

## **Dynamic Equivalence in Translation from English into Ibibio: An Experiment with the Nigerian National Pledge**

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### **Abstract**

This research examined the translation procedures employed in achieving dynamic equivalence in translation from English language into Ibibio language using the Nigerian National Pledge as exemplifying text. The major aim was to see how the translators used some translation techniques to attain dynamic equivalence in their translations. The method of monolingual translation was applied with linguistic approach to translation theory as the theoretical base. The Nigerian National Pledge consisting of six sentences originally written in English was coded ST1 TO ST6 and the first translation carried out by a Professor of translation and a native speaker of the TL-Ibibio was coded TL1 to TL6. An alternate translation carried out by two linguists who are natives of the State but whose L1 is not the TL was coded AT1 to AT6. The two translations were analyzed simultaneously and areas of strengths and weaknesses were spotted. It was found out that the translologist used more of literal method than the linguists while the linguists applied more of exegesis than literal method. The Professor/Translatologist used modulation in a few instances. The translations were similar in some portions of the text while there were a few divergences. The Translatologist performed better than the linguists in that he achieved dynamic equivalence in greater portion of the text than the linguists. Of the six sentences in the SL the Professor and the linguists failed to attain dynamic equivalence in one phrase. Overall, more than 80% dynamic equivalence was achieved in the translation. I therefore recommend that translators should work into the language of habitual use.

**Keywords:** Translation, dynamic, equivalence, exegesis, monolingual, linguistic, national, Pledge, socio-cultural, correspondence, message, source, discourse, original, structure, grammar, analysis, data, literal and faithful

### **Introduction**

The presentation of a message in a language other than that in which it was originally written is translation. The original language is called the source language (SL) and the language into which the message is translated is called the target language (TL). Wyant (2023) defines translation as the process of reworking text from one language into another to maintain the original message and communication. The source avers that there are different methods of translation, and they vary in form and content. There are legal translation, literary translation, commercial and financial translation, medical/healthcare translation and technical translation.

Similarly, Wikipedia (2004) explains that translation is the interpretation of the meaning of a text in one language (the “source text”) and the production, in another language of an equivalent text (the “target text”) or “translation” that communicates the same message. The source argues that although interpreting can be considered a sub-category of translation with regard to the analysis of the processes involved, in practice the skills required for these two activities are quite different. For instance, translators receive extensive practice with representative texts in various

subject areas, learn to combine and manage glossaries of relevant technologies and master the use of both current document-related software (for example, word processors, desktop publishing systems and graphics or presentation software) and computer-assisted translation (CAT) software tools.

On the contrary, interpreters are trained in precise listening skills under taxing condition; memory and note-taking techniques for both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. The source maintains that translation remains essentially a human activity in spite of efforts to computerize or otherwise automate it. The source advises the translator to have a thorough knowledge of the grammar, semantics, syntax, idioms as well as the culture of the source language speakers. For the above goal to be obtained, the source advises the translator to translate into the language of which he is a native speaker.

Catford (1965) defines translation as the replacement of a textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language(TL). The word ‘textual’ in this definition is important. On one hand it differentiates between spoken and written forms of the language, and on the other hand, it is the name of the language structure to be translated and analyzed. The first differentiation brings us to an important aspect of the translation theory: the presentation of a statement in a language other than that in which it was originally written is translation. (Finlay 1971, P.1). This is so because according to Catford, the substance which is relevant to phonology is phonic substance, and the substance which is relevant to graphology is graphic substance. The substantial features relevant to a phonological unit or item are sounds produced in a human vocal tract. Conversely, the substantial features relevant to a graphological unit or item are visible marks on paper, stone... etc. Catford observes that phonic and graphic substances are absolutely different, therefore there can be no question of a phonological item being relatable to the same substantial features as a graphological item. The relationship between graphological and phonological units for any particular language is of course arbitrary.

Another important element in translation is text. Study Moose (2003) describes text as a term used in linguistics to refer to any passage- spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole. He further explains a text as unit of language in use. It is not a grammatical unit like a clause or a sentence; and it is not defined by its size. A text is best regarded as a semantic unit; a unit not of form but of meaning. A text is made up of sentences, but there exist separate principles of text-construction, beyond the rules for making sentences. Text is a set of mutually relevant communicative functions; structured in such a way as to achieve an overall rhetorical purpose. For translation, a text can be a word, paragraph, a page, a chapter or a book. It is not restricted in any way. Mona Baker (1999), following Brown and Yule, defines text as the verbal record of event; it is an instance of language in use rather than language as an abstract system of meanings and relations.

