

REAPPRAISING IGBO LANGUAGE TRANSLATION FOR SELF-RELIANCE: SOME CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

Joy Uche Uzoalor

Abstract

Language is a universal means of communication. Every human group has its own language. Igbo language is the cultural language of the Igbo people. But there is the problem of translating some concepts from other languages that are not indigenous to Igbo language. This is because every culture is dynamic. For this dynamism to penetrate Igbo culture, there is the need for Igbo language to absorb new concepts and ideas so as to ensure self-reliance. Of course there is need for the appraisal of what is translated. This paper therefore attempted to handle the above issues and some solutions were proffered.

Introduction

Translation, one of the most important cross-linguistic and cross-cultural practices has been going on in Nigeria for over a hundred and thirty years now (Edebiri, 1982). The word translation has been viewed and explained by Darbeinet (1977:7) as:

that which consists in transferring from one language to another all the elements of meaning of a passage and only those elements which ensure that they retain in the TL (target language) their relative importance as well as the tonality and also taking into account their relative differences presented by the culture to which the Source and Target languages correspond respectively.

To the ordinary man, translation simply means transferring of message from one language to another. But translation means more than this. Translation as an art could be good or bad. It could promote a language or destroy it.

Generally, it is believed that translation in Nigeria started as an offshoot of missionary activity.

During the colonial era, the missionaries translated the bible into the various indigenous languages of Nigeria because they saw it could

enhance their work of evangelism. Lack of an established orthography in the indigenous languages posed a problem to them. So the missionaries proceeded to establish orthography for the local languages and to translate the Bible into these languages. Hence the Igbo Bible we now use.

Edebiri (1982) confirmed the work of these missionaries when he said that by the middle of the last century, they had already rendered the Bible into Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Ijaw, Efik and Kanuri languages.

The foundation having been laid by these missionaries, some indigenous writers/translators joined in the race. The missionaries apart from translating the Bible to Nigerian indigenous languages also translated some aspects of our indigenous literature. For instance, the Pilgrims Progress was translated as Ije Nke Onye Kraist Jere; F. W. Smart translated the Anglican Catechism into Igbo and it is still in use today. Some translation works on Igbo liturgy for the Roman Catholics and Protestants were also done by these missionaries and indigenous writers/translators. These were of course the springboard for future development of Igbo language and precise translation.

Following this, a number of Igbo writers/scholars embarked on literary translation from Igbo into English in recent years. It is worthy to note that looking at all that man is endowed with and of all the unconscious agreement which hold a society together, language has proved to be the strongest. And so should be given its proper place. No wonder, the Federal Republic of Nigeria stressing the importance of language states thus: Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion, and preserving culture.

Thus every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment. The aim of this paper therefore is to reappraise/evaluate how far Igbo translation has helped both the child, the adult and the Igbo society at large to be self reliant and function effectively. It should be borne in mind that translation permeates all facets of life be it Language/Literature, Science, Technology, law or any discipline of life one can think of. In each of the disciplines, language is used to express ideas. Hence it is necessary to know what language is.

Concept of Language

Several attempts have been made by many people to define and explain language.

Anigbogu, Mba and Eme (2001) defined language as “a means which human beings have devised for communicating ideas, feelings, emotions, and desires, through complex vocal cords or written symbols”. They went further to explain that language is normally learnt through a system of symbols which every fluent speaker of any language has thoroughly learnt.

Similarly, Stock and Widdowson (1978) viewed language as “a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols. On the other hand, Hall (1968) in Lyons (2002) tells us that language is “the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral auditory arbitrary symbols.” From all indications, we can see and understand that language is for communication and totally part of man. Many disciplines have also tried to define and explain language as it affects them. To the philosopher, language may be seen as an instrument of thought, to the Psychologist, language is a window through which the working of the mind is seen and assessed.

For the linguist, it is a system of arbitrary signs and symbols. But for the lay man, language is just a means of communication. From all these

explanations and definitions, it is observed that language is purely human and it is for communication. Moreso, language is very important to man.

Importance of Language

Language is a very important aspect of man. There is nothing man does without the use of language, be it scientific, artistic, theological or otherwise. Remove language from man and there will not be anything like society. Language performs a lot of functions to man ranging from “scientific” report to ordinary everyday conversation. Man uses language in his entire society. The immense power and range of language have been perceived in all societies.

Looking at the functions of language to man, in the first place, it is used as a means of communication. This is the most important and its most obvious use. Communication cannot be effective without language.

