

The Retranslation Hypothesis and the Translation of Proverbs: A Study of the German Translations of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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Abstract

Extant studies on Retranslation Hypothesis (RH) have either given credence to its validity or have done otherwise. In the African context, few studies have focused on the (re)translation of proverbs under the framework of RH. This study therefore aims at examining the claims of RH – in the case of Igbo proverbs found in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and its three German translations. The analysis of the proverbs selected for the study reveals that while the first German translator foreignized, the second translator domesticated, and the third translator paid close attention to the form of the proverbs. By examining the transfer of selected proverbs, the study shows that historical variables involved in retranslation can nullify the universality of the Retranslation Hypothesis.

Keyword: Proverbs, Retranslation Hypothesis, German, *Things Fall Apart*, (re)translation

Introduction

Things Fall Apart has been retranslated into many languages like Portuguese, Persian, Turkish, Spanish, and German. The status of the novel as a canon of African literature makes room for different interpretations in the target language and culture. The different histories and cultures of the target culture influence the reception of this canonical text in the culture. Although different studies have been done to validate or invalidate the Retranslation Hypothesis (RH), this study intends to interrogate the validity of RH in the case of proverbs, particularly the German translations of Igbo proverbs found in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (TFA). In translation, some theories or hypotheses have been presented as universal and RH is one of them. Meanwhile, the practice of translation and its function in the target society is culture dependent. Against this background, I intend to interrogate the hypothesis using the translations of TFA into German. Taking these propositions of RH into consideration, the aspect of culture, that the receiving culture and particularly in the case of TFA, the source culture, which is paramount in postcolonial literature shall be investigated in the three versions of the novel available in German. The data for the analysis shall be the Igbo proverbs used by the author Chinua Achebe in composing the novel. More particularly, theorizations on RH that emphasize more on culture as it relates either to the source or

target text shall be considered in the following. The objective of this study is to test the validity of the RH in the case of proverbs found in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. For the method, each of the selected proverbs will be examined by doing a back translation of the German version into English. After this, each of the proverbs will be analyzed based on the closeness of the language and imagery in the German versions of the proverbs to the English original.

The Retranslation Hypothesis

Berman (1990) opines that first translations are usually domesticated, or target oriented in contrast to later translations which are expected and tend to be source oriented or foreignized. First translations serve to introduce the source text to the target culture. Berman's views have to do with a kind of domineering importance of the target culture. This means, in the case of first translations, the target culture assumes a higher cadre against the source text in dictating to the source text how to present itself more appropriately. In other words, the target culture and/or target text dictates to the source text how to "behave itself" in its presence. Therefore, the target culture is "the king" in this case.

A similar idea can be deduced from Bensimon's (1990) postulation. Bensimon speaks of first translations as "naturalization of foreign works" (Bensimon 1990: ix) because they serve to introduce a source text into a given target culture.

This is to ensure that the source culture is integrated into and received in the target culture. From Bensimon's (1990) ideas, the source culture exists at a lower cadre to the target culture since the former "serves to ensure" and is also supposed to be "integrated" into the target culture before it can be received. In my own words, I consider the phrase "naturalization of foreign works" as giving the impression that the source text is quite "unnatural". It can better be described as "unhomely".

Gambier (1994) views first translations as "assimilating", that is, they are rather "accommodating". In other words, first translations have to accept anything that comes at them. This is because they have to soften communication differences on cultural grounds and this is necessitated by editorial requirements for readability. As such, Gambier (1994) states that first translations always tend to be more assimilating and tend to reduce the otherness in the name of cultural and editorial requirements. First translations feature changes and cuts motivated by a high level of readability. Thus, the retranslation would mark a return to the source text.

Desmidt (2009) considers first translations as a form of deviation. That is, such translations do not meet the required standards of the target cultural norms. Therefore, in my opinion, such "deviations" and "low standards" are forced on the first translations by the target cultural demand. He puts it that first translations deviate from the original text more than the subsequent translations because they determine whether the text will be accepted in the target culture. The text is therefore adapted to the norms that govern the target audience. Desmidt (2009, 671) argues that

[f]irst translations (...) deviate from the original to a higher degree than subsequent more recent retranslations, because first translations determine whether or not a text (and its author) is (are) going to be accepted in the target culture; the text is therefore adapted to the norm that govern the target audience. At a later stage, when it has become familiar with the text (and author),

the target culture allows for and demands new translations – retranslations – that are no longer definitively target oriented, but source text oriented.

Here, Desmidt clearly states that the target culture has the higher authority since it is the one that places the "demands" and also "allows" new translations according to the quotation above.

In all, Retranslation Hypothesis generally claims that first translations of a given source text tend rather to be target culture oriented while subsequent translations are more source culture oriented. Therefore, while the target culture is "king" in the first translation, the source culture is "king" in the retranslations.

