

Translation at The Service of Multiculturalism: A Case Study of Djaili Ahmadou Amal's *Walandé L'art De Partager Un Mari*

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Abstract:

Despite the multiple measures put in place by governments and international and non-governmental organisations to promote multiculturalism, it remains difficult for individuals to come into contact with a given culture without travelling to that part of the country or without it being broadcasted or carried along by natives. This makes it difficult to understand cultural aspects that can explain or better help understand a given social phenomenon observed in a given society. As, by being in contact with other cultures, it helps understand others ways of life, their eating and dressing habits, their beliefs, etc. This research thus aims at showing that thanks to the strong relationship that exists between language and culture, translation can be used as a tool to promote multiculturalism. For this purpose, the study was grounded on the polysystem theory backed up by few literary and language theories. Besides, it opted for a mixed approach, which enabled the collection of qualitative data through documentary research, observation and textual analysis; and quantitative data through statistics. The results of the investigation showed that translation can greatly contribute to the promotion of multiculturalism as cultural elements: language, norms, tradition, beliefs, and eating habits spread by authors in their pieces of writing can be rendered into other languages using translation strategies such as literal translation, explicitness change, foreignization, and sentence structure change.

Key words: Translation, language, culture, multiculturalism.

1. Introduction

Each society or group of people is characterised by a unique way of living or of functioning. It has its own language and norms that might be slightly similar or completely different from other languages and cultures. It might also be known by others or not, like it might be scorn or appreciated by others and/or by its natives, sometimes either because it is looked from a far or because it is looked too close. In the first case, the first impression usually changes when one comes into contact with the culture, be it via TV programmes, trade, tourism or reading. There exists an uncountable number of languages and cultures around the world. The number of languages throughout the globe equals the number of cultures: language being a vehicle of culture that affects each aspect of our lives, be it consciously or unconsciously. Multilingualism and multiculturalism are thus worldwide phenomena. They are observed in each country of the world thanks to globalisation, via which many societies are made up of people from different ethnic backgrounds. However, these people do not always enjoy equal respect and dignity because of their ways of thinking, seeing things or living. As a result, several societies face challenges related to multiculturalism such as hate speech, stereotypes, and mutual rejection which sometimes create conflicts among citizens of different nations in general, and citizens of the same nation in particular. Especially in countries where there are over 200 languages and cultures. For instance, following the detection of these ills among its citizens, the Cameroon government for decades now is leaving no stone unturned to promote multiculturalism and cultural diversity among its citizens. These problems, among others, stem from the fact that very few persons have the opportunity to be exposed to others culture. Therefore making it difficult for them to know about other societies and their mode of operation. However, it appears that translation can help people meet other cultures through reading, thereby contributing to the promotion of multiculturalism. This is because authors in their literary works present their culture, norms and society from which some draw inspiration. Out of 100 literary works, 99 are not only inspired by the society in which there are written, but also portray cultural aspects of the said society. As such, by translating such pieces of writing into different languages, other language speakers will come to know the culture expressed in the piece of work. Thereby enabling them to know how and why things are done elsewhere. This will help to be more open-minded, and more tolerant about other cultures. This paper that aims at showing that translation can be a tool to promote multiculturalism via the spread of culture, posits three questions: what are the cultural elements that authors can spread in their pieces of writing? Are these cultural elements translatable? What are the translation strategies that can be used for their rendering?

2. Literature Review

This research on translation as a tool to promote multiculturalism via the spread of culture is built on and learned from former works on translation, culture, language, relationship between language and culture, literary translation, multiculturalism, multilingualism

and some translation and language theories. This section deals with the definition of theories and concept relevant to this research paper.

2.1. Conceptual Framework

2.1.1 Language

According to Zadeh and al. (2012, p. 78), "language is a cultural component which can be described as a cultural communicating system that is used by people of a particular country in order to convey their purpose". It is also "a system of communication which can be used in many forms, primarily through oral and written channels but also through body language" (Anjad 2010, p. 64), and "a means of communication where at least two parties must be present: the producer and the receiver" (Anjad 2016, p. 268). It thus appears from the above definitions that language is an element of culture that expresses or communicates a given culture to the rest of the world, and a tool used by humans to understand each other. Besides, language is not only presented as a vehicle of culture, but also a part of culture.

