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# LANGUAGE TRANSLATION: BEDROCK FOR FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION TO THE TARGET GROUP

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By

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## **Abstract**

*Language is not only a means of disseminating information and communicating ideas among people; it is also a vehicle for driving development and a means of sustaining the acquired development. But in a nation where the indigenous languages of the people are not officially used for disseminating information to the grass root, what then is the option? It is an obvious fact that the way and manner pieces of information get to the grass root affects the people and their mindset. This paper therefore discusses not only the roles language translation plays in the life of man but also how these roles should be exploited for development and its sustenance more especially in a multilingual nation like Nigeria.*

Language can be seen as a medium of communication, among people of the same cultural background and beyond. Apart from being a medium of communication, language serves other numerous functions of which development is one. The use of language in a society, has contributed immensely to the socialization and developmental processes in human society. It is not an over statement to say that man uses language in his entire life. Of all that man is endowed with which hold a society together, language has proved to be the strongest. The immense value of language has been perceived in the tribes and societies of the world. No wonder Ibiowotisi and Osinomumu (2006) maintain that language is the primary medium for cultural exchange and transmission. Culture is referred to as the totality of a people. It is then

not an over statement to say that human progress has been greatly hastened by the use of language through cultural transmission. Also the knowledge and experience acquired by one person can be passed on to another through language. Through this socialization and development are achieved (Anagbogu, Mbah and Erne (2010).

Considering the immense value and power of language, one may ask, how are pieces of information disseminated in a multilingual nation like Nigeria? has the way communication is handled in Nigeria helped in the development of the country? has this development been sustained?

The grass root that is made up of mainly illiterates, how do pieces of information reach them? Do these pieces of vital information reach them through their indigenous languages? In Nigerian schools, pieces of information are sent across to people in English language which is the official language. The question then is, does it augur well with the junior classes like primaries one to three? If not what is the solution? This is where translation plays a vital role. This is because one cannot practice or retain what he does not understand. One hold firm to what one understands. It is in line with the above that Nwadike (2002) maintains that the most essential assert of a people is their language (mother tongue). When things are translated in peoples native languages communication becomes faster, easier and more productive.

### **Conceptual terms:**

#### **Language:**

Anagbogu, MbahEme (2010) observe that it is often difficult and complicating to define language because one has to consider other systems of communication that are somehow related to language like the communication of monkeys and dolphins or the dance of bees to indicate the location and source of nectar. This notwithstanding, some scholars have tried to define language as it effects man. Hence, Carroll (2004) says that language can be defined as an infinite set of well-formed sentences. For Hall (1968) quoted in Lyons (2002), language is the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral auditory and arbitrary symbols.

Progressively, Bussman (2006), explains that language is a vehicle for expression or exchange of thoughts, concepts, knowledge and information as well as the fixing and transmission of experience and knowledge. For Wikipedia (2011):

Language may refer either to the specifically human Capacity for acquiring and using complex systems of communication, or to a specific instance of such a System of complex communication. Human language is highly complex in that it is based on a set of rules relating symbols to their meanings, thereby forming an infinite number of elements. From all these, one can see and believe that it is often difficult to explain what language is and that language performs numerous functions to man. It is because of this numerous roles that have prompted many disciplines to explain language as it

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affects them. Hence, Lewis (1978) maintains that for the philosopher, language may be seen as an instrument of thought; According to Clark & Clark (1977) to the psychologist, it is a window with which the working of the mind is seen and assessed and for the linguist, Tarni (2009) says, it is a system of arbitrary signs and symbols. But for the lay man it is just a means of communication. All these show that language affects all that concern man and should be handled with every care.

### **Translation:**

The word translation means different things to different people, hence many authorities have tried to explain it in diverse ways.