Having considered the role and importance of the source and target cultures in the RH, how do we relate it to the (re)translation of "culture" (proverbs) in the three German translations of Achebe's TFA? A closer look at the relevance of culture in African postcolonial texts will earn us more insight into this feature.

The Validity of Retranslation Hypothesis in other Works

Sogl (2015) carried out a comparative study of the English translations of Lispector's Portuguese novel *Perto do Coracao Selvagem* under the framework of the Retranslation Hypothesis. Her study supported the validity of RH because his analysis showed that the first English translator domesticated the novel in comparison to the second translator. Mindreci (2014) also highlighted the benefits of RH in her study of the two Romanian translations of Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. By outlining some general approaches to RH coupled with the analysis of the novel, she was able to conclude that 'a translation does not necessarily have to be better than another' (Mindreci 2014: 364). Notwithstanding, she still maintained that the RH holds much benefit both in terms of economic prosperity and scientific results (ibid: 365). In her PhD thesis, Deane (2011) examined the tenability of the RH by analyzing the English translations of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Sand's *La Mare au diable* in the British literary system. For her, the validity of the RH cannot be justified considering the polymorphous nature of retranslation which

are non-sequentiality and non-predictability (Deane 2011: 265). Other characteristics of retranslation like response to socio-cultural forces of the literary field and collective functionality of retranslations also contribute to the non-validity of RH in Deane's view. Feng (2014) reviewed the theoretical assumptions of RH by analyzing the two English translations of *Sangwo Yanyi*. In her study, she admitted that although different social issues played a huge role in making the two translators adopt different approaches in their translations, the assumption of the RH can be verified as true in the case of the English translations of the first Chinese novel, *Sangwo Yanyi*. Dastjerdi and Mohammadi (2013) compared the stylistic features in the Persian retranslations of *Pride and Prejudice* based on Retranslation Hypothesis. Although the findings in their study support the claims of the RH, they admitted that there are many studies with examples that counter the claims of RH and therefore the RH cannot be proved to be absolute in reality.

From the foregoing, it can be observed that other scholars who have critiqued the claims of RH have dealt with various issues but none of them have focused on testing the validity of RH in the case of proverbs. This study therefore intends to fill this lacuna by examining the (re)translations of Igbo proverbs in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The unit of comparison would be the language use and imagery in the German transfer of the proverbs.

Postcolonial Literature and the Relevance of Culture

Postcolonial African literature is heavily indebted to culture. African literary scholars like Chinweizu et al (1980) Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) and Obi Wali (1994) describe in detail how African literature cannot be separated from African culture particularly because it is what marks the difference in African literature. The signature of cultural difference exhibited by African writers to mark the significance of their works as distinct from the rest of the world include anecdotes, songs, folktales and more particularly proverbs. The use, relevance, and importance of proverbs in African literature cannot be overemphasized. Translation scholars who study

African literature particularly dedicate a huge aspect of their study to the works on proverbs. For example, Alimi (2012), Obiechina (1993), Wehrs (2016) all studied the use of proverbs in the works of Achebe while Khadi Fall (1994), Shaban Mayanja (1999), Paul Bandia (2008), Waltraud Kolb (2011) studied the use of African proverbs in translation.

While a review of their studies is much relevant to this article, I will first describe the significance of proverbs in the African novel, particularly, *Things Fall Apart*. Fortes (2014: 558) describes proverbs as „a sample of African oral tradition, constituting a literary resource and a literary potential that carry values, beliefs, customs; in a nutshell, the world-view of African cultures“. Indeed, proverbs exist in virtually all language cultures; however, proverbs are very much important to the Igbos (Achebe 1984: 5). A good user of Igbo proverbs is regarded as a good orator among the Igbos. He is described as “the owner of words”. As written by Achebe in *Arrow of God* (1986: 40), “...Nwaka was a great man and a great orator who was called Owner of Words by his friends.” In fact, according to Achebe, proverbs are the most cherished delicacy of speech because words are eaten with proverbs (TFA 1984: 5). That means eloquence and understanding in speech are adjudged through the use of proverbs.

More importantly, proverbs are seen as a necessary requirement not only in speaking Igbo, but also in relationships among the Igbos. As a result, the necessity of including Igbo proverbs in describing the world-view of Africans in TFA by Chinua Achebe cannot be undermined or over-emphasized. Igboanusi (2002: 8), a scholar of African literature, wrote the following:

.... When an Igbo writer uses proverbs, for example, in his works, it may not be merely to add a touch of local colour or even for aesthetic purposes, but to emphasize an important traditional value of the Igbo society. Similarly, the use of some other Igbo rhetorical devices may be necessary for the writer to be able to capture an important Igbo traditional philosophy.