2.1.2 Culture

Zadeh and al. (2012, p. 78) define culture as "what brings us together as human beings, as social creatures". In line with them, Kymlica (1995, p. 76) defines culture as a tool "which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across a wide range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational and economic life encompasses both public and private spheres". From the above, culture shapes, defines and orientates. This explains why each individual from different social groups has a particular way of talking, of thinking, of acting, of behaving, of dressing, of relaxing, of eating, of expressing one's feelings, etc.

2.1.3 Multiculturalism

According to Moawad and Shoura (2017, p. 802), multiculturalism "means the integration of cultural minorities into the host societies. Multiculturalism means shared values of the society as a whole and appreciation of its diversity including religious cultural and lifestyle background". They also assert that multiculturalism enables communities and individuals to be unified despite their cultural differences and their linguistic background. By promoting multiculturalism, countries and organisation thus "promotes social justice, equal access and opportunity for minorities and other oppressed People" (Moawad and Shoura 2017, p. 803).

2.1.4 Translation

Newmark (1988) defines translation as "rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text" (p. 5). This implies that if the author intended to spread some aspects of his culture through his/her text, the target text must have as main function the spread of culture. As such, when reading the target text the target reader must be exposed to the author's culture as the source readers was. In line with Newmark, Fedja (2011, n.p.) asserts that "translation is a process of converting the message, thoughts, feelings, orders or any other verbal utterance expressed in one language into messages of the same meaning and value in another language". Within the framework of this research, translation is perceived as an instrument to promote multiculturalism via the spread of culture.

2.1.5. The Relationship Between Language and Culture

Just as emotion and language are closely related, language plays a fundamental role in culture. It "is an important key in extending culture and making it popular in the world" Zadeh and al. (2012, p. 78). Language is not only linked to culture, but it is also a significant feature in culture. Kramsch (1998, p. 113) highlights how language and culture are related. First, "language expresses cultural realities (with words people express facts and ideas but also reflects their attitude)". Second, "language embodies cultural realities (people give meaning to their experience through the means of communication)". Third, language symbolises cultural realities (people view their language as a symbol of their social identity). As such, "culture is in language, and language is loaded in culture" (Hinkel 1999, p. 9).

2.1.6. The Contribution of Translation in the Promotion of Multiculturalism

Translation has contributed significantly to the evolution of the world from the linguistic and cultural perspectives. For decades now, translation has been used to spread language and arts from different cultures, enabling them to go across geographical and linguistic boundaries. For instance, renowned works such as *Things Fall Apart* and cultural aspects portray in it have become known worldwide thanks to translation. Translated literatures thus contribute to the spread of ideas and enable readers to enjoy cultural diversity. Translation is vital in multilingual and multicultural societies, easing communication, spreading culture, perpetuating culture, and encouraging mutual understanding among individuals of different cultural backgrounds. As such, who says culture says language, and who says language says translation. Translation is not only a necessary tool in language, but also in culture. "In an increasingly interconnected world,

translation is vital in bridging cultural gaps and fostering understanding between cultures'' (Tamera, 2023). It helps people understand the world around them in terms of language and culture. The pervasiveness of translated literary works such as prose, drama and poetry enable individuals to be informed about cultural events and issues of a given society or community, thus fostering cross-cultural understanding. Translated literature by providing access to a society's tradition, norms, beliefs, language and eating habits, translation helps to break down cultural barriers and to reduce cultural misunderstandings, and hate speech; thereby promoting tolerance and cultural integration. As such, translation contribute to the exchange of traditions, values and ideas among various cultures via translated literary works, movies, and music, accessible worldwide. In addition, by translating literary texts (novels, tales, songs, etc.) into widely spoken languages, translation gives visibility to lesser-known cultures. As, as Cros (2011) says, literary works are highly related to the society. This is because they are inspired by the society in which they are written. Authors write on themselves, that is, on their personal experiences, on their societies or on other societies; either to seek for change or to praise. This explains why one can learn a lot on a given community via literary texts. By translating these texts, translation helps widens the cultural knowledge of individuals exposed to them, thus ensuring a deeper understanding of other cultures, and the sustainability of cultural wealth. "Translation promotes multiculturalism and diversity, allowing people to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for cultures beyond their own'' (Tamera 2023).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 The polysystem Theory

The polysystem theory was developed by the Israeli scholar Itamar Even-Zohar, a literary theorist at the University of Tel Aviv, in the 1970s. His aim was "to deal with dynamics, diversity and change in cultures" (Ozeri, 2008, n.p.). This theory says translated literary works can serve a need within a nation, and shows the place it may occupy in a national polysystem.

