The Cultural Other, Interculture and Interculturality in Postcolonial Translation Dialogic-Communication

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Abstract

This article takes its point of departure from the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis to heuristically establish the nature of cultural otherness, interculture and interculturality in postcolonial translation communication. It posits that postcolonial translation communication takes a discursive-dialogic form that implicates the conflicts and asymmetry of cultural relations between ex-coloniser and ex-colonised cultures and societies. The excoloniser and excolonised are respectively on the quest for continuing dominance and self-liberation. Illustrating with text units from German translated *Things Fall Apart*, the paper concludes on the relevance of postcolonial translation critics to enhance positive outcomes in postcolonial textual communicative relations particularly between Africa and Europe.

Introduction

The differences in cultures and languages provide the framework in which communicative practices across cultures take place, including the translation of texts from one language and culture to the other. These practices become even more significant when some cultures endeavour to gain advantage over others resulting in the formation of stereotypes, exclusion and strife. Postcolonial discourses, on the one hand, mirror these exclusions and strife in the relations between excoloniser and excolonised cultures and societies. On the other hand, intercultural discourses, while implicating these relations, provide dialogic channels for continuing contact and communication that could enable mutual understanding.

This study adopted a conceptual framework weaved from the derived concepts of difference and otherness, Interculture and interculturality that resonate with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis(S-WH) on linguistic and cultural relativity and their connections to postcolonial interactions in translated texts. The study did not seek to prove, disprove, or test the validity or not of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis but adapted its fundamental and self-evident claims of difference and diversity in languages and cultures to heuristically develop the conceptual framework for this study. The study began with contextually foregrounding the disparate and interconnected clarifications of the concepts of difference, the cultural other/otherness, the

postcolonial and interculturality in their resonance with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. The relations between the postcolonial, the cultural other, and interculturality in translation communication were explored and illustrated in translation text units purposively selected from Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (*TFA*) translated into German. Data were subjected to translation and critical intercultural analysis.

Chinua Achebe's *TFA* is a representative narration of African traditional cultures seen through an Igbo worldview. In this narration, the 'uncontaminated' African cultural identity existing before European colonial presence in Africa is presented as evidence that refutes the proto-Euro-western claims of an Africa inhabited by barbaric and primitive species of beings without history, culture and voice (see Irele 2000:2), and the claim that what has come to appear as culture is simply a pathological adaptation to Euro-western slavery, colonialism and racial inequality (see Carson 2002 para. 11; Jones and Campbell 2011). *TFA* not only discursively and dialogically engages these proto-Euro-western claims, it also catalysed the vigorous and sustained interest in investigating postcolonial relations between Europe and formerly colonised countries (Okpewho 2003:3). This engagement, cast in the mode of 'the empire writing back' (Ashcroft et al.1989/2002), provides a platform for the communicative negotiation and mediation of cultural knowledge, meanings, and identities (both African and European) at various media and intercultural textual practices, including the translation of African postcolonial narratives into and out of European languages, German inclusive.

European attitudes towards Africa have been traditionally negative as evidenced by historically and deeply set Euro-western negative thinking and attitudes towards Africa (see Kant 1997:46, Hegel1956:109-117), the overt and subtle ascriptions of negations and inferiority on Africa by Western media that reinforces unexplored stereotypes and myths about Africa(ans)(Goke-Parrola 1993:3134,Ndangam 2002:22, Bork 2011:58,Gruley and Duvall 2012:29,Djongana 2016:45, 52-3, 57,Ezeru 2022:397), and by studies in German translations of African narratives[1] that show proofs of strengthening Euro-western held negations on Africa (Adeaga 2003:15, see also Richard 2005)[2].

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[1] We do not absolutely claim that Germany and German translators of African postcolonial narratives are literally synecdochic representatives of the whole of Europe. We use them as heuristic tools for developing the argument of this study. Europe is a multiplicity and different European nations may exhibit slightly divergent tempers towards Africa. However, there are comparable similarities of thinking about and reacting towards Africa that are creditable to Europe

[2] Richard points out the marginality of African literature in German literature and the exclusionary selective process of African texts for translation

Whereas Adeaga deals with the discriminatory selection of literary genres for translation to fit some deeply set images and representations of Africa in the German cultural industry, this study looks at the treatment of cultural themes and details in the communicative translation of an expansive narrative that projects and positively argues for African cultural identity.