The Igbo saying that proverbs serve as the palm oil with which words are eaten can be described as a

saying that as stew without salt is much tasteless, so is a speech without proverbs among the Igbos. To accrue to this fact, many works have been written and studies done on the use of Igbo proverbs and their importance in Achebe's works and also the works of other Igbo writers like Elechi Amadi, Flora Nwapa and Ifeoma Okoye.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced how relevant proverbs are as a cultural element in TFA, the source text to be used for this study. Having considered that, I deem it necessary to review works done on the (re)translation of *Things Fall Apart* in other European languages including German in order to reveal what gap they do not cover in terms of proverbs and their retranslations in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

Studies on (Re)Translations of Achebe's Things Fall Apart

It is somewhat interesting that while the first translation of TFA into German was published almost immediately, that is the year after the original was published there are three German translations of the novel. As a matter of fact, the third translation was only published in 2012 while the second translation was published 23 years after the first German translation. In my view, one would assume that the quick interest of Germany in publishing a translation of the novel a year after it was published could mean the first translation would be followed by subsequent ones that would follow after it rapidly. The rapidity of the first translation of the novel in the German context is expected to occasion more than two retranslations as we have today in German (although the present situation may be justified by the fact that translation functions differently in different cultures). In contrast to the German context, there are four translations of TFA into Spanish and five translations into Persian.

The Spanish translations of TFA are *Un mundo se aleja* (1966) by Jorge Sarrió, *Todo se derrumba* (1986) by Fernando Santos, *Todo se desmorona* (1997) by J. M. Álvarez Flórez, and *Todo se desmorona* (2010) by J. M. Álvarez Flórez. The first Persian translation of TFA is called *Hame Chiz Foroo Mipashad* (1989) and was done by Farhad Manshoorian, the second *Hame Chiz Foroo Mirizad* (1999) by Safavian, the third *Hame Chiz Foroo Mirizad* (2001) by Ali

Asghar Bahrami, the fourth and fifth *Hame Chiz Foroo Mipashad* and *Hame Chiz az Ham Mipashad* were translated in 2012 by Kamrava Ebrahimi and Hodavand respectively. The reference to these two instances, that is, Spanish and Persian, shows that although Germany had the quickest interest in publishing Achebe's TFA, the interest was not followed with scores of regular retranslations. However, the first Spanish translation, which appeared eight years after the original was published, has been followed by three other retranslations between 1966 and 2010, two years before the third German translation appeared. Also, the first Persian translation, which appeared 31 years after the original, had been followed by four other retranslations within the space of 23 years. Two of these Persian translations appeared in 2012 – the same year in which the third German translation appeared.

I deem a review on the works done on the (re)translations of TFA in other languages relevant to our study to reveal the gap that needs to be filled in this area by considering the German context. The reference to the Spanish and Persian contexts above shows that it is not only in German that there exists more than one and/or two translations of Achebe's novel into the same target language. In fact, there are languages with more translations into them than into German.

Cadera and Martín-Matas (2017) evaluated how the first and fourth Spanish translations of TFA represent the image of Nigerian reality by highlighting the translation of fictive orality and elements of Igbo culture. In addition, they analysed how African literature is addressed in Spain and also tried to reach some conclusions on the reception of African postcolonial literature in Spain through the study of the (re)translations of TFA. Cadera and Martín-Matas in their study postulated that the approach to the study of the translation of postcolonial literature should be done considering both external and internal elements. Thus, their study focused on internal issues of linguistic comparisons between two Spanish translations of the novel and the external elements which influenced the (re)translation(s) included sociological issues like the prestige of the African writer, publishers, government and religious policies and even the

market.

Two of the Persian translations of Achebe's novel under study were analysed by Esmat Babaii and Maliheh Rashed in 2017 with the aim of identifying the successful and/or unsuccessful portrayal of certain socio-cultural context through translation. Using a discourse-based approach, they were able to identify congruence between the source and target cultures at the macro-contextual level, while many other instances of distortion at the micro lexicogrammatical levels were detected in the comparison between the source text and the two Persian target texts used for the study. By linking their analysis to ideology, it also contributes to knowledge in the works done on the (re)translations of Achebe's TFA.

Altıntaş (2015) did a comparative analysis of the two Turkish translations of Achebe's TFA within the framework of Bandia's (2008) approach to postcolonial translation. He was able to identify units of analysis at the macro and micro levels of the novel. Altıntaş use of Bandia's Tripartite Translation Approach and examination of proverbs as one of the microlevels of analysis are relevant to this study considering the fact that in this study, Bandia's postulations on the different levels of translational act involved in the postcolonial African text will also be taken into consideration.

