

# TRANSLATION AS AN INSTRUMENT IN THE DEVELOPING OF A NATION

By

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## **Introduction:**

Everyday, the world witnesses an evolution of its socio-cultural, economic and political values. The world is going through a period of unprecedented recession and the nations that are worst hit are the developing nations. This state of affairs makes all the vital sectors of the economy of these countries, especially those facing problems of bad governance, cease to function. Once the economy is not functioning all other sectors are affected. Many countries are more concerned with survival than development. The development of a nation is about information dissemination and the importance of translating of technical and scientific terms in order to disseminate accurate information. That is how useful information is disseminated to Third World countries in order to accelerate development. The world goes through constant mutations as it quickly becomes a global village where everyone's contribution is important. It now becomes necessary to find a means which promotes communication between nations, **translation** is that means of communication. Translation is an instrument of development which enables the exchange of information. We use Nigeria as a case study, being a country with over 250 ethnic groups and is surrounded completely by francophone countries. We will analyse three languages, Hausa, French and English taking examples from late Ibrahim Dasuki Danbaba's translation of Abubakar Imam's *Magana Jari Ce*.

## **1.0 What is development?**

By **development**, we mean the degree of advancement of a country, it is used in many domains with specific meaning: the human sciences (psychology and sociology) and economic development. It is about growth, progress, improvement, within a period of time. Economic development is the action of evolving in a positive manner. For a people, it can otherwise be called the improvement of the condition of living. That is why economic development is called 'progress', it is described in Wikipedia as:

concerted actions of [policy makers](#) and [communities](#) that promote the [standard of living](#) and [economic health](#) of a specific area. Economic development can also be referred to as the quantitative and qualitative changes in the economy. Such actions

can involve multiple areas including development of [human capital](#), [critical infrastructure](#), regional [competitiveness](#), [environmental sustainability](#), [social inclusion](#), [health](#), [safety](#), [literacy](#), and other initiatives. Economic development differs from [economic growth](#). Whereas economic development is a [policy intervention](#) endeavor with aims of economic and social well-being of people, economic growth is a phenomenon of [market productivity](#) and rise in [GDP](#).

Development can be said to be a succession of stages of growth which differs either by its organizational form (urban or national) of production or by the nature of the predominant sector (primary, secondary or tertiary) or by the type of growth of investments and the accumulation of capital.

## **1.1 What is translation?**

Translation which for a long time has been considered a secondary activity is considered today as a new discipline which is in the process of putting its own mark among the old disciplines. It is both interdisciplinary as well as pluridisciplinary; as a result there isn't a single definition which will suffice to explain it. The word has various definitions depending on the text and the context; music, art, painting even architecture can be translated, but these are translations which are not language based.

According to Larson cited by Danbaba:

Translation, then, 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, and then reconstructing this same meaning in the lexicon and grammatical structure which are appropriate in the receptor language and its cultural context (586).

This means translation has to do with the study of language, culture, communication, meaning, pragmatics, psychology, psycholinguistics, sociology, socio-linguistics and a certain level of bilingualism amongst others. Any comprehensive definition of translation should include all these.

### **1.1.1 Linguistic definition of translation:**

Why is the linguistic theory, considered very important in translation? A lot of linguistic factors play a major role in this domain. First of all, there is the issue of the working languages which are essential to the translator, they serve as codes which permits him to analyse the text and enable him to make the synthesis. At each level of translation, the working languages give the translator a firm control of his task. The study of translation cannot avoid the link between language and cultural heritage of man. As a result, whatever the perspective in the analysis of translation, the linguistic factor always appears as an unavoidable vector and force. This is the reason why the tendency is to always talk of Source Language and Target Language. Even when one talks about source culture and target culture,

linguistics is implied. This is also why it is demanded that a translation should be read as if it wasn't a translation.

### **Translation and Development:**

All disciplines and professions, whatever their nature and areas of emphasis can only be viable if they participate in and contribute to socio-cultural, economic and political development. Translation, practiced for various reasons, serves as an engine of development. An auxiliary of information, communication and culture, translation serves as an immediate solution to these domains by making them more accessible and more efficient. As a result, translation, within these domains, becomes an agent of development without barriers. Translation is a necessity which no society can do without. Communities cannot survive in isolation and some do not share the same language; which makes communication impossible without requiring the services of a translator.