A critical aspect of translation is dynamic equivalence which is synonymous to the object of equal response. Nida and Taber (1974) define dynamic equivalence as the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor’s language respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors in the source language. Continuing, Nida and Taber argue that the response can never be identical, for the cultural and the historical settings are different, but there should be a high degree of equivalence of response otherwise the translation will have failed to accomplish its purpose.

Nida and Taber identify four levels of linguistic structure from the discourse to the sounds: (1) discourse, (2) sentence, (3) word and (4) sounds. Translation problems manifest in the following situations: the use of pronominal forms, handling of direct and indirect discourse, identifying participants in a discourse whether by nouns, pronouns and /or substitute reference and sequence of tenses. The source also identifies numerous features of the sentence structure which must be adjusted in the process of transfer from SL to TL. Some of the most important of these are the following: (a) word and phrase order, (b) double negatives, (c) singular and plural agreement, (d) active and passive structures, (e) co-ordination and subordination, (f) apposition, (g) ellipses, and (g) specification of relationship.

Accordingly, two terms come into focus in the syntactic structure in translation: hypotaxis and parataxis; the first being the arrangement of syntactic subordination by a conjunction while the second is the act of placing clauses or phrases one after another without coordinating or subordinating connectives. However, it is to be noted that Nida in *From one language to another* published in 1986 discusses “functional equivalence” as an addition to dynamic equivalence. In his further research, he has retained the essential ingredients of dynamic equivalence and added fidelity to the form and spirit of the original language. This addition remains extant and tacit in the present work. The aim of this research is to examine the processes involved in the translation from English language into Ibibio language and to see how dynamic equivalence will be achieved in the translation.

## **Methodology**

The methodology of this research is monolingual translation. The text consists of the Nigerian National Pledge comprising six sentences. The sentences are coded ST1 to ST6 and the translated text is also coded TL1 to TL6. The translation is from English into Ibibio. The translator is a Professor of translation and, though his areas of specialization are English and French, he also handles his native language, Ibibio, with high degree of expertise and professionalism and therefore is competent to translate the Nigerian National Pledge from English into Ibibio. Two indigenes whose area of specialization is linguistics and one of the two also studied Ibibio language up to the doctorate level provided an alternate translation. Their translation is in a published text – Ekpo, G.R. and Sunday, V. O. (2021) *Ayọhọ Ifiok ke usem Ibibio*. Their translation is analyzed simultaneously with that of the translatoologist. I hope that combining the two translations will yield more insights to the work. The alternate translation is coded AT1 to AT 6.

## **Quantitative and Qualitative Limitations**

This research has concentrated on the achievement of dynamic equivalence in translation from English into Ibibio language. The source text consisted of only the Nigerian National Pledge comprising six sentences.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical base for this work is the linguistic approach to translation theory. This approach became prominent about fifty years ago and its exponents include: Roman Jakobson, Eugenia Nida, Peter Newmark, Koller, Vinay, Darbelnet, Catford and Van Lauven- Zwart says Peter Hodges (2009). Other proponents of this approach are Austin, Vegliante and Mounin. These linguists were interested in language text, structuralism, pragmatics and the process of translating. It was their position that any type of translation should be considered from the point of view of its fundamental units, that is the word, the syntagm and the sentence (<https://culturesconnection.com>). According to this approach, the aim of theoretical translation studies is to elaborate principles that explain and predict the linguistic, cognitive, cultural and ideological phenomena inherent in the process of transferring a written text from the source language to the target language in a specific socio-cultural context. Hodges (2009) observes that the linguistic approach to translation theory focuses on the key issues of meaning, equivalence and shift. Generally, the linguistic approach to translation theory incorporates the following concepts: meaning, equivalence, shift, text, purpose and analysis, discourse and register. These can be examined in the context of structural and functional linguistics, semantics, pragmatics, correspondence, sociolinguistics and stylistics. This research is conducted in line with the parameters set out in this approach.