Human progress is greatly hastened by the use of language in cultural transmission. The knowledge and experience acquired by one person can be passed on to another through language. Thus, socialization is achieved through the use of language. This is true because language is the means by which older ones in a society teach the younger ones in the culture of their society. The inference here is that language is a veritable tool for socialization.

Man also uses language to express his emotions. Even when one is in love or in a state of hatred, language is aptly used to express each. Language is also “a tool for thinking and even dreaming”. (Anigbogu, Mba and Eme, 2001). It has been observed that when somebody is thinking, he makes use of language in his thought.

Language functions as a binding factor. Various tribes are knitted together

through their languages. Numerous experiences have proved this. Finally, one's language can tell much about him. Language can expose one's ethnic group, status, social background, occupation, sex and personality. What can one then say about language? It is really all embracing.

What is Language Translation?

Translation means different thing to different people. In discussing the importance of translation many authorities have tried to explain and define translation in various ways. House (2009) views translation as the replacement of an original text with another text. This other text is the Target language (TL) while the original text is the Source Language (SL).

Newmark (1981) says that translation is an exercise which consists in the attempt to replace a written message in one language by the same message in another language.

Ezeuko (1997) pointed out that translation could well be considered, not only as an activity or act but also as the product of the art or activity.

Similarly, Nida and Tabar (1969) defined translation as "reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equipment of the Source language message, first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style. In his own opinion, Cartford (1965) defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another (TL).

Thriveni (2001) opines that "translation is not simply a matter of seeking other words with similar meaning but of finding appropriate ways to saying things in another language".

The inference in all the above definitions and explanations is that in translating a text, equivalent words and constructions are used. The original text is reproduced in such a way that the message is retained and the interest of the reader is

captured. For this to be effective, the translator must be in close affinity with the author of the text he is translating. He must understand the intensions of the author.

This idea was buttressed by Ajunwa, (1991). He says "this idea of relating with the author for the purpose of understanding his intensions is quite good". He went further to say that of paramount importance is the translator's mastery of both the Source and the Target languages, his professional training as well as his levels of imagination and personal culture. This in effect is saying that translation work should be handled with great caution.

Importance of Translation

Translation performs a wide range of useful functions. It cuts across cultural and linguistic barriers, thereby bringing international co-operation among peoples of the world. House (2009) said that translating is not only a linguistic act, it is also a cultural one, an act of communication across cultures. The inference here is that translation cuts across linguistics and cultural barriers as stated above.

It is through translation that two languages come into contact. It bridges gaps between two languages.

Translation aids the dissemination of information be it scientific, technological or otherwise. Research reports, inventions and discoveries when translated help in no small measure to the transfer of information to the entire world and this will help man to be functional and self reliant.

There is also cross fertilization of languages through translation in the sense that the enrichment of semantic and syntactic structures are made possible. Many languages have acquired a lot of vocabularies through borrowing. For instance the Igbo

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language has been greatly enriched through borrowing from other languages. Words like jara, bokwu, window and onuku were borrowed from Hausa, French, English and Tiv languages respectively.

Great thinkers, inventors and discoverers' views and findings are transmitted through translation. Such ones like Jesus Christ, Plato, Aristotle and many Scientists, their teachings and works have been translated in many languages.

Translation helps in teaching of the foreign concepts and explanations of abstract materials which could not be taught ordinarily could now be done through translation. Foreign literatures, instructions and messages could be sent to the grass root through translation. For instance, pieces of information relating to health, technology could reach us through translation. All that is being said here is that translation is of vital importance to man and the world at large. Translation when properly utilized do stimulate self reliance among peoples of the world.

What is Self-Reliance

The word 'reliance' means confidence, trust and to be independent and be depended. When one is self reliant it means he is confident of himself. He can stand firm on his own without depending on any person. Can fully harness what he/she is naturally endowed with without anybody doing it for him.

The Igbo world/tribe is greatly endowed with a lot culturally of which language is a part. Developing the language will help to make the Igbos self-reliant. So many goodies and riches are hidden within the language in that when properly harnessed and utilized it can help the owners of the language (Igbos) to stand on their own and proudly raise up their heads anywhere.

The strength of being self-reliant gives one the power to make decisions in one's interest. This will go a long way to aid development.

In the words of Nkuruma of Ghana "The strength of being self-reliant is that we can change

things in our best interest. The weakness of being dependent is that we cannot change things in our best interest.