Foregrounding cultural difference through the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (S-WH)

The S-WH, (1929, 1950s), popularly known as the "Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis", establishes language differences by the different worldviews and set of experiences that embed languages, which not only structure the finite array of formal linguistic categories (grammar, lexis, syntax and the like) of languages but also determine how the categories are used as a coherent system of reference for habitual thought and the overall interpretation, explanation and communication of an infinite array of experiences (see Whorf1956:213-214, Crystal 1993:15). A language, therefore, provides its speakers with a system of linguistic categories that makes possible a particular fashion of thinking. "No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality", says Sapir, because "the worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached". Therefore, "we see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation" (Sapir1949:69).

However, empirical research on the views of the hypothesis so far has not only been insufficient but also controversial and inconclusive (Lucy1998:41, Swoyer2003 para. 21, Pöhls2013:99, Zatlev and Blomberg 2015:21)) and the partisan arguments on the hypothesis show stronger and weaker forms. The weak or moderate version of the hypothesis, emphasised in this study, modifies the strong, extreme or deterministic version and states, "the ways in which we see the world *may be influenced* by the kind of language we use" (Swoyer 2003 para. 7, *emphasis added*). Though the propriety of the strong-weak categorisation of the hypothesis is regarded by some as an oversimplification of the discourse on emerging research (Wolff and Holmes 2010:253), the categorisation remains productive and relevant in research and discourse on the validity and applicability of the hypothesis (Vandewynckel and Willems 2008:4-5, Zlatev and Blomberg 2015:2).

Accepting that languages are different, by this hypothesis, admits the equally obvious fact that cultures, as world views, values, practices, and meanings unique to people, are different. This inference of difference from the hypothesis benefits the establishment of cultural otherness in this study. Furthermore, possible difficulties and impossibility in communicating across cultures due to cultural, structural, and compositional differences in

languages constitute the interest of translation. Translation seeks to surmount the challenges of difference in the exchange of knowledge and the sharing of culture.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and translation

The perspective of S-WH is that translation between languages is difficult in the least and mostly impossible. The weak or moderate version of the hypothesis, however, provides a leeway to the possibility of translation.

Specific aspects by which the weaker version of the hypothesis differs from the extreme deterministic form as noted by Chandler include a) the emphasis on the potential for thinking to be 'influenced' rather than unavoidably 'determined' by language; b) the emphasis on a two-way process such that 'the kind of language we use' is also influenced by 'the way we see the world'; c) the ascription of influence not to language as such but to the 'use within a language' of one variety rather than another (typically a sociolect – the language used primarily by members of a particular social group); and d) emphasis on the social context of language-use rather than on purely linguistic considerations, such as the social pressure in particular contexts to use language in one way rather than another (Chandler 1995:18). This social pressure of language use can permit shifts in the meanings associated with particular utterances across time and shows the potential of languages to accommodate new and varied experiences, expressions, and concepts.

In its deterministic form, the S-WH strictly binds 'content' (thought, meaning) to 'form' (the linguistic structure or text offered by each language) and thus avers that meaning resides in the text. However, the weak, moderate version of S-WH established the mutual self-inclusion of language and culture (Kay and Kempton 1984:77, Trivedi 2005 para. 8, Ash 1999 para. 9) by which linguistic influences are now generally related primarily to cultural conventions and individual styles of use rather than to the formal linguistic structures of the language; for "meaning does not reside in a text but arises in its interpretation, and interpretation is shaped by socio-cultural contexts" (Chandler 1994 para.10, see also House 2000:79).

The implication of thought and meaning arising from socio-cultural contexts is the accommodation of the 'universalists' position that translation is possible in and out of any language (House 2000:69). Through the approximation of the sociocultural contexts by various communicative and translation strategies/techniques including borrowing, elaboration, explicitation, description, circumlocution, and many others, the flexible and extensible nature of human languages can be appropriated to recreate and say in a second language most things

that have been more naturally said in the first (Swoyer 2003 para. 17). Languages, like cultures, can thus accommodate and express new and varied experiences and perspectives.

Cultural otherness and Interculture

The 'other' in the socio-cultural context of this discourse refers to the 'who' or 'what' that a cultural identity considers extraneous to its perception of its self but which it, however, needs to affirm its unique character and meanings (see Cahoone 1996:11, Eke 2006:90). However, cultural difference is stigmatised through a process of othering to create the Otherness – the alienness, negation, and discrimination – of targeted cultures. This process alienates and belittles the other to privilege oneself by setting up "a superior self/in-group in contrast to an inferior other/out-group, and/or construct[ing] the other/out-group as radically alien" (Brons 2011:105).

