

Translation as a veritable tool for economic development in Nigeria: Any possibility?

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Abstract

Virtually everybody knows what translation is. In the same vein, everyone seems to be conversant with the terms – economy and economic development. But what most people are not conversant with is how translation can be used to boost the economy of a country. This can be seen in the literatures on translation where little or nothing has been written as regards the interplay that exists between translation and economy. Sequel to this, this research tends to look at the possibility of translation serving as a tool for boosting the economy of Nigeria. In the course of the research, the findings reveal that as the unemployment rate in Nigeria is escalating day-by-day, translation can provide job opportunities for its practitioners. More so, translation is a tool which can be used in making the locally manufactured goods to Nigeria to reach other countries by translating the manuals and the inscriptions on the goods into the language of the consumer countries. Within Nigeria, economic policies can be translated into the country's indigenous languages for easy comprehension by the dwellers which will in turn spur their interest and participation in the economic development activities. The paper, however, concludes that government and individuals should not neglect translation studies and its practitioners, rather to support them in the roles they play in society generally.

Introduction

Language is a very important tool to man which he uses in expressing his thoughts, feelings ideas and emotions. Linguists have come to agree that language is only used by man and is different from other forms of animal communication. Bussmann (1996) sees language as a means of expressing and/or communicating one's thoughts, concepts, knowledge and pieces of information as well as fixing and transmission of experience and knowledge. He further contends that language also entails a form of expression that is human specific and differs from all other possible forms of communication like “animal communication and artificial languages through creativity, the ability to make conceptional abstractions, and the possibility of metalinguistic reflection” (1996:627). In the same vein, Anagbogu, Mbah and Eme (2010) remark that language

is a means which humans use for communicating their ideas, feelings, emotions and desires, through complex vocal or written symbols. Agbedo (2015:14) views it as “a system of rules and principles of human communication.”

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that the main function of language is communication. It is a means through which an individual or a group of people interact with others who share the same language with them. This implies that one does not understand the language spoken by others unless he learns such language. The multicultural nature of the world is one of the causes of multilingualism. In Nigeria, for instance, Bamgbose (1977) opines that the languages in Nigeria are above four hundred (400) while Akindele & Adegbite (1999) put it at two hundred and fifty. This multilingual feature poses as a problem to communication. In an attempt to solve this problem, many countries have adopted English as their official language or lingua franca so as to communicate with the rest of the world. Another measure which has been put in place to curb the problem of mutual unintelligibility among languages of the world is translation and interpreting. The major function of translation or interpreting is to transfer the meaning in a particular language into another. For instance, if a speaker from ‘Language A’ wants to communicate with a speaker of ‘Language B’, both speakers need someone who speaks or understands both ‘Language A’ and ‘Language B’ so as to serve as a mediator between them. Where the difference lies in the two practices (translation and interpreting) is in the medium of action. Whereas translation has to do with the text, interpreting is oral. In this paper, our major concern is on translation - interlingual translation in Roman Jakobson’s classification (Munday 2001).

Ezika (2012) avers that once translation is involved, there is always a movement from one position to another. This position simply occurs from one language (source language, SL) to another language (target language, TL). For Nida (2001) translation denotes the transferring of meaning of a text from one language to another. This position was supported by Venuti (2008) who observes that translation is a rewriting of what is written in an original text to another text. Similarly, according to Wechsler (1998:8), “translation gives us access to the literature of the world” and “allows us to enter the minds of people from other times and places.” He equally opines that translation is a celebration of otherness, a truly multicultural event without all the

balloons and noisemakers which enriches not only our personal knowledge and artistic sense, but also our culture's literature, language, and thought.

The multidimensional meaning of translation was captured by Munday (2008:5) thus:

The term translation itself has several meanings: it can refer to the general subject field, the product (the text that has been translated) or the process (the act of producing the translation, otherwise known as translating). The process of translation between two different written languages involves the translator changing an original written text (the source text or ST) in the original verbal language (the source language or SL) into a written text (the target text or TT) in a different verbal language (the target language or TL).