Such is the case in Nigeria and all her immediate surrounding neighbors, which are all francophone countries. It is no exaggeration to reaffirm that translation is an instrument of socialization which allows different societies to be in contact and participate in sub-regional affairs at their own level. Translation plays its role at the continental level and takes its rightful place in the international community. It promotes the cohesion of societies in regional and international organizations and creates a sort of conscientisation between societies so that they can participate actively in the collective life.

In developing countries like Nigeria, where the rate of literacy is low, translation is imperative. Almost all news and information, aired on the radio and expressed in newspapers are translations. Lasting social and political development, cohesion, understanding and pacific coexistence of people and communities will only be an illusion if there is no constant flow of information. Misunderstandings, which could have easily been resolved in a friendly way, degenerate into conflicts. This could be because one party or the other is misinformed of facts because of wrong interpretation of facts or events and in most cases words or ideas. Anna Bernacka emphasizes this by saying:

The role of the translator in mediating source ideas across cultural and national boundaries places him or her in a unique position in particular for understanding a range of development issues. Translating narratives from the global South is an invaluable source of knowledge about unfamiliar languages, indigenous cultures and experiences, and is immensely useful for gaining an understanding of non-European societies. Moreover, translation can also have a critical influence in politics and can act as an agent for reconciliation or social integration. Translations can therefore have a distinct effect on how global and human rights issues can be conveyed and communicated.

It is necessary to point out that translation is a cultural instrument; it is through it that cultural elements pass from boundary to boundary. It is also a means of preserving cultural heritage on the one hand and to propagate it on the other hand. This way, through translation, people of different cultures and languages can understand each other, get to know each other and tolerate each other. This creates cultural development. This situation explains the role of translation as a tool and vector of information, because it makes privileged information on others and their customs, cultural and religious practices accessible.

In view of all this, it can easily be said that translation allows us to understand others better in order to judge them fairly, to comprehend situations and events as they unfold and to be able to determine the causes and consequences of things happening in the world.

### **The Linguistic Approach:**

Many linguists have given definitions of the role of linguistics in translation. Among these are; Roman Jakobson, J. C. Catford, George Mounin, George Steiner, Eugene Nida, Paul Newmark, Koller, Vinay et Darbelnet, etc. We will look at the definitions given by some of these experts but with emphasis on the one by Vinay and Darbelnet.

**J. C. Catford** lays emphasis on language: ‘Translation is an operation on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another’ (1). This explains clearly that translation is language based and it involves practical applications of language. The goal this is to put in place a general theory which applies to all types of translation.

**George Mounin**, presents linguistics as a point of reference for the study of translation. He asks if the scientific study of the operation of translation should be a branch of linguistics (10). He refers to principal theories of linguistics in the era of Saussure, Bloomfield, Harris, etc to confirm the legitimacy of the scientific study of translation. Finally, he explains that: “la linguistique contemporaine aboutit à définir la traduction comme une opération relative dans son succès, variable dans le niveau de la communication qu’elle atteint” (p278). Meaning; the goal of contemporary linguistics is to define translation as an operation relative to its success, adaptable to the level of communication it attains.

**2.3 George Steiner** goes further by introducing another element essential in translation. “The schematic model of translation is one in which a message from the source-language passes into a receptor-language via a transformational process” (28). In this definition, Steiner brings up the issue of a transformation procedure. This highlights the fact that translation is not a simple case of reproduction. We must not ignore the fact that whatever goes through a transformation changes the form of its point of view. This emphasizes the fact that translation has a complex nature.

**2.4 Vinay and Darbelnet**, in *Sylistique Comparée du français et de l’anglais* introduce the seven procedures of translation based on a translation theory built on linguistic structure as well as the psychology for the sender of the message (26). These are techniques which are used by trained or untrained translators. One only needs to recognize that languages and cultures are different for the translator to consciously or unconsciously enter their domain.

They take into consideration mental, social and cultural attitudes which could influence the procedures of translation. The use of these criteria brings up the seven techniques of translation. The comparative analysis is used to describe translation shifts (a term first used by J.C. Catford 1965). It gives detailed explanations of categories of describing small linguistic changes in the translation of a particular language pair – English and French. “Translation shifts = small linguistic changes occurring in translation of ST to TT” (Munday, 55).

The categorizations of these translation procedures are very detailed and the two main strategies are **direct** and **oblique** (otherwise known as literal and free) which comprised seven procedures.

