

The Role of Translation in National Development

Agwu Uzoma Patience

Languages and Literary Studies Department,
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria

Abstract: Communication has been recognized as the most essential tool for rapid and sustainable developments. Translation serves as an instrument for the cross-fertilization of languages. Translation has also been shown as a significant instrument for the spreading of materials, linguistic, political, economic, religious and other forms of culture.

Key words: Language • Translation and national development

INTRODUCTION

The world has acquired the status of a global village. This phenomenon stems from the application of technical device. One of the major devices is communication. Communication has been recognized as the most essential tool of rapid and sustainable development to which all communities aspire. The recent communication revolution tends to nourish a universal commodity chain that holds the world with a centripetal force which makes for more intense connections than ever before. This communication, it is believed, ensures the transmission and reception of ideas and thoughts from one person to the other. Communication involves the interchange of thoughts and ideas. It is necessary for human relations and development to exist. It has its vehicles and channels. An indispensable vehicle of communication is language.

Language is a vehicle for social change, social mobilization, social reconstruction and national development. Language is the identity of a people. Thus language provides an important medium for understanding of the people. Language permeates every aspect of life and harmony and disharmony in life derives from proper use or misuse of language. That is why language matters above every other thing. Language is the basis of all communications, local or national in the chain of international communication and as Alfa (2004:151), [1], says.

Human language is a daily consumption which has pattern: rules and regulations. It is a phenomenon to the survival of any race without which no man on earth would be in existence and even would not be accepted in any community of the world. In addition; language has been acknowledged world wide as a means of communication.

It is through language that the basis need of human interaction at both individual and collective levels is satisfied. The biblical tower of Babel evokes the inability of members of the same community to refer to the same objects and notions with the same words. This has made it clear that we are living in a very complex world with multifarious languages.

Corresponding Author: Agwu Uzoma Patience, Languages and Literary Studies Department,
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria.

This predominately terminological problem constituted an impediment to man's technological advancement symbolized by the babelian tower. Man has come to term that no one is an island and this implies that people have been compelled by nature to interact on a regular basis with one another. Such human interactions are not limited to people with the same linguistic backgrounds and where two people that do not understand each other's language meet something has to be done for such an interaction to be fruitful since they must. This calls for translation. The role of translation in ensuring wider-reaching communication among the various language communities has therefore been recognized.

Translation serves as an instrument for the cross-fertilization of languages. In the words of Malinowski (as cited by Ajunwa 1991:2), [2], translation amounts to "the unification of cultural context between the source and target languages". The path to rapid national development in any country has understandably been tied to scientific and technological development. As a result, the development strategies have been tied to, first, the search for scientific and technological know-how to boost indigenous private sector industrialization. Also, the need for effective and successful communication is heightened by the multilingual and multicultural nature of the world. For unity, peaceful co-operation, security and development, there has to be effective communication and mutual understanding between the nations of the world. Translation has become a crucial communication tool in this era. This is because connections among nations, organizations, institutions, states, etc for international exchange, tourism, trade and commerce or any other bilateral relationship are inevitable. Translation is therefore very important as it has become a veritable factor in the micro and macro communities.

Defining National Development: Development is a concept usually associated with living entities. As a living entity, a nation naturally desires to grow and develop. Development in a nation's economic, political, social and technological and other sectors, all things being equal, would translate to high standard of living for its people. The people's potentials are better harnessed for further development, while such a nation would likely earn a place among respectable comity of nations.

Izuwah (1997), [3], opines that national development,

Refers to the balanced, comprehensive and progressive growth of a nation in terms of desirable quantitative and qualitative indicators like life expectancy, representing long healthy life, educational attainment-representing knowledge, skills, values, e t c. GDP. (Gross Domestic Product) in purchasing power-representing decent standard of living.

The term national development is very fashionable in the so called developing nations and all government claims to be working towards, some, as yet undefined ideal of national development. It would however be said that national development means progress, in the sense that a political entity (like a nation state) strive to improve the state or quality of human welfare by gradually moving towards a more optimum condition of living for its citizens. Development depends upon the successful interaction of the material resources of a given geographical area with the human resources available in the area. When development occurs, new materials and products are manufactured while new roles become possible for the individuals of that given area. Development is therefore dynamic in character, involving change or growth. Such a change may require the application of science and technology, research finding, innovative thinking, experimentation and a lot of intellectual efforts and technical know how conceded by the human agents of change in the development process. Therefore, national development is resource demanding, in the sense that there can be no development output without resource input.