Amongst others, Raji-Oyelade (1998) and Rosen (2000) have respectively shown that Europe and the West represent the East and Africa in images, narratives, and terms that depict them negatively as other. The East is shown to be strange, separate, passive, eccentric, and backward (Rosen 1998 para. 2); while Africa is culturally mythologised as primitive, savage, barbaric, lacking in and the negation of values, and "caught in the dark beginnings of time" (Raji-Oyelade 1998:275). Relying on Derrida ('Positions'1972), Witte and Harden point out that the notion of culture underlying the colonialist agenda always includes naïve and misleading binary opposition such as 'us' and 'them', 'civilised' and 'primitive', 'white' and 'black', 'men' and 'women', and so on, that tend to stigmatise, suppress and exclude the other(see also Eke 2006:91); and aver that the political scene in Europe confirms the political use of this binary notion of culture to "exclude the 'others' in a condescending manner because 'they' allegedly are too different from 'us' to be able to effectively assimilate: the other is defined with reference to his or her cultural difference"(Witte and Harden 2000:8). Chinua Achebe further points to the deep desire in Western psychology "to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest" (1977 para 5).

This strategy of the collective cultural self to create a distorted image of the other in other to exclude and estrange this other is aimed at preserving its wholeness, worth, and meaning and its self-acclaimed privileged status (c.f. Said1978, Spivak 1988; Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2002). In pursuit of this purpose, the collective cultural self discriminates, demarcates and filters out ideas and meanings external to its cultural community which it considers capable of reordering knowledge and meaning within that community (Schöpfling 2001 para. 14, Eke 2006:92). However, the excluded other is ironically constitutive of the self. The other defines and equally embodies the self. Without the constant presence of the

other, the self can neither know itself nor be self. Each of Hegel and Hall (1996) avers that any identity is marked through its dialogic relationship to the other, which is within the self not outside it, the identity. Hegel, in his classic master-slave dialectic in which 'self-consciousness stands for an individuating identity state,"Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come out of itself…First it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other*being; secondly, it does not see the other as an essential being, *but in the other sees its own self. ... It supersedes its own self, for this other is itself"* (1977: 111)(emphasis, mine). Identity is, therefore, the relationship of the other to oneself:

> … Identities are constructed through, not outside, difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside* that the 'positive' meaning of any term and thus its 'identity' can be constructed (Hall1996:4)

Thus, suggesting the necessary condition for dialogue and possible consensus rather than the estrangement and exclusion of the other; for if the other is really another form of the same, there exist much chances for the two sides to relate with each other, to possibly talk, perhaps reach mutual understanding and reconciliation (c.f. Miller 1994 para. 15). Understanding, at least, of the fact that difference in the quality of being human neither references superiority or inferiority nor equality and inequality. Successful dialogue and reconciliation would diminish estrangement, exclusion, and strife.

The possibility of dialogue and understanding further suggests the possibility of transcending cultural and linguistic differences by adopting relevant communication and relations strategies that overcome the inhibitions imposed by the diversity of cultures and languages to constructive and mutually beneficial exchanges/relations. Interculture implies the difference of cultures and languages evident in S-WH and it rightly assumes the existence of 'the other', as well as the possibility of contact and conflict in communicative relations.

The 'Postcolonial' and Interculturality

The postcolonial references the overt or covert asymmetrical contacts and exchanges between cultures that are mediated by the un-ended experience of domination and subservience, exploitation and expropriation, displacement, hybridity and silence, as well as defiance, resistance and the quest for independence and voice carried over from the era of geographical imperial colonisation (cf. Eke 2022:42). The postcolonial thus qualifies the nature of the interactions, asymmetry and conflicts inherent in the interculturality between cultures of 'formerly' colonised societies and those of 'former' colonisers.

Interculturality itself arises from the difference and otherness of cultures and points to "the critical and dynamic contacts, interactions and exchanges between cultures that are the consequences of their difference and diversity" (Eke 2006:93). Whereas many cultures may coexist in a single geographical space, interculturality emphasizes contacts, encounters and interactions that further implicate the complexities and conflicts of power (political, economic, ideological, symbolic, and real), identity, and representation underlying intercultural relations especially those within asymmetrical contexts (see Eke 2006:93). Interculturality, however, also emphasizes the need for cultures to engage in dialogue. The nature and process of these interactions would thus involve argumentations, negotiations, mediations and other direct and intervening measures that could result in "the construction of cultural syntheses in new stages" (Gumucio 2008:321).

