT (Mokpe): ηmàna mo é móoneli

7.6 Meaning: The story of the one who sows/plants

7.7 Rewriting strategy: Calque

### C. Larger social context contributing to the creation of meaning

7.8 The difference between the SL and TL rendering is very slight, probably because of the fact that it is a title and therefore, in most cases, does not warrant much alteration, thus, respecting the rule of invariant in translation. However, the message comes across succinctly to the TL readers.

## EXCERPT 8

### A. A spoken and written language text

8.1 ST: A lamp under a bowl

8.2 Portion from the Bible: Mark 4:21 (Topic)

8.3 Element of interest: The whole text

### **B. Discourse practices involving the production of the text**

8.4 Context of production: Jesus was teaching His disciples that the Word of God is like a lamp that cannot be hidden

8.5 TT (Mokpe): etúlùà rza utahwa

8.6 Meaning: The lamp (light) cannot be hidden

8.7 Rewriting strategy: Modulation

### **C. Larger social context contributing to the creation of meaning**

8.8 An analysis of the ST and TT shows a complete shift of perspective. Thus, while the ST is written in the affirmation, the TT is written in the negation. This in no way dilutes the intended meaning: the Word of God is like a light that cannot be hidden.

## **EXCERPT 9**

### **A.A written or spoken language text**

9.1 ST: It is like this. A man takes *a mustard seed, the smallest seed in the world* and plants it in the ground

9.2 Portion from the Bible: Mark 4:30(a)

9.3 Element of interest: a mustard seed, the smallest seed in the world

### **B. Discourse practices involving the production of the text**

9.4 Context of production: Jesus compares the Word of God to a mustard seed

9.5 TT (Mokpe): Li gbei ndi nàa ì hvə̀ngɔ ja wóngo gbée ema mótó a wó, rzi a hvàhva o mooda. Ini hvə̀ngɔ i tu rzai-rzai. O ji meneni te nà ihve-hve hvə̀ngɔ ja ene rze

9.6 Meaning: It is like that seed that a man takes and plants on fertile ground. The seed is very small, compared to other seeds in this world.

9.7 Rewriting strategy: Modulation (with explicitation)

### **C. Larger social context contributing to the creation of meaning**

9.8 There is a change of focus as one navigates between the ST and the TT. Thus, whereas the former text uses a superlative to describe the mustard seed, the latter text resorts to comparison, saying the seed is very small as compared to other seeds in this world. This comparison, which is not found in the SLT is very effective in bringing out the sense. Especially given the fact that superlatives do not exist in Mokpe. Also, the TLT has resorted to explicitation, describing the ‘mustard seed’ like ‘that seed that a man takes and spreads on fertile ground, probably because of the absence of the expression ‘mustard seed’ in Mokpe. Also due to the need to enhance understanding of the TL reader.

## **EXCERPT 10**

### **A. A written and spoken language text**

10.1 ST: Jesus is rejected in Nazareth

10.2 Portion from the Bible: Mark 6:1 (Topic)

10.3 Element of interest: The whole text

### **B. Discourse practices involving the production of the text**

10.4 Context of production: The passage of Jesus’s rejection in His home town

10.5 TT (Mokpe): hwatò hwa Narzalèti hwa ma ndinda Yerzù

10.6 Meaning: The people of Nazareth rejected Jesus

10.7 Rewriting strategy: Modulation (including calque)

**C. Larger social context contributing to the creation of meaning**

10.8 An analysis of the ST and TT reveals a shift of focus from the action of rejection (ST) to the people of Nazareth who rejected Jesus (TT). The meaning comes across very clearly to the target language readers, notwithstanding this change of perspective.

**Presentation of Findings**

Before the presentation of findings, it should be observed that the *Good News Bible* was used as the SLT given that it is the simplest and one of the most recent versions of the Bible. A thorough analysis of the ST and the target text reveals that the following micro-procedures were used to recalibrate the Bible from English into Mokpe:

- Transposition: Changing the grammatical category or replacing one part of speech for another, without changing the meaning of the message.
- Modulation: Changing the focus, perspective, point or view or category of thought in relation to the SL.
- Calque: Literal translation (either lexical or structural) of a foreign word or phrase. It is a ‘loan translation or a phrase borrowed from another language and translated literally, to describe a concept in the exact words of the source (2017:43)...’
- Substitution: The translation procedure by which ST lexical or phrasal items are replaced by other lexical items or phrases in the TL (Guerra 2012:11).

Findings reveal that the above have been used as micro-procedures within the macro-strategy of rewriting to translate the Holy Bible from English into Mokpe. From the 10 representative excerpts, these strategies have been used in varying degrees of occurrence as presented in the following table:

| S/N          | TRANSLATION STRATEGY | FREQUENCY OF OCCURENCE | PERCENTAGE |
|--------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------|
| 1.           | Transposition        | 3                      | 30         |
| 2.           | Modulation           | 5                      | 50         |
| 3.           | Calque               | 1                      | 10         |
| 4.           | Substitution         | 1                      | 10         |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |                      |                        | <b>100</b> |

The table above reveals that transposition and modulation have been mostly employed to recalibrate biblical discourse from English into Mokpe. Thus, in order to successfully replicate the source language message and hence, spread the word of God in traditional parlance, the translators did not indulge in one-on-one correspondences, as this would have diffused the SL message and obliterated the evangelical intent of the translation. Being Bakwerians themselves, they knew that a change of focus, perspective, category of thought, grammatical category, etc. will be effective in translating the message of evangelism for their people.

However, the percentage in the use of substitution may be misleading. This is because this strategy together with explicitation, were used concurrently with transposition and modulation in many instances, to render portions of the selected excerpts from English into Mokpe. The use of

explicitation concurrently with other microstrategies can be explained by the fact that most of the biblical concepts do not exist in Mokpe. There is therefore the need to explain them for the understanding of the target language readers.

## Conclusion

This study is based upon the premise that the translation of the Bible into many African indigenous languages is fundamental to the life and growth of the church, to the task of theology and the need to contextualize Christian message, thus making it relevant to the needs of receptor cultures and communities. It therefore sought to find out how the Word has been recalibrated from English into Mokpe through the translation strategy of rewriting. The study was guided by two research questions: 1) How relevant is rewriting in the translation of biblical discourse from English into an African indigenous language like Mokpe, and 2) How has rewriting been used to translate biblical discourse from English into Mokpe? The study used the polysystem theory as theoretical framework, conscious of the fact that different versions of the Bible have been translated over time (what Even-Zohar calls 'historical systems') to cater for persons from different social, literary and cultural backgrounds.

The study employed a corpus-based and analytical research design. Thus ten (10) excerpts were collected from the New Testament Book of Mark and analyzed following Fairclough's three dimensional model of linguistic analysis and their translation from Mokpe into English justified. It was discovered that the translators of the New Testament of Book of Mark from English into Mokpe principally employed the following rewriting techniques in varying degrees of preference, either knowingly or unknowingly: modulation, transposition, calque, and substitution.



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