## **Data Analysis**

For ST1 the translator uses exact translation in “my country” translated as “obio mmi” while the alternate translators use exegesis as “isoñ emana mmi”. In ST2 the translator renders “faithful and loyal” as “edisọñọ nda, nsuuk iwuod” while the alternate translators put it as “adibuot idem, nsuuk iwuod”. (Both the translator and the alternate translators are at par in the translation of

“loyal” as “nsuuk iwuod”). This means that the former uses modulation for the first word and the alternate translators use literal technique. For ST3 the translator renders the phrase: “with all my might” as “ke afid odudu mmi” while the linguists cast it in a clause: “adidat afid esid mmi”. In this case, the translator uses literal i.e. exact translation and the alternate translators apply exegesis. Both the translator and the alternate translators have agreed on the translation of ST4: “To defend her unity” which they render as: “edikpeme edidiana keed amọ” and the method is literal. In ST5 the translator uses literal technique for “To uphold her honour and glory” which he translates as “Ye edimam ukpono ye uboñ amọ nkama”. The alternate translators put it as “Ye adisoño ukpono ye uboñ amọ”. The former is literal translation and the latter is exegesis. For ST6 the translator puts the adverb “So” as “Ndion” while the alternate translators render it as “Ke ntoro”. The translation of the translologist is modulation while the alternate translators have used literal method. The data are presented in the tables below:

**Table 1 Showing Translation by the Translatologist (Translator)**

S/n	Source Language (English)	S/n	Target Language (Ibibio)	Technique
ST1	I pledge to Nigeria my country	TL1	Mme ñwoño nno Nigeria, obio mmi	Literal
ST2	To be faithful, loyal and honest	TL2	Edisoño nda, nsuuk iwuod, nnam akpaniko	Modulation
ST3	To serve Nigeria with all my strength	TL3	Edinam mkpo Nigeria ke afid odudu mmi	Literal
ST4	To defend her unity	TL4	Edikpeme edidiana keed amọ	Literal
ST5	And uphold her honour and glory	TL5	Ye edimam ukpono ye uboñ amọ nkama	Literal
ST6	So help me God	TL6	Ndion Abasi Ibom ’nyaña mien	Modulation

**Table 2 Showing Translation by Nonnative Translators (Linguists)**

S/n	Source Language (English)	S/n	Target Language (Ibibio)	Technique
ST1	I pledge to Nigeria my country	TL1	Mme ñwoño nno Nigeria, isoñ emana mmi	Exegesis
ST2	To be faithful, loyal and honest	TL2	Adibuot idem, nsuuk iwuod, nnam akpaniko	Literal
ST3	To serve Nigeria with all my strength	TL3	Adidad afid esid nnam mkpo nno Nigeria	Exegesis
ST4	To defend her unity	TL4	Edikpeme edidiana keed amọ	Literal
ST5	And uphold her honour and glory	TL5	Ye adisoño ukpono ye uboñ amọ	Exegesis
ST6	So help me God	TL6	Ke ntoro, Abasi Ibom nnyaña mien	Literal

## Discussion

Literal translation as explained by Catford (1965) lies between free translation and rank-bound translation; it may start as it were, from a word-for-word translation, but makes changes in conformity with TL grammar (e.g. inserting additional words, changing structures at any rank, etc.); this may make it a group-group or clause-clause translation. In plain language literal translation is the translation that is not figurative, idiomatic or rendered through near equivalent language in the TL. Literal translation is akin to formal correspondent which according to Catford means any TL category (units, structure, element of structure etc.) which can be said to occupy, as nearly as possible, the ‘same’ place in the economy of the TL as the given SL. (Catford, 1965, P.45).

The translologist uses exact or literal method to translate “my country” as “obio” in Ibibio language. Obio can also mean city. The translation of the word by alternate translators as “ isoñ emana mmi” is exegesis. In back translation this would mean the country of my birth or the land

of my birth. Between the two translations, “obio” has achieved dynamic equivalence. The translation of “To be faithful, loyal...” by both the translologist and the linguists is problematic. The former uses modulation while the latter use literal style. The use of the two lexical items in the Nigerian National Pledge appears to be a tautology or at best pleonastic doublets. The two words converge at the deep structure level: meaning showing support for someone. The translologist renders “to be faithful and loyal” as “edisọñọ nda, nsuuk iwuod” and the linguists translate the phrase as: “adibuot idem , nsuuk iwuod”. In back translation the former means to be faithful and obedient whereas the latter means to stand firmly and be obedient. It is to be noted that the two translations do not yield dynamic equivalence to the source language (SL). If “faithful” and “loyal” coalesce into support, the translation should be *edida ikpat iba mbet* or *edida mbet ikpat iba*. Both phrases in back translation mean ‘firmly loyal’ which can yield “to be faithful, loyal” in dynamic equivalence. The two translations used in the analysis have given a fair knowledge of the SL and have satisfied rhetorical and/or aesthetic requirement of the TL. However, both the translologist and the linguists have agreed on the last phrase: “and honest” meaning “ nnam akpanikọ”. But this is a modulation in itself: changing from a conjunction and an adjective(phrase) in SL to a clause in the TL.