This position of Munday is similar to that of Paden (1989:13) who sees translation as a process where "...the original work [as] an ice cube. During the process of translation the cube is melted. While in its liquid state, every molecule changes place; none remains in its original relationship to the others. Then begins the process of forming the work in a second language. Molecules escape, new molecules are poured in to fill the spaces, but the lines of molding and mending are virtually invisible. The work exists in the second language as a new ice cube—different, but to all appearances the same." This is so because there is always a certain degree of loss of meaning in the process of translation. In other words, there is no perfect communication (Glodjović 2010).

From the above excerpt and definitions from authors cited above, what these authors offer us is the knowledge that for translation to occur, it must involve two or more languages. For it to be a 'field of study, a process or a product' individuals are involved. These individuals that ensure that the end product of translation is made concrete are known as translators. In her introduction to the French translation of Iliad published in 1699, Anne Dacier conceives a translator like "a sculptor who tries to recreate the work of a painter." In Wechsler (1998:24), Petrus Danielus Huetius was recorded to have opined that "A translator must . . . become like Proteus: he must be able to transform himself into all manner of wondrous things, he must be able to absorb and combine all styles within himself and be more changeable than a chameleon."

In as much as we have people who are good translators, there are some other persons who kill works in the process of translating. This latter category of people are who Landers (2001:88) refers to as 'hijacked authors.' He further expatiates that in the work of these so-called translators, 'some translations are worse than not being translated at all.'

However, the practice of translation has been discussed a lot in literatures. Some writers have discussed the politics of translation, translation and culture, and some of the problems which can be encountered during the process of translation. But one area which has received little or no attention is the relationship between translation and economy. Suffice it to note that the growth of any country is dependent mainly on its economy. Since 31st August 2016, Nigeria has been in recession till 5th September 2017 when the National Bureau of Statistics announced that the country has exited recession. In the Nigeria's economic context, the major source of revenue is oil. After the oil boom in the 1970s, Nigeria shifted from Agriculture as the major source of revenue to oil. Because of the poor saving culture of past leaders and with the present fall in the price of oil, Nigeria's economy has been dwindling.

As such, among the ways to ensure that other alternatives are sought to boost the economy of Nigeria, the Nigerian government has mapped out programmes to boost the sectors in Nigeria. On the other hand, one of such alternatives which might not have been thought of is improving Nigeria's economy through translation. Hence, this paper tends to look at the possibility of using translation as a tool for economic development in Nigeria.

Review of literature

Researches on translation have not really looked into the impacts of translation on the lives of societies as their economy. Most of the works done on translation are theoretical in the sense that they are mainly directed towards improving translation as a discipline or to foster its process i.e. the principles to abide by when translating. In addition, most of the theories on translation fall under the latter category. For instance, Nida's (1964) formal and dynamic equivalence theory is a guide for translators during the translation process. Fawcett (1997:2) observes that the principle of Nida's dynamic equivalence is a sociolinguistic aspect of translation in the sense that it describes the way translators can adapt texts to the needs of a

different audience. On his part, Munday (2001) contends that Nida considers adaptations of grammar, lexicon, and cultural references as important factors to consider so as to achieve naturalness.

Newmark's (1981) theory of 'semantic and communicative translation' also supports our claim. Newmark remarks that a translator must try as much as possible to create in the minds of the readers of the target text the same feeling they had when they were reading the source text. Even the 20th century seven-classical-model principle of translation as cited in Munday (2001) is more or less restricted to students of translation and translators in general. These principles include: borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation.

Furthermore, texts which have been written on translation have concentrated mainly on translation as a discipline and not as a phenomenon that can be applied to solve economic problems. For example, Landers (2001) focused on explaining the fundamentals of translation i.e. what translation is all about, as well as the techniques involved in translation where he gave the readers hints on how to translate any literary genres. Kuhiwczak & Littau (2007) (Ed.) in their text have chapters which tried to establish a link between translation and other phenomena or areas of study such as culture, philosophy, linguistics, literature, gender, theatre and opera, screen translation and politics. The major interest in the book was to arm the reader with the necessary knowledge needed when handling translation that cuts across these disciplines. Hence, it does not go beyond using the product of translation to achieve other societal purposes like using the knowledge of translation in economic development. This attitude of writers of translation texts focusing mainly on how to improve translation as an area of study and its process can be seen also in Newmark, 1991; Robinson, 2003; Hansen, Malmkjær, and Gile (2004) (Ed.); Baker & Saldanha (2009) (Ed.) amongst others.

