

### TRANSLATION, IDEOLOGY AND HEGEMONY

Eugene Nida and Charles Taber define translation as being the fact of “reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message.” This is certainly what they mean when they write: “The translator must attempt to reproduce the meaning of a passage as understood by the writer” (Nida & Taber 8). According to the two authors, success in this attempt must be the main task of the translator. Conversely, anything other than this attempt should be regarded as a failure. Producing the closest natural equivalent, it goes without saying, partakes of the target-culture approach highlighted by the French translation theorist, Antoine Berman, who claims: “Of course, to translate is to write and to transmit. However, this writing and this transmission become truer only when they are guided by some ethics. [...] I call bad translation any translation that, generally under cover of transmissibility, operates a systematic negation of the text’s strangeness” (Berman 17).<sup>1</sup> Further down, Berman writes that “[...] Translation is not a simple mediation; it is a process whereby all our relationships with the Other are deployed to their fullest extent” (Berman 287).<sup>2</sup>

Visibly, even if he does not clearly say so, Berman is up for translation perspectives that are caring and inclusive of the Other and his/her difference. Insisting on the visibility of alterity in translation serves the agenda of uncovering tactics seeking to unduly and permanently provide central position to one culture/people over and against the other(s). Reproduction of the message has always been laden with the weight of ideology and power of the translator whether s/he be the dominant / (ex-)colonizer or the dominant/ (ex-)colonized. The ideological and power turn then creates some legitimate doubt with regard to the true intent and import (fidelity) of the original text. Therefore, there is a need to comprehend epistemological and ontological foundation and impact of hegemony and power in translating texts emanating from the culture of the so-called (ex-)colonized and (ex-)colonizer.

---

<sup>1</sup> This is the original text in the French language : “Traduire, c’est bien sûr écrire et transmettre. Mais cette écriture et cette transmission ne prennent leur vrai sens qu’à partir de la visée éthique qui les régit. [...] J’appelle mauvaise traduction la traduction qui, généralement sous couvert de transmissibilité, opère une négation systématique de l’étrangeté de l’œuvre étrangère”

<sup>2</sup> The French original : “La traduction n’est pas une simple médiation : c’est un processus où se joue tout notre rapport avec l’Autre ”.

Despite concerns raised by critics like Berman, one important thing remains undealt with when it comes to texts by writers using foreign languages as a medium of expression. There is unquestionably the presence of other languages and cultures in the foreign language appropriated. This is what Paul Bandia rightly summarizes here:

[...]The language used to write fiction and which is also the dominant language in every political sense is literally dependent on the imperatives of the construction of postcolonial identity. Thus, writers ascribe prominence to writing in the local language, which they oppose to the colonial language. Thus, the psycholinguistic importance of the writer's language is opposed to the sociopolitical preeminence of the colonial language (Bandia 127).<sup>3</sup>

Whether it is the original or the translated text, ideology as a worldview is apparent. It is all the more so when one deals with a foreign text to be translated, and when they are elements deemed offensive, unaesthetic enough according to the tastes of the receptor culture, or to forthcoming to injure sensibilities. Attempts to curtail such distasteful and atypical elements in the process of translating are, without discussion, ideology-driven

Translations of other people's works must testify to the fact that the renditions are culturally peculiar. Thus, for example, when translating an originally Asian or an African literary/cultural text, attempts to domesticate it in order for the receiving culture to welcome it "without resistance" is a form of cultural violence to guard against. This contributes to creating of a node of imbrications of cultures and peoples without which the world becoming resolutely globalised without which it will concomitantly be the seat for the Babelian hullabaloo that translation is supposed to quell.