Oetinger (1960), states that translation can be defined as the replacement of elements of one language, by equivalent elements of another language still retaining what is said. From his own perspective, Newmark (1991), says that translation is an exercise which consists in the attempts to replace a written language in one language by the same message in another language. For Thriveni (2008), translation is not simply a matter of seeking other words with similar meaning is retained. From a linguistic point of view, Ladmiraal (1979) in Chima (2012), explains that:

*Translation is a peculiar case of linguistic convergence: In a broader sense, it denotes all forms of "inter-linguistic Mediations" which lead to the transfer of information between Speakers of different languages. Translation conveys a Message from an original or source language (SL) to a receptor Or target language (TL).*

The above explanation shows that in translation, no piece of information is neglected, so that meaning is not distorted, or lost whether in the classroom or literary works.

### **Sustain:**

Summer (2008), explains the word "sustain" thus: able to continue without causing damages to the environment, able to continue for a long time, for instance sustainable economic growth, sustainable development. While the New Illustrated Oxford Dictionary (2007) Defines "sustain" as keeping from falling or sinking, keeping up and upholding.

In effect, sustain means to retain, and maintain something that has already been achieved or developed so that it will continue and not drop or go back to a negative state.

## **Development**

Summer (2008) also explains the word “Development” as the process of gradually becoming bigger, better, stronger, or more advanced. For H.N Nwosu, (1980), a developed society is one in which the people are self-reliant and confident, and can constantly generate and mobilize energy which is capable of running independent and democratic government, and of inducing a productive and distributive economy which is both self-generating and self-perpetuating. In summary, development means to be better and more advanced self reliant, more mature, well organized and able to stand on its own.

## **The Role of Translation**

In translation, two languages are involved: the source and the target languages. These two languages differ in structure and style and at times, the culture of the owners may also differ. It is then the role of translation to transfer the pieces of Information into the languages that can be understood by the readers. Hence, it is the medium the world uses for the exchange of ideas. Translation is a vital tool in creating awareness. In politics, translated jingles and manifestoes reach the grass root and make the desired impact. Also in a multilingual nation like Nigeria, translation is a must tool for dissemination of information. This is because the bulk of the populations are mainly illiterates. So for information to reach such people effectively, translation must be employed.

Translation cuts across cultural and linguistic barriers, thereby bridging international operation among peoples of the world. Through translation different cultures are brought to the lime light. For instance, through the translation of “Things Fall Apart,” authored by Achebe, Chinua, some aspects of Igbo culture have been known to the outside world. Furthermore, U. Nwosu (2010) maintains that “medical exploitation often occurs because a patient does not understand the nature of his/her illness. Consequently, the patient falls prey to any explanation” if the patient were to be aware through language via translation, the exploitation would not be possible.

What is it that translation has not done for man? Is it in the area of agriculture? When terms are translated into the indigenous languages, they get expressively to the grass root with the desired result. A research work performed by Ezeuko (1997) on rice production has actually proved that the use of indigenous terms help farmers to produce more because they understand better in their own language. It is a known fact that the world has turned into a global village. People of different languages and cultures now live and work together; this is possible only through translation.

In the world of man, many facts are hidden in different languages and it is only through translation that these facts are made open and thus can reach others. Also findings from researchers and scientists are made known to the world through translation. For instances, findings on the use of antiretroviral drugs to better the lives of many patients have been made known to them through translation. Through

translation, awareness has been created and the lives of the affected patients have been improved, (Ijezie, 1992).

In the area of religion, translation has actually done a lot for man and his environment. The works of Jesus Christ have actually got to us through translation. Originally, the Bible, the Holy book of the Christians was written in the Hebrew language. But today, it has been translated into numerous languages, thereby making the great teaching of Jesus Christ to reach everybody. It is then not an over statement to state that, if translation was not discovered, man will remain static, without any progress, or development. Even if there were to be, it will not be sustained.

### **Translation for Sustaining Development in Nigeria**

Development strategies and ways of sustaining them, if not focused on languages and campaign for target users are bound to be counterproductive. It is then instructive to note that any campaign for the development of our dear nation, Nigeria and its sustainability that is outside language and how this language gets to the grass root will not yield any important and impressive result. In this context therefore, the role of translation in sustaining development in Nigeria is quite obvious.