In the domain of empirical researches, interest has always been on examining the principles and problems encountered during translation (cf. Medolu, 2010; Ezika, 2012; Ijioma & Ezeafulukwe, 2015; & Nwike, 2015). In an attempt to change this 'routine' in translation texts, this research wants to fill the gap in the existing literature by looking at the possibility in using translation in boosting the Nigerian economy.

The Nigerian economy: Situation report

The growth of any country largely depends on the state of its economy. In the Nigerian case, there are many sectors that make up its economy – agriculture, manufacturing, services, oil etc. Before the oil boom in the 1970s, Nigeria’s main source of revenue generation was agriculture. After the oil boom, interest was diverted to oil. Osalor (2017) opines that the Nigerian economy is overwhelmingly dependent on oil, while accounts for 81 percent of government revenue and more than 97 percent of export earnings. This overdependence has brought more harm than good. This is why Ajasa (2014) contends that crude oil has always been slippery stuff – good when under control; destructive when out of control. Crude oil is about to destroy the Nigerian economy faster than insurgency or natural disasters. Kalau (2017) enumerates the economic problems in Nigeria to include: lack of interaction between government and society, corruption, inconsistency in the macro economy, poor human development, lack of competitive markets, crime and terrorism, unemployment, rot in the educational system, environment and health issues, and inadequate infrastructure.

However, sequel to the above; the Nigerian economy is dwindling every day. On 31st August 2016, Nigeria’s economy went into recession because it has recorded two consecutive quarters of economic contraction. The reasons behind the fluctuating nature of the Nigerian economy are not far-fetched. Commenting on the situation, the former governor of Central Bank, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi opines, “The cause of Nigeria’s economic woes is as a result of policy inconsistencies on the part of governments who borrow money to settle wage bills rather than embarking on capital projects.”

On the other hand, Nageri, Umar & Abdul (2013) note that the major reason for the poor economic state of Nigeria is the prevalence of corruption in governance, public and private places which has its roots on self-servicing style of governance. Similarly, the findings of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) (2016) show that corruption in Nigeria could cost up to 37% of GDP by 2030 if it is not dealt with as soon as possible. These findings corroborate Achebe’s (1984) view that the trouble with Nigeria is that of a failed leadership. All these might have been the reason why David Cameron in 2016 referred to Nigeria as a ‘fantastically corrupt’ country.

A research from RTC Advisory Services Ltd (2016) shows that virtually all major economic sectors are in recession such as manufacturing, construction, trade, transport, hotels and restaurants, finance and insurance, real estate and government excluding agriculture and telecommunication. They further highlight the reasons for Nigeria's recessed economy which include; oil dependence, oil price collapse, low sovereign savings, wrong policy choices, and weak economic cabinet.

Amidst these crises rocking the economy of Nigeria, the government on their own part has devised means to curb this menace. Abdullahi (2017) remarks that in the midst of this disarticulated, discordant and self-serving fiscal and monetary policy mix, the government launched the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan. The plan, according to him, is "a well-articulated, logically consistent and coherent document that could go a long way to diversify the economy, if implemented." The plan sets out to improve foreign exchange inflows, restoration of economic growth, anti-corruption, public safety, job creation and youth empowerment.

On the issue of corruption, the Treasury Single Account (TSA) policy is another way of ensuring that looting of money is minimised to the barest minimum. In addition to that, the 'whistle blowing' policy was also introduced to aid in arresting embezzlers of public funds. It seems that these policies and other policies are yielding positive results in the sense that on 5th September 2017, the National Bureau of Statistics announced that Nigeria has exited recession. The fact that Nigeria has exited recession should not deter the efforts being made to restore the lost glory of the nation as the giant of Africa. Thus, the need to generate more means of improving the economy among which translation services must not be neglected.

In addition to these economic policies which the Nigeria government has mapped out to ameliorate the economic situation, this paper tends to examine the viability of translation in the economic growth of Nigeria.