Interculturality is nevertheless dually conceived and emphasized based on the differentiated experiences and peculiar needs of a cultural grouping or system. In the 'EURO-US', several of which leading nation states qualify as excolonisers and imperialists, interculturality is preferably understood in terms of intercultural competence, referring to individual set of skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to successfully and effectively relate with people from diverse cultures. It is more of "an academic matter and produces valuable scholarship and training programs and methodologies" (Medina-Lopez-Portillo and Sinnigen, 2009:250). In Latin America, however, where the nationalities were colonised and, even now, still struggle with and against refracted instances of subjugation, interculturality is "a historic condition", that references

> the radical restructuring of the historically pronounced uneven relations of wealth and power that have existed between Europeans and their descendants and indigenous and other subordinated groups during the last half millennium. This history has been characterised by an ongoing process of conquest, exploitation, and resistance. Interculturality is [thus] used to describe the necessary condition for a new social configuration that allows historically marginalised indigenous groups and others, primarily blacks, to pursue cultural, political, and economic equality. (Medina-Lopez-Portillo and Sinnigen 2009:250)[3]

Underpinning both conceptions is the necessity to bridge misunderstanding and manage the conflict arising from cultural differences and cultural 'othering' within postcolonial interactions.

Postcolonial intercultural interactions would thus involve dialectical processes of synthesization (that is, mutually harmonized understanding) of standpoints in which conflictual positions would gradually, systematically and continuously result in open-ended compromises that could eventually lead to the full resolution of the conflicts. The resolution

will bring about mutual and equal respect of cultures, cooperative endeavours hinged on equal participation and

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[3] This quote is earlier used in Eke 2006(see Reference)

representation of all cultures (cf. Eke 2006:94). Dominated cultures would progressively become less subsumed to the political, ideological, economic and military indulgences of hegemonic cultures; they would recover the possibilities and capacity of defining and realizing their own goals, priorities and destinies (cf. Van-Binsbergen 2003:17). This admixture of the postcolonial and the intercultural we qualify as "postcolonial interculturality" (Eke2006:103, c.f. Irani and Dourish 2009).

Communication and Postcolonial Interculturality

Communication features in interculturality as a mediatory or intervening factor in the difference of cultures. The healthy knowledge and understanding of the other mediated through communication can unarguably help erase the prejudicial binary oppositions and categorisations, and reduce conflicts. As Samovar and Porter observe:

> The ability through increased awareness and understanding to coexist peacefully with people who do not necessarily share our background, views, beliefs, customs, habits or lifestyles can benefit us in our own neighbourhoods and also can be a decisive factor in forestalling international conflicts (1997:2).

However, communication, in postcolonial intercultural contexts, is far from being a difference-neutralising agent that merely carries information across cultural boundaries. It is a discursive and dialogic process that implicates the conflicts inherent in intercultural postcolonial relations. The extension of the field of communication "to both scientific and humanistic views" (Griffin 1997) makes possible the existence of widely divergent views by scholars regarding what communication is. Thus, the difficulty of a universally accepted definition.

Notwithstanding, Schramm (1979:18) conceives of communication from its Latin root word "communis", meaning 'common'. Thus, when we communicate, we are trying to share information, an idea or an attitude by a process that always require at least three elements – source (initiator), message, and destination (recipient). Schramm suggests that to communicate is to invite to participate not only in the knowledge of an information or idea, but also in an attitude or disposition. Communication, therefore, elicits both a cognitive and an affective response from the invitee.

Kiernan, Reid and Goldbart's (1987:9-10) view of communication as intentional or unintentional responses which a person makes to affect the behaviour of another in the expectation that the other person will receive and act on the message shows that Communication can be both a deliberate and non-deliberate or unconscious means of controlling, affecting and influencing a person's thinking, attitude and behaviour. Significantly too, these responses and behaviours can involve verbal and non-verbal symbolic aspects.

Aherne and Thornber (1990) clarify that these responses basically include speaking, listening, and the use of language as a system of words and rules that include non-verbal elements such as gesture and body language which reflect the act that the speaker intends to carry out. With non-verbal communicative responses, the speaker presupposes that the listener "shares the understanding between what is communicated and the situation" (Aherne and Thornber 1990:9-10). Porter and Samovar see communication as "a transactional behaviour-affecting process in which people behave intentionally to include or elicit a particular response from another person" (1997:10) while Frey, Botan, Friedman and Kreps (1991:28) define it as "the management of messages for the purpose of creating meaning".

Communication understandably equally accommodates the written mode where language is used as a structured system of graphic symbols. In this usage, the non-verbal and unintentional elements in communication will be mostly found in affective or emotive responses, and in the subtle connotations embedded in words, structures and contexts.