The translologist used literal method to exegete “To serve Nigeria with all my strength” as “edinam mkpọ nnọ Nigeria ke afid odudu mmi”. The linguists applied exegesis method as: “adidat afid esid mmi nnam nkpọ nnọ Nigeria.” In this regard, the translologist has achieved both dynamic equivalence and formal correspondence in his attempt. In his style, he has changed the syntax of “to serve Nigeria” (gerund phrase) to a genitive structure: “mkpọ Nigeria” which in back translation would mean Nigerian thing or matters. The translation by the linguists of “with all my strength” as “adidat afid esid” is a modulation of some sort. It is also an exegesis.

The linguists/translators and the translologist are on the same page in the translation of ST4: “To defend her unity” as “edikpeme edidiana keed amọ”. The linguists, however differ on the Ibibio spelling “edikpeme” by using [a] instead of [e]. This is a dialectal difference. The central Ibibio speech reflects [e] in this environment. The literal method employed by the translators in ST4 has yielded dynamic equivalence for the translation.

The ST5: “And uphold her honour and glory” was translated by the translologist as: “Edimam ukpono ye ubọñ amọ nkama”. This is a literal method that has brought about dynamic equivalence. To arrive at the result, the translator had to resort to the normal syntax of the TL by splitting the verbs into two constituents: “edimam” and “nkama” bringing the object: “ukono ye ubọñ amọ” into the middle of the verb phrase. That is to say that the word “uphold” in the National Pledge in SL is expounded by two words in the TL: *edimam* and *nkama*. In back translation, “edimam” means to hold and “nkama” means keep or maintain. So, literally, “edimam nkama” would mean hold and maintain and to use the TL translation for “uphold” is apt. “her honour and glory” translated as “ukpono ye ubọñ amọ” takes a literal technique and is apt. The translation has achieved the goal of response.

The linguists rendered ST5 as “Adisọñọ ukpono ye ubọñ amọ” This translation is an exegesis and it has not yielded the goal of equal response in the TL. For example, “adisọñọ” in back translation would mean to affirm or to seal and its semantic properties do not fit in completely with ‘uphold’. The linguists and the translologist differ in the translation of the adverb: “So” in ST6. The full sentence is “So, help me God” translated by the former as: “Ke ntoro, Abasi Ibom nyaña mien”. The only point of divergence is in “so” which the translologist renders as “ndion”. The linguists have attained dynamic equivalence in “so” which synonyms can be consequently or therefore, preceding the prayer. The translation is apt. The translation by the translologist; “ndion” may have a peripheral equivalence because in back translation, “ndion” would mean time is almost running out or before. Both the translologist and the linguists were similar in the translation of “...help me God” as “Abasi Ibom nyaña mien”. The name of the supreme God whom the speakers of the TL worship is Abasi Ibom. The name is modelled after Ibibio cosmology. Ibom in Ibibio means a personality or anything that is immeasurably big in

size, magnitude and /or authority. For instance, ocean is called inyañ ibom, ladle is called ikpañ ibom and the state is called Akwa Ibom christened after the supreme deity.

### **Conclusion**

I conclude from the analysis and findings of this research that dynamic equivalence also known as the goal of equal response has been achieved in a greater part of the translation of the Nigerian National Pledge from English(SL) into Ibibio (TL). The two translations by the translator and the linguists have not yielded dynamic equivalence in the translation of “ To be faithful, loyal...” The semantic properties of the translated text for these two lexical items: “ faithful” and “loyal” do not entirely represent those of the source text. The translations are a fair representation of the SL and have satisfied some aesthetic and rhetorical requirements in the TL. Finally, I conclude that the translator has performed higher than the linguists perhaps because he is an L<sub>1</sub> speaker of the TL as well as a professor of translation. The linguists depending on their area of specialization have however scored one above the translator. On the whole the goal of dynamic equivalence has been attained through the use of some translation techniques such as literal, exegesis and modulation. It is also my conclusion that this work on translation has enriched the Ibibio culture and revitalized both the SL and the TL.

### **Recommendations**

I recommend that translators should be acquainted with both the source language and the target language. They should also translate into the language of habitual use. An acquaintance with the culture of the target language will enhance translation for the achievement of dynamic equivalence.

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