Even-Zohar (2005) defines polysystem as "a multiple system, a system of various systems which intersect with each other or partly overlaps, using concurrently different options yet functioning as one structured whole, whose members are independent" (p. 3). According to Zhang (2014), the polysystem theory "absorbs translated works into the national polysystem, the position of translated work is elevated" (p. 140). This position can be central or peripheral.

From the above it is clear that translated literary works are important and exist as a particular system or forms an integral system within any national polysystem, can occupy a given position within the literary polysystem, and can serve a need within a nation. In this vein, a translated literary work can help in the promotion of multiculturalism, thereby contributing to the fight against hate speech and stereotypes that stem from the existence of diverse cultures.

2.2.2 Kruger and Wallmach (1997) Textual Analysis Model

Kruger and Wallmach (1997) textual analysis model offers a method on how to conduct an analysis of a source text and its translation(s). It consists in selecting the corpus, collecting information about the general macro-structural (global) features of the translation, and carrying out a comparative analysis on the texts both at the macro and micro-textual levels. That method of Kruger and Wallmach is vital for our research as it guides on the analyses of the novel under investigation and its translation.

2.2.3 Sociocriticism Theory

This theory was developed by Edmond Cros. It "aims to bring out the relations existing between the structures of literary (or cultural) work and the structures of the society in which this work is deeply rooted" (Cros, 2011, p. 32). In this theory, the author poses that there exists a relation between a literary work and the author's society in which the work is written. As such, textbooks are tools of cultural spreading. This theory thus helps us stand firm on the point of view according to which literary works contain cultural aspects that can be spread via translation. For, the social context influences the author writing the literary work, as an author draws inspiration from his/her society. It also helps understand the context of production of the novel under investigation, likewise the cultural elements mentioned by the author in the piece of writing.

3. Methodology

This section describes actions taken to investigate the research problem. It also explains how data was collected and analysed. To successfully solve the research problem, a mixed approach was adopted. This approach enabled the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. Following this approach, documentary research, textual analysis and observation helped in the understanding of the novel, in gathering elements of culture, and in identifying them in the novel under investigation. Besides, the interpretation of the translated excerpts was done based on observation.

3.1 Research Design

This research is carried out in the domain of literary translation, and is concerned with translating as a means to spread culture via

the translation of cultural elements in a literary work. It focuses on aspects of culture in a literary work and their translatability. Data was culled from *Walaande: l'art de partager un mari* by Djaïli Amadou Amal, a Cameroonian novelist from the Far-North region of Cameroon. This novel was published in 2015 by Éditions Proximité and has 144 pages. It satirises a traditional chauvinist society where practices such as early marriage, forced marriage, domestic violence, and polygamy are still prevalent. The novel was selected based on the following criteria inspired by Pavel and Nolet (2001): its richness in cultural aspects, its literary genre, the objectives of the novel and the themes addressed by the author in her novel, the author's style, and the appreciations of the book. The data collected is made up of 20 excerpts, all on the author's culture. But, while 10 are used mainly to illustrate the five cultural aspects: language, norms, tradition, beliefs, and food found in the text; the 10 others are translated not only to show how a given culture can be carried over thanks to translation, but also to highlight the translation strategies used in the translation of the said cultural elements.

3.2 Research Instruments

Several instruments were necessary in this research: documentary research, textual analysis, and observation. While documentary research and textual analysis were used for data collection, observation was used both for data collection and translation analysis. Documentary research consisted in collecting information necessary for the understanding of cultural elements in a piece of work. Textual analysis helped in the understanding of the novel under investigation both at the macro and micro levels, and observation helped in the identification of cultural elements in the selected novel and in the understanding of the translation of data and the identification of translation strategies used for this purpose.

3.3 Data collection and Analysis

To collect data in the novel under investigation, information on cultural elements was first gathered through documentary research. Then, the novel was read and analysed following Edmond Cros' Sociocriticism theory and elements of culture identified via observation. The corpus was then constituted, translated and analysed based on Kruger and Wallmach (1997) translation analysis model. Lastly, the translation was interpreted and translation strategies used in the translation process were identified through observation.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1. Signals of Cultural Elements

This section seeks to answer the research question: what are the cultural elements that can be identified in a literary work? Several cultural elements such as beliefs, dressing habits, language, education, food, tradition, religion, norms, recreation, and economic life are spread by authors in their literary works. The study considered five elements of culture: language, tradition, norms, beliefs, and food. These elements were identified in the novel under investigation, a novel that stems from the Muslim culture in the Far-Nord Region of Cameroon, and are presented below. By translating these elements, the target reader will undoubtedly learn many things on the author's culture thereby knowing who things are done in that part of the country, thus promoting multiculturalism.