All the views or conceptions of communication above not only assume the three basic elements required in communication: initiator, message and recipient, they also implicate a fourth – motive or purpose in communication. Incorporating the idea of interculture into communication, communication denotes here the exchange of messages through a process by which knowledge, meaning and identities are negotiated and created to possibly achieve and maintain the understanding necessary for mutually just and beneficial attitudes and behaviours between cultures and peoples. This process is explicitly or implicitly dialogic and discursive. Communication is, therefore, far less a passive transmission of information than it is a serious transactional engagement of cultures with each other. It is about exerting influence and control; not just about telling, but acting, changing another person's and another culture's perception, attitude and behaviour through the things that were said to them.

Postcolonial Interculturality situates communication squarely within the asymmetry and conflicts of power, identity, and representation that underlie the interactions between former colonisers and former colonised societies and cultures. Communication thus becomes a contested terrain for the sustenance of hegemony as well as for the liberation of self and

voice, but also for the attainment of understanding. In its discursive dialogic nature within postcolonial interculturality, communication seeks to control the nature and direction of discourse, of perception and consciousness, and of behaviour in the maintenance, erosion and acquisition of power, privilege and voice. Simultaneously, however, it provides the platform to effectively engage the conflict and possibly bring about understanding, build consensus, and surmount the challenges and hindrances of difference.

Postcolonial Translation Communication

Postcolonial translation communication is translation-mediated communication that engages the dialogic discourses of power, identity, representation, and voice between 'former' coloniser and 'former colonised' cultures and societies in intercultural relations of difference, asymmetry and conflict. Intercultural relations between the Euro-West and Africa, for instance, have continued to be hampered by the crisis of difference, asymmetry and inequality that engage the interest of African postcolonial narratives.

Postcolonial narratives from Africa (and indeed from former colonised cultures and societies) began first to discursively and dialogically respond to earlier hegemonic narratives of 'former' colonisers that denigrated and dehumanised Africans. Further from there, they also describe the situations and conditions of the African postcolony as that which is considerably being continually manipulated by the hegemony of Western influences and controls.

The translation and retranslation of these narratives may strengthen, hamper or manipulate the communicative discourse and dialogue depending on where the translator locates him/herself in the asymmetrical and conflictual relations. Understanding, a major aim of communication, may or may not thus be achieved. We illustrate this postcolonial translation communication with examples purposively selected from the translation of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* into German from an 'english' modified to carry the African cultural experience (Achebe 1973:55). Chinua Achebe is duly acknowledged to have emphatically initiated Africa's literary discursive and dialogic response to the West's narrative of negations on Africa. His consolidated aims were to reveal the falsehoods of the Western narratives and to restore to Africans the dignity of their human and cultural identity and voice.

i. Translating Social Class Structure: Consolidating Inequality

The Umuofia society in *TFA* is a merit-based society structured on hierarchical social-cultural class categories. The *Ndichie* or elders (Achebe 1958:9) comprise the highest social-cum-

spiritual category because of the closeness of those in this category to and their representation of the deified ancestors (Achebe1958:85). Just below it is the 'titled men' ranked in four ascending categories (egwugwu, ozo, Idemili), the undisclosed fourth category being the highest (p.86). *Ndichie*are usually title holders. 'Titled' men belong to a category frequently mentioned in *TFA* narrative and represent an important and significant social class in Umuofia traditional society. In *TFA* (p.6) and (p.123) we reference two separate mention of 'title' that defines this category.[4]

. [4] This illustration and analysis is reused here from Eke 2015 (see Reference) to illustrate the thematic control of discourse in translation postcolonial communication

In Achebe (1958:6), the narrator records that when Okonkwo's father, Unoka, died he had "'taken no title at all' and he was heavily in debt" and in Achebe (1958:123), when the church finally settled in Umuofia, it misled not only the low-born and outcasts but sometimes a worthy man like Ogbuefi Ugonna. Ogbuefi Ugonna is compared to the madman that had "cut the anklet of his title and cast it away". The German translators, Heusler and Petzold, rendered the expression he had "taken no title at all" *literally* as *"... hatte er nichteineneinzigen Titel erworben…*." [he had not acquired a single title (Achebe, 1958/1983:14)] transposing 'at all' with 'a single' without distorting the perspective and meaning of the idiom; and Strätling, "*hatte er keineneinzigen Titel...*" [he had taken no single title (Achebe 1958/2012:26)]. On Achebe (1958:123), the translators rendered the idiomatic allusion by *paraphrase* as:

> Den Fußreifmit den Zeichen seiner Titelwürdedurchtrennt und von sichgeworfen (Achebe 1958/1983:192) [to cut the anklet along with the dignity it symbolizes and throw it away] and "...seinen Titel-Fußreifzertrümmert und weggeworfenhatte (1958/2012:190) [to smash the anklet of his title and throw it away]

The verbal idiomatic phrase "'taken no title at all', occurring in the very first introductory chapter of the narrative, directly alludes to the social class structure of the Igbo. The entire narrative of *TFA* makes obvious the significance of titled men in the Igbo society of Umuofia. In a society without a 'visible' or 'pronounced' institution of kingship, the titled men constitute an indispensable focus of authority that takes part in every weighty decision the clan makes.

Titled men in Igbo society compare favourably to that privileged and prestigious class in German and European monarchical and feudal/agrarian society known as the nobility. "To take no title," means unable to accede to the social status of a noble, and "to cut the anklet of his title and throw it away" means in its context "to despise something of immense worth to

oneself". It, however, alludes to the cultural process by which a nobleman – a titled man could 'unnoble' himself or could be regarded to have been 'unnobled' in the culture. Joining the church becomes an act of "self-unnobling", for he (Ogbuefi Ugonna), literally, as it were, turned his back on the gods, the ancestors, the customs and mores – the culture, the basis upon which he was ennobled. This possibility and process of "self-unnobling" through joining another religion is previously unknown in the culture; it is created by the intruding colonial presence and religion. In the source culture, a noble or titled man demeans or loses the dignity of his status if he does not abide by the code of conduct that governs the noble status (Achebe 1958:48, 51).

In the entire narration of *TFA* in both translations, 'titled men' has been translated literally. No attempt was made to cross-refer to what is similar in the German culture between titled men in Igbo society and titled or noble men in comparable German society. Such cross-cultural reference could promote intercultural postcolonial understanding by establishing not only a measure of commonality in both cultures through which the same idea, object and meaning could be accessed but also, and more importantly, by establishing to the target reader the equal validity of the source culture. This is possible by the translating technique of *retention and guidance* or what could be called *semantic cushioning* whereby a literal translation is combined with paraphrase or elaboration. The passage could have been translated as follows:

> … hatte er keinen einzigen Titel erworben und deshalb zählt er nicht zu den adligen Männern des Dorfes. Außerdem war er hochverschuldet (...he had not acquired a single title and so was not one of the noblemen in the clan. Besides, he was heavily in debt.)

And the second text unit:

> „...den Fußreifseinenadligen Titel durchtrennt und weggeworfenhatte" (who cut the anklet of his noble title and threw it away)

Heusler and Petzold have, in the translation of the second text unit, added additional information that could help the target readers to know that the anklet is the symbol of dignity that goes with a title or social rank. This translation by guidance or note makes available to the target readers the knowledge of what the anklet stands for and still retains the items explained by the note in the translation. This is an aid to the knowledge of the source culture and to intercultural understanding, but not necessarily an aid to intercultural postcolonial understanding. The translators did not see the holding of title as a comparable noble rank in the German culture but simply a dignified position in the source culture.

The translations, in this instance, distance the source culture from the target culture or rather maintain the distance of the source culture to the target culture by, perhaps, 'unintentionally' drawing an artificial line of incomparability between source and target cultures thus rigidifying difference, engendering othering and enhancing primordial anti-sentiments rather than promoting productive dialogue that could achieve understanding. The translations suggest evidence of, perhaps an unintended, effort to control the discourse and dialogue of the cultures rather than effectively mediating the conflict. This distancing of the source culture 'might' be a way (perhaps unconsciously and unintentionally created) of preserving the target culture's claims of higher worth and meaning thus promoting the false assumptions of cultural inequality.

ii. Translating Family and Gender Relations

In *TFA* (Achebe1958:72-75), the Egwugwu adjudicates on the marital dispute between Uzowulu and his in-laws. The Egwugwu is the ancestral and highest judicial panel of the entire clan and also the spirit cult by which impersonated ancestral spirits participate in communal life. Uzowulu's in-laws have forcefully taken back their daughter (his wife) from her husband's house citing several cases of wife battering. The leading Egwugwu, Evil Forest, uses the proverbial saying below in mediating the conflict and accentuating the judgement of the Egwugwu:

> It is not bravery when a man fights a woman (Achebe, 1958, p.75)[5a]

Uzowulu should go to his in-laws with the traditional pot of wine and plead for his wife's return. The proverb is directed at Uzowulu in the immediate narrative context. Beyond its application to the immediate marital conflict, the proverb is phrased to also emphasize the relations between man and woman acceptable by and within the Igbo culture. The German translation by Heusler and Petzold[5b] renders the proverb:

> Es zeugt wahrlich nicht von Tapferkeit, wenn sich ein Mann mit seiner eigenen Frau schlägt (Achebe1958/1983:106). [It does not show bravery at all, when a man fights with his own wife.].