Being self-reliant means to work hard for one's own interest aiming towards development. A dependent person or group looks up to others for direction and every other thing and this tantamounts to slavery. Self-reliance attracts dignity and respect. There is nothing more honourable and dignifying than being self-reliant. This is developed when the individual is focused and has some vision.

Development of Self-Reliance

- **Assume Responsibility:** Depend on yourself to get things done.
- **Be Informed:** If you do not know some vital piece of information, find it out. Ask. Get the facts you need to make good decisions. Knowledge gives power. Ignorance puts you at the mercy of others.
- **Know where you are Going:** Set goals and do not react passively to the world around you.
- **Make your own Decisions:** Develop the ability to think for yourself. Do not rely on others to make choices for you. Be decisive.

The above hints when properly assimilated and used help one to be self-reliant no matter the aspect of life that is being looked into. This is because taking control of one's destiny is a great way to improve one's satisfaction with life, to increase happiness. This is all that Self-reliance is about. Against this backdrop, one may ask how is translation related to self-reliance? Of what use is translation to Self-reliance? Can translation enhance Self-reliance? All these questions and more will be answered in order to expose the

importance of translation towards Self-reliance. It is obvious that the need for translation will continue to grow as borders disappear and the world becomes smaller. The need to communicate with other cultures in other languages will become mandatory for every business to succeed. Success brings self-reliance. Pieces of information in foreign languages when translated into indigenous languages are disseminated faster into the areas they are needed. For instance, information concerning agriculture, Health, child upbringing and the like when translated in the indigenous languages are understood better in the grassroots and this goes a long way in enhancing self – reliance and development.

Consider the age we are in now (computer age), important concepts if translated into the indigenous languages will go a long way to enhance self-reliance.

The French, the Germans, the Japanese and the Chinese they imbibed the culture of translation and strongly stick to their language and culture. They have gone nuclear because through translation they have been able to develop their languages. Remember that no matter how experienced or educated one is in a foreign language, it is still a foreign language. Honest and dynamic people are generally more comfortable writing and reading in their languages. When working in ones mother tongue, one instinctively has knowledge that is not easily learned. Grammatically and culturally it is best to work with ones native language. There is the sense of fulfillment, independent and sense of belonging in using one’s language. This is self–reliance and nothing more. No wonder the Federal Republic of Nigeria stressed the importance of teaching a child in his indigenous language.

Translation no matter the system has the singular positive effect of contributing to the development of a people and their language. Igbo language has been greatly positively affected in this aspect. It is through translation that so many loan words have found their ways into the

language. Other languages could as well borrow from Igbo language. Borrowing enhances language development.

What is it that translation cannot do to enhance development and self –reliance? Is it in the sectors of medicine and law? In medicine, instructions that accompany drug manufacturing and usage when translated could help indigenous manufacturers and the native herbalists. They will come to understand that the ingredients are here with us. More so, medical messages concerning HIV/AIDS, Sickle Cell Anemia, Malaria, Polio and other diseases when translated in the indigenous languages could easily get to the grass root and be properly utilized. Remember that a healthy nation is a wealthy nation. When a nation is healthy and wealthy, she is self–reliant.

Suffice it to say that in a multilingual nation like Nigeria translation is of vital importance if we must be free and self – reliant. This is because translation aids development of all facets of life.

Be it education, science and technology, medicine, social, business or any other area of life you can think of.

Reappraising Igbo Language Translation and Self-Reliance

Like its owners, the Igbo language is dynamic and receptive to change from all contact situations. The lexical inventory of Igbo reveals loans, loan blend and loan translations from Isoko, Urhobo, Ijaw, Izom, Tiv, Idoma, Hausa, Igala, Yoruba, Isekiri, Edo, and English, (Emenanjo, 2008).

The above statement speaks for itself. It shows that Ndiigbo being dynamic and receptive have borrowed some lexical items from Nigerian indigenous languages, blended and translated then for their own use. This is how a language grows and this brings development.

Reappraising Igbo Language Translation For Self-Reliance: Some Challenges And Prospects

In the area of science, it is a known fact that Holistic development is essentially a scientific mindset. The Igbo language is not left out in this area. The examples of; Japan, Brazil, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea and China reveal that any other language is as good as the other for the articulation, expression and implementation of scientific knowledge and the overall development of a people and their nation. This will not be possible unless concepts and necessary issues are translated in the people's language.