Table 1: Elements of Culture in the Text

No.	Elements	Definitions	Examples	Interpretation of the Examples
1	Tradition	The transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation. It is also a doctrine believed to have divine authority though not in scriptures.	L'ont défit les longues tresses, lava le corps, le parfuma, et le revêtit d'un linceul en toile blanche. Puis, on l'enroula dans une natte. Cette natte fût déposée sur un mortier selon une vieille tradition. Si laa mort survenait dans la journée, l'ont enterrait tout de suite. Mais pour Yasmine il fallait attendre le lendemain.	From this excerpt it is understood that in the Muslim culture when someone dies, they undo the hair if it is plated, washes the body and wraps it up with a white loincloth before wrapping it in a mat in which it is buried. When someone dies during the day, the person is immediately buried, but when it is in the night, they wait in the morning.
2	Belief	It is an idea that one accepts as being true or real with or without evidence.	Un hadith veut que les Djinns, nombreux à cette heure, souffle à l'oreille des humains, alourdissent leurs paupières afin de les empêcher d'accomplir leur premier devoir de la journée.	In the author's society, it is believed that there are many evil spirits (Djinns) early in the morning who blow in humans' ears and eyes to prevent them from hearing the prayer call of the morning and from waking-up in order perform their first duty of the day which is praying.

3	Norms	Norms are rules or expectations that govern a given society.	Obligée de se baisser pour saluer un homme. Obligée de se baisser pour lui donner à boire, obligée d'enlever les chaussures avant de passer à côté d'eux, obligée de ne pas riposter quand il la corrige.	In the author's culture, girls are obliged to bend down when greeting a man, or when serving him a drink. She is also obliged to remove her shoes before passing by him and forced not to retaliate when he speaks to her or beats her.
4	Food	A nutritious substance that people or animals eat in order to stay alive.	De toutes les façons, même si le repas restait, on pouvait l'apporter aux voisins et les domestiques pouvaient en rapporter à leur famille. Mais jamais on ne devait garder le reste pour le lendemain. C'est considéré comme un mépris envers les bienfait d'Allah.	In the author's culture, it is a sin to keep remains of food. When they cook and it does not finish the same day, they distribute it to neighbours and house mates. Keeping remaining food for the next day is considered as scorning the blessings of God. This explains why Muslims do not cook for two days like Christians.
5	Language	A system of communication used by a community or a society.	Saare Allahu Akbar Walaande Imam Al Saalatu Hairun Minan Naoumi Danki Faadah Hadith Dada saare Amiina	House God is great A wife's turn to spend the night with the husband. Someone who leads a prayer session. It is better to pray than to sleep. A shed A group of persons who usually gather at the compound of a chief, a notable or a wealthy man A set of rules and traditions of the Prophet Mohamed that govern the daily behaviour of Muslims. Name given to the first wife in a polygamous house, meaning the mother of the house. Amen

From the above table, it is crystal clear that one can learn a lot about a culture and a language just by reading a literary work. It can also be observed that literary works are carriers of aspects of a given culture. They promote culture by given it visibility, and present a given society mood of functioning. It is also seen that author's in their writings paint their society and spread their culture. Besides, by reading literary works, one can built an identity about a given society, or can eliminate built stereotypes on a society. This is justified by Edmond Cros sociocriticism theory which asserts that literary works contain aspects of the author's culture, as the social context influences the author writing the literary work (Cros, 2011). As such, when reading this Djaïli Ahmadou Amal's *Walandé l'art de partager un mari*, readers come into contact with the author's culture, and even learn the author's language. The novel if translated may have the same function. Like the source readers came into contact with the author's culture, the target readers will do same, that is, they will also get into contact with the author's culture like the source readers did. Translation will thus enable the novel to have a larger audience, both source readers and target readers. Thereby enabling a greater number of people to be exposed to the author's culture. This enables readers to have an idea on how things are done in the author's society or in that part of the country.

4.2. Translating Cultural Elements

This section aims at answering the second and third research questions: are these cultural elements translatable? What are the translation strategies that can be used for their rendering?

The cultural elements identified in the table above can be translated into other languages, for instance in English, using translation strategies. Thereby contributing to the spread of the author's culture and promoting multiculturalism.