There are also studies of the German translations of Achebe's TFA. For instance Manyanja (1999) and Fakayode (2010) show in their analysis of the first two German translations of the novel that differences in them are due to the different ideologies of the two German states existing at that time (i.e. East and West Germany). Fakayode (2012) illustrates this point in the analysis of the proverbs in the source text and the differences in the two German translations. Kolb (2011) also examined proverbs and their translations in the two German target texts and considers them as a form of "rewriting". She based her postulations on Umberto Eco's (theory) of "Translation as Rewriting". Even though she disagreed with Manyanja on the notion that the differences were due to different political ideologies existing in Germany at the time of the publications of the target texts, she agreed that a

high level of "rewriting" was carried out by the second translators in contrast to the first translator in the transfer of the proverbs into German. Onken (2013) was able to take into cognizance the third translation that was published a year (2012) before her work was published. As a matter of fact, she only mentioned the translation for recognition purposes. Her detailed analysis consisted of the earlier two German translations. Basically, she was able to identify degrees of differences, digressions, distortions, and deviations in both translations and particularly in the second target text. Kolb (2011) also spoke of "Christianization of Igbo elements" by the translators of the second German version. In the studies reviewed above, it can be observed that some of them were not done based on RH and those that did study the retranslation of proverbs did not do so under the auspices of RH. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge by considering the retranslation of proverbs in the context of the retranslation hypothesis.

Postcolonial Literature Translation

The translation of African postcolonial literature has been described as occurring on a double level. Bandia (2008) proposes a "double tier" approach to its translation. This is because, in his view, African postcolonial literature is in itself "writing as translation". Therefore, the Postcolonial African source text is itself a form of translation of oral literature into the European language of writing i.e. French, English and Portuguese. These colonial languages which serve majorly as the medium of writing for the African author are thus regarded as just a medium of expression of what originally exists in the mother tongue of the African writer. However, Fall (1994) and Manyanja (1999) have earlier made this proposition in their Habilitation and Dissertation respectively. While Fall (1994) opines that there are two source texts and two target texts in the translation of Europhone African texts, Manyanja postulates the import of the "third text" in such translations. For Fall (1994) the first source text is the unwritten form of the African novel in the mother tongue of the writer while the second source text is the available African text written in European language. This second text which is regarded as a "translation" also serves as the first

target text while the other language into which it is translated into is the second target text.

According to Mayanja (1999) however, the recognition of the “third text” is fundamental for an appropriate transfer of culture in carrying out a work of translation of an African novel. This third text is chronologically the first, because it exists in the mind of the African writer and is in the unwritten form in his/her mother tongue. It is the import of this cultural signification carried by the written African text in the mind of the African writer in the African novel that makes scholars of African literature translation like Fall (1994), Mayanja (1999) and Bandia (2008) regard the translation of Europhone African literature in two tiers. In view of this, the translator of an African novel must consider the culture and language of the African writer seriously and not take it for granted. Therefore, the cultural signification evident in the Europhone African source text must neither be overlooked but should make its signature evident in the European target language text. In this regard, it is assumed that the source culture of the African novel which is different from its source language, i.e. the European language of writing, must be given much importance and be treated as the “king”.

Relevance of Venuti’s Domestication and Foreignization

In conjunction to the studies by the scholars above, Venuti (1995) proposes a foreignization approach to the translation of postcolonial texts. This proposition is to be preferred as postulated by Venuti above domestication. A type of domestication strategy is “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bring the author back home” (Venuti 1995: 20), while foreignization is “an ethnodeviant pressure on those (cultural) values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad” (Venuti 1995: 20). In view of the fact that Venuti’s postulation of the domestication and foreignization methods in translation highlights the significance of culture in a translation task, this study is going to be done using these theories as its theoretical framework. In addition, I consider Venuti’s postulations as suitable for this study considering our previous

discussions on culture both on Retranslation Hypothesis and Postcolonial literature translation. While according to RH the “target culture” is the “king” for first translations, the “source culture” is the “king” in the concept of postcolonial literature translation and Venuti. Accordingly, the “king” changes his position in the subsequent translation(s). This is assumed to be the case in RH. But my study intends to validate or invalidate this hypothesis in the context of the three German translations of TFA through the proverbs found in the novel.

Another reason why I find Venuti’s theory of domestication and foreignization important for this study can be seen in the discussion by scholars of retranslation hypothesis (RH). For example, Koskinen and Paloposki (2010) opine that the Retranslation Hypothesis regards the nature of first translations to be domesticating and of the second and subsequent translations to be closer to the original. Also, according to Koskinen and Paloposki (2004) the Retranslation Hypothesis posits that retranslations mark a return to the source text, after an alleged assimilation carried out by first translations. For them, the RH postulates that “first translations are more domesticating than retranslations”. Other scholars like Susam-Sarajeva (2006) state that RH is the assumption that “subsequent translations will succeed in bringing forth more appropriate, more ‘faithful’ texts ‘closer’ to the ‘original’, or texts which will be more suitable for the needs and competence of modern readers”. While according to Chesterman (2004), RH states that “later translations tend to be closer to the source text” (Chesterman 2004: 8). In all, Retranslation Hypothesis generally claims that first translations of a given source text tend rather to be target culture oriented while subsequent translations are less target culture oriented and more source culture oriented.