Translation can never be isolated from language and language in its entirety cannot be removed from man and the society. Language is spoken by man and it is language that is translated by a translator. Hence Sapir in Crystal (1997) defines language as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. It is pertinent to point out at this juncture that development does not necessarily mean building of imposing infrastructures. It should be man oriented and not institution oriented.

Language translating services are being used in all spheres of daily life. It aids and sustains development in any society. When properly handled, translation can change the state and mind-set of man –more especially in a multilingual nation like Nigeria where almost 521 languages are spoken (Gordon, 2005). In Nigeria today, most official messages are disseminated in English language which is the official language of the country. Were these messages sent across in the indigenous languages via translation, there would have been positive changes in peoples' attitudes to certain things in the country. People will be aware that they do not have any other country and will be interested in whatever that concerns the country.

An adage says that health is wealth and that healthy nation is a developed nation. But it is sad to note that most messages that concern health and ways of many diseases are sent across to the masses in English language. More awareness would be created when the messages are disseminated in the indigenous languages such as Igbo, Hausa, Yourba and other ethnic languages. When this is the case, development is acquired and sustained. There is no aspect of human life in which translation is not important: is it in science and technology? Look at the country's oil sector. Oil bunkering is the order of the day. Many lives are being lost on daily bases. The youths

that will be the leaders of tomorrow lose their lives through Oil bunkering because of their mind-set and the type of orientation they have. These could be corrected through the use of jingles, talks and dramas that will be sent across in the indigenous languages. When this is done there will be positive changes in people's attitudes to life, thereby boosting and sustaining development in the country.

Furthermore, the increase in the number of lives lost in our roads is alarming. This could be reduced through translation. Most of the message, jingle, talks and jokes that concern road users are produced in English language. It is known fact that most of the bus, cabs, and lorry drivers are mainly illiterates. The only way these messages could reach them is through their local languages via translation. When this is done, more lives will be saved which is an indicator of development that will be eventually sustained.

Currently, the world has turned into a global village through information Technology (IT). People transact business locally and internationally. Business is one of the means by which the economy of a nation is boosted and sustained. For effective business transaction, translation must be employed. A German and an Igbo man transacting business must employ translation, otherwise communication will be impaired. When a business is positively transacted, economy is positively affected and development is sustained. This could be achieved through translation of business terms and other things that are needed in business translation.

In Nigeria today, it looks as if we are regressing to the era of slave trade. Killings, kidnappings, human sacrifice, child trafficking, prostitution are the order of the day. People have lost the norms and values of their people. Talks, sermons, programmes condemning all these are mostly done in English language without any positive result. If these talks were to be translated into the needed languages, there must be positive change. Remember, culture is the totality of a people. When an aspect of one's culture is used to teach the person, the needed result must be got. When this is done the society is affected positively. This is an aspect of development that will be sustained through a positive mind-set. Same is true in the area of security. In summary translation is seen as a veritable tool for sustaining development not only in Nigeria but in any country one can think of.

### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

The review has it that translation turns a communication in one language into a correct and understandable version of that communication in another language. This shows that translation is a sine qua non in the life and development of man. Through translation, development is sustained in any society. The paper has actually tried to discuss the role of translation in sustaining development in Nigeria. The role of translation cannot be exposed unless the indigenous languages are given their proper places. This is because as stated earlier, Nigeria is a multilingual nation where official

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messages are disseminated in the English language which does not augur well for the masses that are more of illiterates.

To achieve the above, more and adequate attention should be given to our indigenous languages for this will help to move the country forward. This should start from our homes because the home is the cradle of any development, from our homes, the use and respect for our indigenous languages will then spread to other areas in the society.

Finally, it is therefore advocated that for proper development and its sustenance, in Nigeria, messages should be disseminated in various indigenous languages via translation for this will help the country to uphold, and keep up with development rather than allow it sink.

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