This is true of the Igbo language. The examples of personalities like the Obinabos and the Osuagwus has actually revealed that Igbo language is already being used to take modern physics and teach primary science in our primary schools. Hence we have concepts like:

English	Igbo
Velocity	Velooso
To and fro	Je agha azu
Empty set	Ikpoefu
Numeral	Onuogugu
Fraction	Mpempe
Improper fraction	Okempempe

A look of the Okaasusu Igbo (Igbo meta language) will encourage us thanks to the society for the promotion of Igbo language and culture (SPILC) for piloting and spear heading this.

Furthermore, the Odenigbo lectures and parts of Emenajo's Ahiajioku lecture have shown that serious discourse in any of the domains of human intellectual endeavour can be carried out in the Igbo language. Much of their lectures were valuable because of the translated work done in them.

What is more, the legal and agriculture sectors are not left behind. Court proceedings and terms have been studied and translated for faster dissemination. For instance

English	Igbo
Members of the bench	Ndi okaiwu
Search warrant	Ikikeicho ihe
Trustee	Onye ndebe

Suspect	Onye a na-enyo enyo
Sanction	Ntaramaahuhu

And a host of other. This is progress in the right direction. commenting on the need for this type of translation, Ezeuko (1998) says.

A country in which individuals are unable to translate i.e. finding meaning for what they hear, think or even dream, is a dead country ... A Nation which is unable to participate in the give and take that circulates cultures, civilizations and technologies among the nations will not cease being the servants of other nations in every sense of the word.

This implies that there is need for Ndiigbo to use their language in exploring their culture, society and natural resources. Thanks to providence, the awareness is now with us.

Looking at the state of food production in the country, it is a known fact that creativity and innovativeness of farmers will be on the increase when indigenous terms are used in scientific research. More so, technology known and used in one part of the world can be shared by the entire world (Ezeuko, 1997). Considering the above, some Agricultural terms have been translated and have been proved to be of immense help to our farmers. A typical example is seen in a research work conducted by Ezeuko, (1998) on rice production where English terminologies were translated and applied.

English	Igbo
Broadcasting	Oghugha
Method of dehusking	usoro nkucha
Winnowing rice	mfucha
osikapa.	

Some common pest of rice
Rice weevil

Ufodu uke osikapa
utu osikapa

youths love Igbo works and the language in general. We should bear in mind that:

And a host of other translated terms. These translations in no small measures promote self-reliance and development. Although translation has helped in so many ways to promote and develop the language, much is still needed.

Recommendations

It is clear that some progress had been made –thanks to some Igbo scholars and traditional rulers. The awareness has been created but the challenges are there.

In the first place, the use of the language is often rejected by some Igbos who see themselves as well –to do and ‘educated’. They frown at anything that is Igbo. Preferring a foreign language to Igbo. This gradually retards the language. Someday the owners of the languages they crave for will reject them.

For Igbo studies to make giant strides it deserves, every Igbo person has to identify with it because “Onye kpoo oba ya mkpokoro e were ya kpoo ntu”. All hands should be on the deck.

We must speak and reverence our language. Works translated in Igbo should be read and appreciated by us before others will join.

More work is still needed in the area of translation so that Igbo language should compete with other languages of the world both locally and internationally. More especially now that we are in the computer age. What Japan, China and Korea did could equally be done by Ndiigbo. When translation is promoted, the language is equally promoted. Translated concepts should be used by teachers in teaching our young ones since they are the ones that will handle the baton when we are no more.

For Igbo to progress, the tertiary institutions in Igboland should take up the challenge and give ‘translation’ the encouragement and position it deserves. Igbo language should be included as one of the General Studies courses. This will make the

Any ethnic group that neglects its language is as good as dead. Any ethnic group that has no language has no culture it can call its own. Any ethnic group that has lost its language has become the slave of others. Any ethnic group that is shy of its language is not worthy to live. (Nwadike, 2008).

Conclusion

Attempts have so far been made to highlight in a clearer perspective the importance of translation to language development and self-reliance. Pointed out also is the place of translation in our society (Igbo world) today. From all indication, translation as it affects Igbo language has not been given its proper place. This should be looked into if our language (Igbo) should compete favourably with other languages. Igbo language should be developed via translation for the integration of the Ndiigbo and for both individual and collective emancipation (self-reliance).

Translation is indeed a living human activity that has assisted man in understanding himself better in many ways.

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Joy Uche Uzoalor
Department of Igbo and Other Nigerian Languages,
Nwafor Orizu College of Education,
Nsugbe.