In my opinion, both Venuti and scholars of RH see a tussle between source culture and target culture orientation in first and subsequent translations of a text. As a matter of fact, Koskinen and Paloposki (2014: 27, 32) outrightly use the term “domestication” and “foreignization” in discussing RH just as Venuti formulated them. This, I consider, a huge signification in the

relevance of these terms to the study of RH in the context of the transfer of Igbo proverbs in TFA into German.

The Translation of Proverbs in the German Translations of *Things Fall Apart*

The source and target texts to be used in this study are Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958; 1984), *Okonkwo oder Das Alte Sturzt* (ODAS1, 1959) translated by Richard Moring, *Okonkwo oder Das Alte Sturzt* (ODAS2, 1983) translated by Dagmar Heusler and Evelin Petzold, and *Alles Zerfallt* (AZ, 2012) translated by Uda Strätling. The study analyzes four of the proverbs used in TFA. The choice is based on the similarities and differences among the three German translations of the proverbs. The closeness of the target texts to the source text would be based on Venuti’s theories of domestication and foreignization as mentioned earlier. Thus, the analysis follows.

During one of the planting seasons, Okonkwo went to Nwakibie to ask for seed yams. At the beginning Table 1

everyone present started to drink palm-wine and the discussion during this period reverted to Obiako who gave up his trade of palm-wine tapping. Nwakibie described Obiako as a very strange personalty. He referred back to a particular time when the oracle told Obiako his father wanted him to sacrifice a goat to him and Obiako responded by asking the oracle whether his dead father ever owned a fowl while he was alive. The boldness of Obiako in answering the oracle back and the fact that a very poor father asked to be treated in a lascivious manner after his death was funny and thus instigated laughter among those who heard the story. Everybody present at the occasion laughed heartily, except Okonkwo. Okonkwo couldn’t laugh much because his own father too was a “failure” because he was lazy and poor. Okonkwo detested his father’s failure. Achebe uses the following proverb to describe the scenario:

TFA	ODAS1	ODAS2	AZ
Everybody laughed heartily except Okonkwo, who laughed uneasily because, as the saying goes, an old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb. Okonkwo remembered his own father (TFA, 6).	Alle lachten schallend; nur Okonkwo war verlegen, denn – wie das Sprichwort sagt – ‚eine alte Frau wird verlegen, wenn von dünnen Knochen die Rede ist‘. Okonkwo dachte an seinen eigenen Vater (ODAS, 27).	Alle lachten schallend, nur Okonkwo war nicht recht wohl beim Lachen, denn, wie es im Volksmund heißt: ‚Stets sieht man nur den Splitter im Auge des anderen‘, und die Erinnerung an seinen eigenen Vater stieg in ihm hoch (ODAS, 28).	Alle lachten herzlich, nur Okonkwo lachte etwas gepresst, denn es heißt, einem alten Weib werde unwohl, sobald in einem Sprichwort Gebeine vorkommen. Okonkwo dachte an seinen eigenen Vater (AZ, 39).
Back Translation			
	Everyone laughed resoundingly; only Okonkwo was embarrassed, for as the saying goes "an old woman is embarrassed when dry bones are being talked about." Okonkwo remembered his own father“	“Everyone laughed loudly, only Okonkwo felt uneasy laughing because, as the people say: ‘one always see the splinter in the eye of the other’, and the remembrance of his father touched him deeply”	Everyone laughed heartily, only Okonkwo laughed a little pressed because as it is said, an old woman will be uneasy once bones are mentioned in a proverb. Okonkwo remembered his own father

The first translator tried as much as possible to maintain the form and the message of the proverb in his translation. However, he talks of „being embarrassed“ and not of „uneasiness“. The replacement of the proverb „an old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb“ with an intertextual element from the Bible (Matthew 7: 1-5) as „stets sieht man nur den Splitter im Auge des anderen“ (one always see only the splinter in the eye of the other) in the second translation shows that the two translators of the second German version of TFA undertook a domestication method in translating the proverb. There is naturalness of expression for the target reader in this translation because the German society was a Christian community familiar with the Christian scriptures. Even though the actual message of the proverb was not accurately carried