Boosting the Nigerian economy through translation: Any possibility?

Our position in this paper is that translation has its contribution to the improvement of the Nigerian economy. First and foremost, translation is a field of study and there are people who practice it – translators. Regrettably, the claims of Serban (nd) that there are many companies

dedicated to the provision of translation services is not so in Nigeria. Translation can boost the Nigerian economy in the sense that it can provide work for Nigerian youths who are students of translation. Instead of complaining that there is no job, these students can practice the act of translation and by so doing get paid for their services. This engagement will go a long way in savaging the economy due to the fact that these graduates of translation studies – since they have something they are doing – may not engage in violent acts such as being used as thugs during electioneering period, assassination, kidnapping etc.

More so, if Nigeria will adopt the indigenous language policy of China which uses the language of people more in the areas of commerce, trade, and administration while English is mainly employed in education, the Nigerian economy will be boosted (Bolton & Graddol n.d.) The former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, remarks that if you speak in the language of the people, it goes to their heart; but if you speak in the language they understand, it goes to their head. Hence, economic policies should be taken to the grassroots. Imparting these policies and their usefulness in the country's official language – English is not enough. These policies should be translated in the peoples' indigenous languages for better understanding of the policies and the role they will play in its actualisation. This is supported by the assertion of Chapman, Slaymaker & Young (2002) that “the impact of increased information flow on human capital development will depend equally on the effective translation of material into different languages and appropriate formats for the intended users and their local cultural context.”

When this is done, it might go a long way in promoting participation. This is needed because according to Fafunwa, Macaulay & Sokoya (1989), when a child is taught with his mother tongue, he performs better than when taught with his second language as a medium of instruction. In affirmation, Fasokun (2000:4) notes that “... the colonial pattern of education had robbed the African child of inventiveness, originality and creativity, since he was forced to think in English instead of in Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo or any other Nigerian language.” Therefore, when the people are informed in their language, they will be motivated to contribute their quota in boosting the economy.

On the other hand, if the Nigerian government should tackle its security issues and makes the country a favourable ground for investors, translation is needed for such economic uplift because it will help in bridging the communication gap that exist with the two countries. By so

doing, the countries will understand themselves much better so as to engage in such a bilateral economic relationship.

Furthermore, one of the problems facing translation studies and its practitioners is the neglect of the discipline. In the view of this, Wechsler (1998:18-19) opines thus:

In fact, there's nothing translators complain about more than the money they don't make from their work... So not only does becoming a translator usually start as a labor of love, it remains that. Translators bitch and bitch about not being appreciated, or understood, or respected, or any of the things adolescents complain about every day...

The state of translation in Nigeria is worse unlike in Frankfurt, Germany where there are translation agencies which provide linguistic and translation services in more than 100 languages. If such translation agencies are established and supported in Nigeria, the tax they will pay will go a long way in contributing to the economic development in Nigeria.

Finally, in the industrial and/or manufacturing sector of the economy, translation is needed when preparing manual of goods and equipment manufactured in Nigeria. Translators can translate such in many languages so that they will get to many peoples. When the number of countries consuming these locally produced and exported services are many, it will maximise the revenue of Nigeria; thus boosting its economy.

Conclusion

This paper has looked into two concepts: translation and economy with the view of discovering the possibility of the Nigerian economy being boosted through translation. This paper is of the view that most translation researches have always centered on discussing translation as a field of study and as a process where it is used to bridge the gap in communication. Little or no work has been done on the application of translation in solving economic problems or fostering a good economy.

Our claim is that translation has its contribution to the boosting of the Nigerian economy in the sense that people can be employed through it. It can also go a long way in increasing the

number of buyers of the locally manufactured goods or services in Nigeria to other countries of the world. This is feasible by translating the manuals of such equipment, inscriptions on the body of the goods into major languages of the world.

Within Nigeria, we contend that if the different policies mapped out by the Nigerian government can be translated into our indigenous languages, it will foster the participation of the people in the rural area in economic development activities or campaigns. Therefore, this research concludes that government and individuals should not neglect translation studies and its practitioners, rather support them for the curbing of Nigeria's economic woes.

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