The resource input to development as opined by Usman and Ossai (2012:70), [4], consists of;

- Natural resources; that is all non-human commodities (minerals, hydro-electric power, land, forest etc. that can be exploited and used in industries, etc.

- The human resource serving as ‘manpower’ or agent of change in that it is the manpower that initiates and under takes development project involving the exploitation of natural resource of the transformation of raw material into finished consumable products.

Continuing, Usman and Ossai notes that national development in a nutshell, can be viewed essentially as the nation’s human resources acting on its natural resources to produce goods necessary to satisfy the economic needs of the community. They opined that it is not sufficient to have both human and natural resources for development to take place. The quantity (numbers) and quality (level of education and training) of the human resources are crucial factors in the development since only well motivated and skilled manpower can effectively initiate and effect action to satisfy the manpower development needs of the nation.

Supporting this notion is the 1995 UNDP Human Development Report (1995:13), [5], which states, “The real wealth of a nation is its people both woman and man.... And human development is the process of enlarging people’s choices....not just income”.

Efika and Okeogu (2001:324), [6], observe that national development;

Should focus on the people’s growth in all aspects of a nation’s life: its philosophies, its objectives, its educational goals should focus on the people. To achieve this in a multilingual and multicultural society, translation of foreign languages into Nigerian languages should be seen as a major agent of national development.

Thus, development involves the progressive expansion of the individual’s ability to choose. This is why freedom is essential to viable and autonomous development.

Language, Translation and Development: Over the years men have tried to live harmoniously with other human beings but because of multiplicity of language in the country at times meaningful co-operation becomes impossible. And when people are not living a co-operative life, it becomes difficult for them to come together and plan for meaningful development. In fact any country that wants to develop must work as one, plan things together and speak with one voice. Perhaps, the biblical story in Genesis 11:1-9 illustrates in clear terms the role that language plays in national development. The building of the tower went on smoothly because people spoke one language and thus understood each other. However, the anti-climax came when there was confusion in their language, thus leading to the breakdown in communication. The outcome was the abrupt stoppage of work on the monumental project. The message is clear. While people constitute the soul of development in any society or nation, language constitutes the soul of communication among people who execute sustainable development. Thus when people speak with one voice, development is often one of the surest benefits.

Again, translation helps in the promotion of the operations of multinational corporations in a country. This is because multinational corporations, also known as cross border or trans-national business organizations are characterized mainly by the dispersal of their managerial centers across political and linguistic frontiers. Their business transactions involve people with differing tongues, cultures and values. Yet their operation in any country has today become a key index of development of that country. In other words, national development is enhanced by the healthy by the healthy operation of multinational corporations within a given country. This is achieved through effective and efficient communication through language usage since language is a vehicle of all thoughts and ideas.

Also, it is through the means of translation that the existence of great authors and philosophers and products of the different people of the world (technical, mechanical, medical, etc.) are made known world over by making them available in different languages through the effective means of translation to different societies where they would not have been known. This brings about development because one appreciates what one knows and understands what one has studied. If one could ask, how can one know to understand a culture that is not his and that is not felt in his environment? The

possibility lies only in literary translation. For example, it is through translation that the African novels translated into European languages have showcased the folklore and the oral African tradition to the world. Without translation, the diversity of the human communities cannot be appreciated or understood.

The Nature of Translation: Translation reveals multiple definitions and explanations. Catford (1965:20), [7], defines translation as “the replacement of textual materials in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language (TL)”.

The 20th century Larousse dictionary describes translation as the act of translating and transposing from one language to other.

In his words, Peter Newmark (1981:7), [8], says that “Translation is an exercise which consists in the attempt to replace a written message in one language by that same message in another language”; Nider and Taber (1969:12), [9], on the other hand notes that “Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor’s language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message”.

According to Susan Bassnet Mc Guire (1980:14), [10], translation implies: <<the rendering of a source language (SL) text to a target language (TL) text so as to ensure that:

- The surface meaning of the two will be approximately similar and
- The structure of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible, but not so closely that the TL will be seriously distorted.

Ajunwa (1991:13), [11], quoted George Mounin, a French translation theoretician as having said that “translation involves the passage from one cultural world into another”. In his own contribution, Ajunwa defined it as “the rendering in writing of a source language text into the target language with a view to preserve as much as possible the source message and style”.

With the many definitions of translation already given and other definitions, it is clear that the concept is as varied as the perspectives of those trying to define it and as Ojeaga(2001:344) sees it “it is generally accepted that translation is a means of communication necessitated by cultural contacts and interactions between speakers of different languages”.