Table 2

TFA	ODAS1	ODAS2	AZ
„if one finger brought oil it soiled the others“(TFA, 41)	„Ein kranker Finger steckt die anderen an.“ (ODAS, 139)	„Es ist besser einen Finger zu verlieren, als die ganze Hand“(ODAS, 142).	„wenn ein einziger Finger Öl brachte, er alle anderen verschmutzte.“ (AZ, 141)
Back Translation			
	„a sick finger infects the others“	„it is better to lose one finger than to lose the whole hand.“	(If a single finger brings oil, it makes all others dirty)

The proverb can be found in the last sentence of the thirteenth chapter of TFA. Here Oberika, Okonkwo’s close friend, thought about how the earth goddess normally ask for destruction of individuals or properties (as the case may be) even if there is no need for it in real terms. If the destruction is not carried out, the whole land suffers. Here Okonkwo had killed a clansman inadvertently and must suffer for it. He must flee to his motherland and his properties must be destroyed. If this is not done, the whole land of Umuofia would experience the anger of the earth goddess. The way the judgement over an individual becomes the judgement of the whole land is what is expressed by „if a finger brought oil it soiled the others“.

Even though the first translator tried to maintain a foreignization method, he is quite explicit by using the verb „anstecken“, which means „to infect“.

across, the proverb had been adapted to the target cultural affordances. The back translation of the third version gives a relatively closer meaning of the English text. This shows the kind of foreignization Venuti advocates for. The translator tried as much as possible to capture the exact words with the same meaning in her translation of the source text.

Therefore, it can be observed that while the first and third German translators keep to the use of imagery, linguistic otherness, cultural elements and speech patterns of the Igbo culture in translating the proverb, the two second translators adopt the target cultural elements and speech pattern. The cultural imagery and linguistic otherness of the Igbo culture is missing in the translation of this proverb in the second German version of the text.

Thus, though the form of the proverb seems to be kept, the meaning is made more explicit. In addition, the cultural imagery of the source text is used but the cultural element of “oil” is missing in the translation. Also, the speech pattern is somewhat overlooked, although the linguistic otherness is achieved to a large extent.

The second translators tried to describe how the „destruction“ of an individual (Okonkwo) and his properties was better than the „destruction“ of the whole land of Umuofia. This is the notion they tried to illustrate in their translation of the proverb. In doing this, they maintain the cultural element through the use of the word finger but they overlook the imagery of a finger soiling the others. Therefore, neither the speech pattern nor the linguistic otherness is sustained in the proverb. By not following the form used in the Igbo proverb, and by using

another metaphor which is not present in the proverb which is „hand“, we observe that another form of domestication has occurred in this translation. There is also some biblical echo of the verse found in Matthew 5:30: “And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell”. In my opinion, the translators attempted to use a speech pattern and linguistic clarity, which could be natural enough for the linguistic culture of target readers.

The third translator tried as much as possible to maintain the form and meaning of the proverb in her translation. In the back translation of the third Table 3

German version of the proverb we observe that it results into almost an exact rendition of the words of the original text. In so doing, the third translator not only maintains the use of cultural elements and use of Igbo imagery in her translation but she also tried to stay close as much as possible to the linguistic otherness and speech pattern of the Igbo culture. This can be said to be foreignization.

The following examples are proverbs that have been translated in a less distinctive way by the different translators. In the prayers of Okonkwo at Nwakibie’s residence, when he went to request for seed yams, he said the following proverb:

TFA	ODAS1	ODAS2	AZ
...Let the kite perch and let the egret perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break. (TFA, 5)	Der große Milan soll horsten, und der kleine Reiher soll auch horsten. Und spricht der ein ‚nein‘ zum andern, soll er die Schwinge brechen.“ (ODAS, 25)	Der Milan soll sich ebenso niederlassen können wie der Adler. Wenn einer von beiden den anderen nicht dulden will, so sollen ihm auf der Stelle die Schwingen brechen. (ODAS, 26)	Mag der Milan nisten, und mag auch der Reiher nisten. Wenn der eine zum anderen nein sagt, soll sein Flügel brechen. (AZ, 37)
Back Translation			
	The big kite should perch and the small egret should also perch. And if one says 'no' to the other, let his wings break.	“The kite should perch and so should the eagle. If one of the two does not want to tolerate the other, then let his wings break immediately”	May the kite perch and may the egret also perch. If one says no to the other, let his wing break.

In explaining this proverb, Ifesieh (2014, 363) postulates that,

Although the kite and egret are both birds of prey and belong to the same family, they are not equal in strength and rank. While the eagle represents the rich, the kite represents the poor. In other words, the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor should peacefully co-exist.

Therefore, this proverb states the need for peaceful co-existence among members of a community. If one group is not ready to bear the other, then „his wings should break“. That means he should die off. If a bird’s wings break, it would be demobilized and would die as a result of this (see Ifesieh 2014, 363). In other words, Okonkwo was expressing an

aspect of the belief system of the Igbo community.