Research, for the benefit of a world that has been more difference-oriented than necessary, will gain more credibility and increased interest from without the academe if it focuses on finding ways to bridge up gaps between cultures. Likewise, it is academically incorrect to pretend that translation and issues related to ideology and hegemony have been exhaustively dealt with. An African with colonial experience, both past and present –since

---

<sup>3</sup> The original in French reads like this: "[...] la langue d'écriture littéraire qui est la langue dominante dans tous les sens politiques est soumise littéralement aux impératifs d'une construction de l'identité du sujet postcolonial. Ainsi, à la dominance reconnue de fait de la langue coloniale, l'auteur oppose une prééminence fondée sur le désir d'écrire sa propre langue. Une prééminence psycholinguistique de sa langue s'oppose à la prééminence socio-politique de la langue coloniale".

avatars of colonial dominance and hegemony can be seen locally and on the world politics stage in a renewed fashion –cannot be attentive to such a claim. Additionally, such a consideration is suspicious in that it hides the hegemonic and dominant dirty secrets of former colonial powers and their allies in the academe.

In this highly technologized and global age where spaces and landscapes are quickly morphing, researchers in the area of translation studies have to (re)think how power structures deploy in our communicative use of language. Thus, as ideology and its attendant tendency to dominate the other have also been a full-fledged part of translation (theory and criticism) and have not been exhaustively examined and interrogated, our academic/intellectual attempt here is seeking to reopen the debate with new research dealing with the aforementioned concerns and preoccupations. This is pursuant to the recommendation of a postcolonial translation theorist, Tejaswini Niranjana, who claims: “The rethinking of translation becomes an important task in a context where it has been used since the European Enlightenment to underwrite practices of subjectification, especially for colonized peoples. Such a rethinking –a task of great urgency for a postcolonial theory attempting to make sense of ‘subjects’ already living ‘translation,’ imaged and re-imaged by colonial ways of seeing–seeks to reclaim the notion of translation by deconstructing it and reinscribing its potential as a strategy of resistance” (Niranjana 6).

The present issue comprehends three (03) contributions dealing with at least one problem in ideology- and hegemony-related translation research.

The first contribution titled “Linguistic Issues in Translation” by Amitabh Vikram Dwivedi is an attempt to discuss the linguistic issues in translation. The paper focuses on understandings and practices of those linguistic issues which should be taken into consideration during the translation process. Some of the questions the author of this text raises are encapsulated in the following: what do translators need to know to be effective language translators and code transfer professionals, and how this knowledge can be enhanced with the help of basic linguistic knowledge?

The second paper is titled “Reescritura e ideología en la traducción de textos africanos: caso de la narrativa negroafricana poscolonial” (Rewriting and Ideology in the Process of Translating African Texts: Case Study of Postcolonial African Writings) by Ezechiel Akrobou. The author’s

main interrogations are: Is there a relationship between the text and ideology? When does ideology affect the process of translation?

In this series, the final text is titled “Notes sur la retraduction en anglais par Philcox de *Les Damnés de la terre* de Frantz Fanon” (Notes on the Retranslation of Fanon’s *Les Damnés de la terre* by Richard Philcox) by Konaté A. Siendou. This text reviews the difference between translation and retranslation in the first place. Showing the weight of ideology in translation and retranslation, the text also answers to questions about the reasons behind the retranslation of the same text by the same publishing house by different translators. Is the retranslation meant to fill up the gaping hole left by time and obsolescence of meaning because of time elapsed or is it done to fulfill some mercantilist needs by the publishing house.

Through these contributions, *CIEC/IJCS* wanted to fulfill its promise of catering to its readership both in Cote d’Ivoire in Africa and around the world with new and different perspectives on translation. This move is fundamental if one seeks to ensure that others do not speak for us as intimated by Gayathri Spivak in her fundamental question about voice in the so-called (ex-)colonized spaces of the world. Clearly, our journal invites readers to enjoy these contributions and ask them to engage likewise.

## REFERENCES

- Bandia, Paul. 2001. “Le concept bermanien de l’‘Étranger’ dans le prisme de la traduction postcoloniale”. *TTR : traduction, terminologie, rédaction*. 14.2, pp 123-139.
- Berman, Antoine. 1984. *L’Épreuve de l’étranger : Culture et traduction dans l’Allemagne romantique*. Paris, Gallimard.
- Nida, Eugene A. and Taber, Charles R. 1982. *Theory and Practice of Translation*. Leiden: J. Brill.
- Niranjana, Tejaswini. 1992. *Sitting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Konaté A. Siendou  
 Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny  
 Côte d’Ivoire