One can deduce that the common denominator is just the transfer of a message from one language to another, creating the same reaction in the mind of the target language reader as presented by the source language. Since the world is made up of separate speech communities and cultural entities, certainly we cannot do without translation for the much desired national development to occur.

The Importance of Translation: The multiplicity of languages imposes on us the need for translation. Translation, written or oral is a universal human activity that is as old as language itself. We consider the translator as someone who reproduces the message to create the same effect as the original message in the target language reader/listener.

Language is known as an instrument of communication. Man uses language to reach others to transmit a message. In doing that, man must have access to signs and other elements of speech that will help him to be understood. The need for translation comes directly from the need for communication.

Translation plays a unifying role in our societies. It is through translation that ideas of different societies are sent across to other societies. Translation is therefore indispensable in life because it helps solve the problem of misunderstanding by causing linguistic barriers and their effects to disappear.

Infact, to summaries the great importance of translation Ajunwa (1991:91), [2], describes the importance of translation saying: “translation performs a wide range of useful functions. To start with, it cuts across cultural and linguistic barriers, thereby bringing about mutual understanding and international co-operation among peoples of the world. Continuing, he highlights the importance of translation as follows:

- Translation has become a significant instrument for the spreading of materials, linguistic, political, economic, religious and other forms of Culture.
- In a multilingual nation state such as Nigeria or Senegal, translation has come to acquire another role functioning as an instrument of political consciousness and national unity.
- Translation has resulted in and continues to bring about the semantic syntactic enrichment of many languages through the process of loaning and naturalization.
- It is the instrument for the transmission of great thinking as it was through translation that ideological, philosophical, economic and political thinking of great minds such as Plato, Aristotle, Voltaire and Montesquieu were made accessible to different peoples of the world today.
- It is the instrument for the dissemination of scientific and technological information.
- Pedagogically speaking, translation plays a vital role especially in the teaching of foreign languages [2].

From the above, one can see that translation has a very vital role to play in our world and as B. J. Chutte (2001:344), [11], says:

---bridge between cultures. ...without translation our world would narrow mercilessly. Like air and sunlight and good growing earth in the natural world, translation is our necessity in the creative world.

The Nature of Texts: Each text to be translated has its peculiarities. All texts are not the same in nature. Texts can be classified into three categories according to their nature. These include: general or pragmatic, literary and scientific/ technical texts.

General or Pragmatic Translation: These texts are texts whose language is descriptive and informative. The language is not too technical or literary. Examples include a general text, magazine or newspaper, administrative, commercial, political, religious propaganda, etc. Translation here is almost perfect.

Literary Translation: These texts are texts with literary language which is usually flowery, subjective and connotative and flooded with camouflage for the author's message is all laced with figures of speech.

Scientific / Technical Translation: These are texts in which the technical and scientific language level is so high that only professionals in that particular field can comprehend it. This differs greatly from pragmatic or literary translations. These texts treat particular domains with the given technical language of the domain.

Good and Bad Translations: Just like communication can be said to be successful or unsuccessful, effective or ineffective, translation can also be said to be good or bad.

Good Translation: The essence of a good translation is to give the true image, thought, reality and original poetic intention and its true qualities. This is what would constitute its faithfulness to the original text. As Forest puts it:

A good translation is one which fulfils the same purpose in the new language as in that in which it was written.

Godspeed as cited by Ojeaga (2001:347), [12], says:

The best translation is not that which keeps forever between the reader's mind, the fact that this is a translation, not an original English composition but one that makes that reader forget that it is a translation at all and makes him feel that he is looking into the ancient writer's mind, as he would look into that of the contemporary.

A translation is then good when it presents in the receptor language the tonality of the source language. And as Julius Zulawski puts it:

A translation is accepted as good when it gives you in different languages a true image of the thoughts, realities and poetic intention of an original and at the same time reveals itself as an equally integral, genuine piece of work.

J.B. Philip warns thus:

The test of a real translation is that it should not read like translation at all...a translation into English should avoid translator's English.....

Also the following four criteria have been suggested by Donald Buchanan for determining a good translation as cited by Ojeaga (2001:347), [12].

- Rendering faithfully the sense of the text ;
- Conserving the style and tone of the original;
- Not making any incorrect grammatical construction;
- Expressing oneself in a language which does not allow suspicion in any manner, of the fact that it is a translation

From all that has been said, it is clear that all translations may never be classified as good. A good translation takes all formalities of the original text, that is, all the formalities of the departure language should be reflected in the target language.