4.2.1. Tradition

Variables	Description
Source text	Il est vrai qu'un crime doit être reconnu pour pouvoir être pardonné, mais chez nous, dans nos coutumes, les hommes ne s'abaissent pas devant les femmes. Ils ne demandent pas pardon.

Context	Aladji forced his daughter to marry a man she does not love. As a result, the daughter refuses and sees herself well beaten for opposing her father. She thus decides to die than marrying a man imposed to her. After her dead, her father does not ask for forgiveness to her mother for causing their daughter's death.
Translation	It is true that a crime must be acknowledged in order to be forgiven, but in our society, in our customs, men do not lower themselves before women. They do not ask for forgiveness.
Interpretation	This excerpt enables the target reader to understand that men in the author's society do not ask for forgiveness no matter the seriousness of the mistake or error.
Translation strategy	Literal translation
Justification	There exists a sentence to sentence correspondence between the source text and the target text.

4.2.2. Norms

Variables	Description
Source text	Pauvre petite fille du Sahel, privée de l'amour paternel parce qu'un père qui montre de l'affection pour sa fille, c'est interdit par la coutume et même par la religion.
Context	The author at the beginning of the novel laments on the situation of the Sahel girl who is not lucky like her male counterpart to enjoy the love of her father because in their culture men do not have the right to show their daughters love.
Translation	Poor little girl from the Sahel, deprived of her father's love because the custom and even the religion forbids a father to show love to his daughter.
Interpretation	This excerpt help understand the relationship that exists between a girl and father in the author's culture. Girls are not close to their fathers and vice versa. This is because a father who shows affection to his daughter is considered to be weak.
Translation strategy	Literal translation and structure change
Justification	There exist a word to word correspondence between the source text and the target text in the first part of the sentence, and a change in the structure of the last part of the sentence. This is to make the whole sentence sounds natural in the target language.

4.2.3. Beliefs

Variables	Description
Source text	Quand une fille va à l'école elle devient païenne et elle ira en enfer ainsi que ses parents.
Context	Djaili, now a wife and mother of four children, out of jealousy for her educated co-wife, regrets why her own father did not send her to school. In tears, she recalls that when she was still a kid, she asked her father why she is not allowed to go to school like her friends. Her father responds that if a girl goes to school she will become a pagan and will go to hell. He adds that her parents will go to hell too because they send her to school. He then asks her if she wants him to go to hell. She says no and never ask to go to school again.
Translation	When a girl goes to school, she becomes a pagan and she will go to hell, and her parents too.
Interpretation	From this excerpt it is understood that in the author's community it is believed that if a girl goes to school she will become a pagan and will not only go to hell, but because of her, her parents will also go to hell. This explains why girls are not allowed to go to school.
Translation strategy	Literal translation
Justification	There exists a sentence to sentence correspondence between the source text and the target text.

4.2.4. Food

Variables	Description
Source text	Comme le conseil la tradition Islamique, on utilise les couverts que pendant les occasions rares. Tout le monde mange avec les doigts.
Context	In the evening, housemates serve the dinner to the family in trays and everybody sit on the mat and eat with their fingers.
Translation	As advised by the Islamic tradition, cutlery is used only on rare occasions. Everyone eats using fingers.
Interpretation	When reading this excerpt, a target reader understands that in the author's society, cutlery is used only on rare occasions. This explains why they eat using their fingers no matter the meal.
Translation strategy	Literal translation

Justification	There exists a sentence to sentence correspondence between the source text and the target text. This strategy best renders the cultural element embedded in this excerpt.
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4.2.5. Language

Variables	Description
Source text	J'ai besoin de te parler hamma
Context	Sakina goes to her mother's compound in order to meet her elder brother and give him money to buy her a phone.
Translation	I need to speak to you hamma .
Interpretation	The word hamma means elder brother.
Translation strategy	Foreignization
Justification	The word "hamma" has been rendered identically in the target text.

The table above shows that translation strategies such as literal translation, explicitness change, foreignization, and sentence structure change can be tools to spread authors' culture highlighted in a text, thereby promoting multiculturalism.

Conclusion

By and large, the translation of literary works can help promote culture. Literary works do not only educate, sensitise, or satirise; but also present the author's society and spread his/her culture that can be extended to other parts of the world and perpetuated through translation. Attention should not only be carried on technical and specialised translation that have tremendously taken over literary translation, but should also be paid to literary translation as a means to promote multiculturalism.

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