In the first translation, Richard Moering, the first translator tried to follow the foreignization method by stating the proverb in German using almost the exact equivalence of the English words. This translator tried to maintain the linguistic pattern in the translation of the proverb which

makes the form to be sustained in the translation. In the second translation, however, the translators tried to retain the cultural elements in their translation. Nonetheless, the speech pattern, imagery and linguistic otherness was lost. This can be observed when the translation is examined closely. The use of the word „dulden“ i.e., endure instead of „spricht nein“ i.e., „say no“ in this translation insinuates an attempt to clarify the Igbo culture behind the English source text to the German target readers. In addition, the translators added the phrase „auf der Stelle“ i.e., „on the spot“. This shows the inclusion of European cultural world view where judgements are expected to be executed immediately. This, also, is a form of domestication.

In the third translation as can be seen, Uda Strätling follows the same trend as usual in using the Igbo imagery, linguistic otherness, speech

patterns and cultural elements as can be obtained in the source text. This is also obvious in the previous examples of her translation. While there are slight, minimal or extended adjustments in the earlier two versions, the third German version follows the text as close as possible in form, which makes foreignization in the third German version highly pronounced. As I observe, the back translation reveals almost the same words and syntax as we have in the English text. It is necessary to mention here that the first edition of TFA used by Richard Moering and the third translator Uda Stratling reads “egret” and not “kite” as it is in later editions. That is why both of them using the formal equivalence translate the word as “Reiher” (egret) and not as “Adler” (eagle) as we have it in the second German translation. The next example goes thus:

TFA	ODAS1	ODAS2	AZ
“a toad does not run in the daytime for nothing” (TFA, 6)	„Eine Kröte läuft nicht ohne Grund am hellen Tag herum.“	„Eine Kröte zeigt sich nicht ohne Grund am hellichten Tage.“	„Nicht umsonst rennt die Kröte am hellichten Tag.“
Back Translation			
	(A toad does not walk about in the bright day without reason) (ODAS, 27)	(A toad does not show itself in the bright day without reason) (ODAS, 28)	(The toad does not run in the bright day in vain) (AZ, 38)

The proverb was used by Ogbuefi Idigo while commenting on Obiako who suddenly gave up his trade of palm-wine tapping. To explain this, it can be said that Obiako did not just leave his palm-wine trade without having a good reason. This is because he would need to survive and also support his family from his trade. If he does nothing, nobody would bail him out. And for him to leave his trade despite his needs, there must really be a good reason for that. Here there is a slight change in the form used in the third translation. This can be explained in terms of the syntactic disparities between English and German. Nevertheless, the translator still tries to maintain the form and the meaning of each word in the proverb especially by her use of the verb “rennen” (rennt) as an equivalent for “run” and “umsonst” for “nothing”.

As can be seen, in the second German target text, the speech pattern and linguistic otherness is lost even though the cultural element and imagery by the use of “eine Krote” (a toad) is maintained. In this way, the translators opt for the domestication method in transferring the proverb into German. Instead of translating “run” they chose rather to use the phrase “show up” (zeigt sich). This is quite interesting because the toad naturally does not “show up” but “hops”. The first translator on his own employs the foreignization method as well. Although he adds the word “herum” i.e., “about”, the imagery, linguistic otherness, speech pattern and cultural elements were maintained in his translation. The word “herum” (about) however, makes the translation of the proverb a bit explicative in this case. From the foregoing

analysis, it has been shown that while the first and third German translators used similar strategies of foreignization in their versions, the two second employed a different strategy which is domestication in translating the proverbs into German. I assume that while the first and second translators recognized the Igbo culture and its import in the English source text, this was overlooked by the second translators. Just as Fall (1994), Mayanja (1999) and Bandia (2008) postulate, credence should be given to the African culture of the postcolonial African writer of a source text written not in his mother tongue when it is being translated into another European language. Venuti also attests to the significance of the signature of the culture of a foreign text in a work of translation.

Reflections and Conclusion

From the foregoing, we can observe that RH suggests that the target culture is „king“ in the first translation but in the case of TFA this is not so. The source culture is rather the „king“. This has been proven through the use of Igbo imagery, linguistic otherness, cultural elements and speech patterns found in the target translations of the proverbs. These are alien to the target culture but at home in the source culture. Also, the notion of source culture being „king“ in retranslation of a foreign work is false in the case of second German translation. This has been proven through the domestication method employed by the second translators. These translators tried to seek a naturalness of language for the target readers as much as possible. This is obvious even when they use some of the cultural elements found in the proverbs in their own translation. In some cases too they use biblical imagery alien to the source text but at home with the target culture. The third translation meets up with the expectations of postcolonial third text theory, Venuti’s theory of foreignization and more particularly RH theory as explained earlier in this paper. The reason for this is that the translator tries to stay close to the linguistic otherness and speech pattern of the Igbo proverbs in her translation. The cultural elements and imagery were also followed closely in the third version. A complete foreignization method was used by her. Going back to my ideas of „either the target or the source culture being king“ in the