And Strätling renders the proverb thus:

> Es ist kein Mannesmut, wenn ein Mann seine Frau bekriegt (1958/2012:110). [It is not manly bravery, when a man wars with his wife.]

Both translations adopted the amplification technique by which semantic elements implied in contexts are identified and elaborated on in the translation. Amplification of context can

become a form of explicitation that rather than state the literal or exact words of the textual speaker assumes on what he/she *could or should* be saying in the context or situation (Eke 2012). The replacement or substitution of '…a man to fight a woman' with '… a man to fight with his own wife' in Heusler and Petzold (Achebe 1958/1983) and its exaggeration as '...man to war with his wife' in Strätling (1958/2012) amplifies the narrative situation and 'explicitates' the cultural context in the proverb.

Though accurately capturing and clarifying the exact social situation of the immediate narrative context, the translations permit a number of defects to intercultural postcolonial communication the most important being that they modify the perspective and meaning of the proverb in the socio-culture of the Igbo, thus othering and misrepresenting the Igbo by obscuring the accurate knowledge of their culture to the target readers. A woman in the proverb

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[5a & b] This illustration is reused here from Eke 2012 (see Reference). The usage here incorporates a comparative analysis with the 2012 translation of *TFA* by UdaSträtling.

includes both wife and 'non-wife'. The proverb shows the relations between man and woman considered appropriate and acceptable in the culture. In the Igbo culture, it is not bravery for a man to fight 'any' woman (Eke 2012).

The interventions of the translators permit the erroneous view that in the Igbo culture a man may justifiably fight with or beat a woman who is not his own wife. The translations thus subtly present the source culture as supporting wife-beating/battering, so demonizing and representing it to be reprehensible and inferior: "if the source culture justifies 'woman-battering', then it justifies wife-battering because a wife is also a woman" (Eke 2012).

A close reading of *Things Fall Apart* makes it clear that wife-battering/beating evidences a dysfunctional marital relation that needed to be healed or restored; and the culture provides for the institutions and mechanisms for such healing and restoration. The Strätling version's use of 'bekriegen', which figuratively means 'to fight', and literally 'to war', ambiguously amplifies the partner misunderstanding to armed conflict indirectly suggesting the precariousness of the woman's life in this patriarchal culture. This translation failed to correct the errors of the Heusler and Petzold version. The source culture is thus translated to be primitive, archaic and barbaric in its gender and family relations; the othering of the source culture is rather rigidified.

iii. Obfuscating and Reappropriating the Discourse of Civilisation and Colonisation

Furthermore, in *TFA* (Achebe 1958:166), the District Commissioner (DC) is led to the spot where Okonkwo hung himself. The lifeless body dangles from the tree. The DC is informed by Obierika and the other few men of Umuofia with him that the custom and tradition of Umuofia prevent them from touching or burying Okonkwo's corpse. His death is an abomination. They request the DC and his men, who are strangers in the clan, to bring the body down and bury it for a fee. The narrator relays the impression and thoughts of the DC from this encounter with the death of Okonkwo and from his experience in Africa:

> In the many years in which he had toiled to bring civilisation to different parts of Africa, he had learnt a number of things …[6]

The text unit is translated in Heusler and Petzold into German thus:

> In den vielen Jahren, in denen er sich redlich bemüht hatte, in einigen Teil Afrikas die Segnungen der Zivilisation zu verbreiten, hatte er eine Reihe von Dingen gelernt (Achebe 1958/1983:226).