Bad Translation: Bad translation is then simply one which is lacking in all the qualities stated above.

Translation as a Catalyst: Today, we note that certain languages are considered as languages of international communication which help to transfer scientific and technological knowledge. These languages are English, French, Spanish and Portuguese languages. In the scientific angle, English language is recognized/ accepted as the first because of the position of leaders of the United States in the domain of scientific and technological inventions. In these conditions, translation is very important to allow for the diffusion of scientific/technological information for the different languages to thrive. And for the better understanding of the many languages as Asobele (1984:39), [13], puts it;

If language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant; if what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done remains undone; if this remains undone, morals and arts deteriorate; if morals and arts deteriorate, justice will go astray; if justice goes astray, the people will go about in hopeless confusion. Hence there must be no arbitrariness in what is said. This matters above everything.

This goes to say that with proper understanding things get done so easily and this is through the powerful and essential tool of translation.

Also, in a country of many languages, the federal government has an obligation to help the people get the information it wants to get across to the people through translation. Certain official texts are equally published in the different acceptable languages to maintain peace and equity among the population. This is done through translation. This is because translation helps to provide valuable insight into the custom, beliefs, art, way of life, value, attitudes and capabilities of a people.

It is an important vehicle for expressing what a people stand for. When properly used, translation not only reminds the people what they stand for but also encourages them to live up to such expectations. In such context, translation serves as a catalyst or motivating factor for performance because when more people are aware of the policies and the happenings around them, their potentials are better harnessed for national development.

CONCLUSION

In a multilingual context like ours, it is natural that we use and understand many languages and in consequence be able to express ourselves in the reference language to be able to make any meaningful development. Since we live now in a world

where the market, the monetary system, the media, etc are international and multicultural, translation is necessary for a better understanding in life. Having in mind that good understanding brings peace and peace means more development, the importance of translation in our everyday life is vast and multidimensional. We have come to a point where the biggest word in our everyday situation is “TRANSLATE” because it is evident that we need to use the translated language

REFERENCES

1. Alfa-Olasunkade, M. and Y.O. Abiodun, 2004. “Teaching of Translation in Multilingual Society: Problems and Prospects” in *Ikere Journal of Education*, 2004.
2. Ajunwa, Enock, 1991. *Translation: Theory and Practice*, Onitsha: varsity Ind. Press.
3. Izuwah, L.U., 1997. “The language Provision of the NPE and the Role of NINLAN in National Development”. Paper presented at the in-house seminar, NINLAN, Aba, pp: 2.
4. Usman, B. Iliyasu and O. Ossai, Bibian, 2013. “Language Education and National Development”. *Journal of Nigeria Language and Culture*. Enugu: SAN Press, pp: 14.
5. UNDP Report on Human Development, 1995.
6. Efika, Nkechi and Okeogu, Chidimma, 2001. ”Translation: A veritable means of Development” in Anyaehie Evaristus O. (ed). *French in Nigerian Universities: Problems and Prospects-Proceedings of the 3rd Annual NUFTA conference*, Abia State University, Uturu. 8th-11th November 2000. Okigwe: Fasmen Communications, 2001.
7. Catford, John C., 1965. *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. London: Oxford University Press.
8. Newmark, Peter., 1981. *Approaches to Translation*. Oxford: Pergamon.
9. Nida, E. Eugene A. and Charles, R. Taber, 1969. *Theory and Practice of Translation*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
10. Zulawasky, J., 2001. quoted by Ojeaga Paul. “The Possibility of translation” in Anyaehie Evaristus O.(ed). *French in Nigerian Universities: Problems and Prospects-Proceedings of the 3rd Annual NUFTA Conference*, Abia State University, Uturu. 8th-11th November 2000. Okigwe: Fasmen Communications, 2001.
11. Chutte, B.J., 2001. Quoted by Ojeaga Paul. “The Possibility of translation” in Anyaehie Evaristus O.(ed). *French in Nigerian Universities: Problems and Prospects-Proceedings of the 3rd Annual NUFTA conference*, Abia State University, Uturu. 8th-11th November 2000. Okigwe: Fasmen Communications, 2001.
12. Ojeaga, Paul, 2000. “The Possibility of translation” in Anyaehie Evaristus O.(ed). *French in Nigerian Universities: Problems and Prospects-Proceedings of the 3rd Annual NUFTA conference*, Abia State University, Uturu. 8th-11th November 2000. Okigwe: Fasmen Communications, 2001.
13. Bassnett-Mcguire, 1980. Susan. *Translation Studies*. London: Methuen.