case of first and subsequent translations, that is that Retranslation Hypothesis generally claims that first translations of a given source text tend rather to be target culture oriented while subsequent translations are less target culture oriented and more source culture oriented. Therefore, while the target culture is “king” in the first translation, the source culture is “king” in the retranslations, I would like to give some reasons why the RH is not justifiable in the case of the first two German translations of proverbs in TFA and why only the third translation meets up with this notion. One major reason is because the second translators do not reflect in their version that the source text author himself was translating his culture into the English language while writing. This is what Bandia (2008) calls “writing as translation”. Therefore, translating this type of work into another European language in most cases requires the recognition of the culture of the postcolonial writer.

Furthermore, the case of the first and second translations of TFA is completely opposite to RH considering some sociological reasons. It is therefore of paramount importance to note that different factors like the history of a target culture, ideology of a translator and events in a target culture could disprove the validity of the Retranslation Hypothesis. This will be explained subsequently regarding the first two translations of the novel into German.

Owing to the fact that translation practice followed the trend of the prevailing theory of a particular period when they were carried out, the translation of the novel by Moering done in 1959 resulted into a version that is source text oriented. Translations in the 1950s were tailored according to this approach. Considering this fact, the second translation published in 1983 was also strongly influenced by Nida’s dynamic equivalence theory in the 1980s and the third translation done in 2012 by Uda Strätling was also motivated by Venuti’s advocating for foreignization in the 1990s and beyond.

Furthermore, other sociological reasons as regards the background information of the periods in which the translations were produced would serve as arguments for the preferred strategies employed by them. As it has been observed that the

first German translation tends to be closer to the source text than the second translation. While the first translator makes use of the imagery of the source text and tries to maintain the form and meaning of the proverb in the target text, the second translators employ a dynamic equivalence method. Thus, what the Retranslation Hypothesis maintains is not applicable to the first retranslation of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The opposite of the case obtained in this context. Speculations why the RH is not obtainable in this case could be explained in terms of the fact that the first German translation was introduced to the German speaking world in the early days of its interest in African literature (see Waltraud Kolb 2011, 189).

Another possibility could be that the second translation was published by a famous publisher which is one of the largest publishing companies in Germany – Suhrkamp Verlag in Frankfurt. It is possible that such big publishing house occasioned the German translation of the novel due to the need for profit and as a result requested the translators to domesticate the foreign culture to make the novel readily understandable for the target readers. Besides this, more interest in African literature was occasioned by the Frankfurt Bookfair in 1980. This event probably gave rise to the second translation of the novel into German. Various reviews on the second translation showed that the German community favored the second translation more considering the fact that the unfamiliar culture in the novel, especially as regards the frequent use of proverbs was explicated or adapted to the target culture as the case may be. The above speculations point to the fact that although the RH could be obtainable in many cases, this is not the case in introducing some very unfamiliar culture into a target one as in the case of Igbo into German.

Another conjecture for the disproval of RH in the first two German versions of TFA could also be attributed to the profession of the translators. The translator of the first German version, Richard

Moering was a writer and a poet under the name Peter Gan. Bearing this in mind, we consider that he preferred to maintain the imagery of the source text in his translation and leave the target reader to engage himself actively in creating meaning while reading the text.

As in the case of the third German translation of the novel, the validity of RH in translating proverbs in the novel could be welcomed. This is because by the time the novel was translated in 2012, the third time into German, it had already entered the stream of world literature. The novel had been sold in more than 50 languages and more languages are still anticipated. Achebe the author had already been acclaimed in Germany when he received the most prestigious prize for literature in Germany – The Peace Prize for Literature in 2002. Therefore, there was no more need to try as much as possible to introduce an “unfamiliar culture” to the German target readers. Besides, there existed previous German translations of the novel.

I therefore posit that the above sociological information given about the German contexts on the translators of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* are salient speculations for the different strategies employed in the three German translations of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Therefore, the universal claim of Retranslation Hypothesis cannot be validated in the context of the (re)translations of proverbs in Achebe's *TFA* into German. The stories of other cultures and their history of translation need to be heard before certain claims about universality in translation can be made. In conclusion, the complexity of retranslation research which involves a variety of variables and historical factors which are dynamic in nature coupled with other social variables like publishing houses are germane in the validation of RH in any context and the approaches adopted in the study of retranslation. Considering the analysis in this study, the Retranslation Hypothesis therefore cannot be accepted as universal.

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