#### **2.4.1 Direct techniques are:**

**2.4.1.1 Loan words (borrowing):** This is where the word in the source language is transferred directly meaning the word is left unchanged. This is one of the aspects of translation which serves culture:

**2.4.1.2 Calque:** is also a kind of borrowing from the source language and structure in the target language giving it a kind of cultural integration.

**2.4.1.3 Literal:** This is the word-for-word translation, it respects the syntactic and semantics genre of the source language used between languages of the same family and culture. Some literal translations can be taken for calques translations.

#### **2.4.2 Oblique techniques are:**

**2.4.2.1 Adaptation:** this is a technique frequently used by imitators. The linguistic, cultural, religious element is replaced by a more acceptable and more frequently used one in the language of the target language.

**2.4.2.2 Equivalence:** is a method of describing the same situation while using different stylistic and structural procedures to reproduce ‘equivalent texts’. It is necessary especially in translating idioms and proverbs.

**2.4.2.3 Transposition:** as a procedure of translation involves ‘replacing one word class with another without changing the meaning of the message’. There are different types of transposition which we will see in the table below.

**2.4.2.4 Modulation:** this is a technique which deals with the change of view but giving the same meaning to the source language, at the level of the word, the expression or the global pronouncement.

The specific examples of the use of all the different techniques cited above are presented below:

|                      |              | <b>HAUSA</b>                        | <b>ENGLISH</b>                                  | <b>FRENCH</b>  |
|----------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Loan words</b>    |              |                                     | Rendez-vous                                     | Weekend  |
| <b>Calque</b>        |              | Ran sarki ya dade                   | Long love the King                              | Que le roi vive longtems                                 |
| <b>Literal</b>       |              | Na ji tsoro                         | I was afraid                                    | J'ai eu peur   |
| <b>Adaptation</b>    |              | Kafin ka ce kwabo                   | Before you could say Jack Robinson              | En un clin d'oeil  |
| <b>Equivalence</b>   |              | Ido wa ka raina, wanda na saba gani | Familiarity breeds contempt                     | La familiarité engendre le mépris                        |
| <b>Transposition</b> | Verb/Noun    | Da ya isa                           | On arrival                                      | Dès son arrivée  |
|                      | Verb/Adj     | Yaro ya tashi yana ta fushi         | The boy got up angrily                          | Le garçon se leva tout furieux                           |
|                      | Noun/Adj     | Ujila na ke yi                      | I am in a hurry                                 | Je suis pressé   |
|                      | Pronoun/Noun | In ya kuskura ya bari aka taso idi  | If he dares wait until Eid prayers are finished | Si par mégarde, il attend que les gens finissent d prier |
|                      | Verb/Adverb  | Ya yi ya yi ya kubuta, ya kasa      | He did all he could to escape but in vain       | Il fit tout ce qu'il put mais en vain                    |
| <b>Modulation</b>    | Negativity   | Sai ya ce masa ya tsaya nan         | He told him to remain where he was              | Il lui dit de ne pas bouger                              |
|                      | Change of    | Ka ji abu kamar                     | See how he                                      | Regarde comme  |

|  |                                |                           |                           |                                     |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|  | perspective                    | magani                    | fooled us.                | il nous a joué                      |
|  | Interval and limits (duration) | Ni tun watan jiya na tuba | I repented two months ago | Je me suis repenti il y a deux mois |

The science of translation which allows the transfer of ideas from one language to another is not only important but imperative in communication blockage. International meetings and gatherings at the United Nations, European Union, African Union and ECOWAS would have been impossible without translation. This makes it intricately related to development. In this study we adopted the Linguistic Theory and in particular the Comparative Stylistic Analysis of Vinay and Darbelnet, this method remains the comprehensive categorization of differences between a pair of languages.

### **Conclusion:**

Translation is useful for the stability and development of every society. The multiplicity of languages and ethnic groups in almost all countries of the world makes the need for translators always possible. In this paper, Nigeria was the case study and based on our examples on Abubakar Imam's *Magana Jari Ce* as translated by Danbaba. We could have looked at more established translated works but we opted for this which is closer and handier because of its value as the role of translation as a tool. The theoretical approach we used is one among many, it may not even be the most appropriate, and however, we believe it has helped us in the few illustrations we have tried in this paper. This paper, in terms of size, illustrations and bibliography, may not be said to be the best we could do but we believe it could serve as food for thought to any budding researcher who wants to look at the relationship between development and translation generally and in Nigeria in particular.

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