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6. This illustration is reused here with more elaborate explanation to show thematic control of dialogic-discourse in postcolonial translation text relations. Cf. Eke 2022:53 (see reference) where the three German translations of TFA are compared

The translators amplify "to bring civilisation…" by adding" 'die *Segnungen*' der Zivilisationzuverbreiten …", that is, to spread *the blessings* of civilization in some parts of Africa.... (*Emphasis added*)

The supposedly satirical subtext '*the blessings of*' *civilisation* introduced into the target text subtly and ironically reinforces the ostensible and presumptive reason of Europe for the colonisation of Africa: colonisation is a blessing to Africa (see Eke, 2022, p.53). A Further critical reading of the Heusler and Petzold's translation, which emphasises the "blessings of" civilisation rather than civilisation, would seem to implicate the view that Europe, rather than bring civilisation –whatever that is – to Africa, brought the blessings of civilisation, which, ironically here, is colonisation. The resort to a religious motif and the interpretation of colonisation by the translators certainly object forcefully to Achebe's strong contention in *TFA* that colonialism rather destroyed the peace, harmony and cultures of Africa: "He [the white man] has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (1958:141). By the translation of Heusler and Petzold, Europe did not hurt African civilisation, if Africa really had one, and did not civilise Africa, whatever civilisation would mean, but only brought the blessings of European civilisation to Africa; for only Europe has civilization in comparison.

This subtle bias could be due either to a misreading of context by the translators, or as a deliberate or non-deliberate effort to subvert or muddle the view on Western civilisation

presented in that unit of the *TFA* narrative by adding a religious motif to soothe the eurocentric sensitivity or mindset of the target readership. Instructively, Strätling in a new translation of *TFA* into German removed that addition:

> In den langen Jahren, die er sich nun schonabmühte, diversenTeilenAfrikas die Zivilisationzubringen, hatte er so manches gelernt (1958/2012, p.224) [in the many years in which he has toiled to bring civilisation to different parts of Africa, he has learnt so many things]

Notwithstanding the removal, colonialism is still equated with civilisation to Africans.

iv. Translation of Title and Subversion of Source Cultural Identity

The title of the novel "Things Fall Apart" has been 'amplificatorily' translated in both the former East and West German versions into a single two-part title as *Okonkwo oder Das Altestürzt,*[7]that is, *Okonkwo or the Old Collapses* through a 'misreading' of the context and the meaning in which the novel is written or by a presumable but failed pursuit of what the

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[7] The East German version was a re-edition' and republication of Richards Moering's 1959 translation for *socialist states* in 1976 by Aufbau Verlag, East Berlin/Weimar). See Eke (2022:41)

author within the context of the novel "could" or "should" be saying. The title of the German versions contrasts that of the English source text which was excerpted from the poem of W.B. Yeats' "The Second Coming". (see also Eke 2022:54).

The first part of the title "Okonkwo" detached Okonkwo from the cultural community and unduly makes him the central focus of the narration rather than the cultural community, which cultural identity the author sets forth to present. Ibemesi takes a strong exception to this misrepresentation evident in the German title:

> Already in the title, Dagmar and Evelin [translators of the West German version; Richards Moering – translator of the East German version] show that they do not appreciate the major thrust of the novel, which is, to exhibit the communal consciousness among the Igbo. One of the themes of the novel is in fact 'Communalism'. If the translators of *Things Fall Apart* understand that the Igbo of the twenty-first century still attach much importance to communal living as against individualism of most developed countries of the West, then they would not have chosen the first part of the title for the novel as *Okonkwo.* The translators see the conflict narrated in the novel more as an alienation of the individual (Okonkwo) from his changing society. The singling out of the chief protagonist Okonkwo shows that he is seen as a lone individual struggling in a society turned

> upside down, thus, the novel is interpreted by some audience who read the novel only in translation as the tragedy of one man – Okonkwo (2005:314).

The "or" used in the German title to introduce the second part of the title to be of 'equal', 'similar' and 'interchangeable' value to the first part continues the implicit imposition of individualism on the *TFA* narration, that is, of the individual being above the collective. It also stereotypes the Igbo by respectively suggesting, on the one hand, that the fall or fate of Okonkwo is the fall or fate of the cultural community of Umuofia and, on the other hand, that Okonkwo symbolises the "Old" that collapses, the "Old" being the cultural personhood of the Igbo. In other words, Okonkwo is the replica of every Igbo man (or woman, as the case may be).

Whereas both Okonkwo and the Umuofia community go through the conflict of culture brought about by the intrusion of the colonial culture, Okonkwo additionally goes through a personal internal contradiction of self which, in his ignorance of the true nature of this "Himself-in-Conflict", he believes he could resolve through the continued coherence and stability of the Umuofia culture and community; for he aims to rise in rank in the culture to become one of the lords of the clan (Achebe 1958:104). This "becoming" for Okonkwo is an escape from the 'Self' in him that resembles his 'lazy' and 'improvident' father, Unoka, and he needs Umuofia culturally intact and whole to succeed in his flight.

Indeed, the reverse of the proposition put forward by the "or" in the German title is valid: the fate of Okonkwo, in so far as he sees the way and manner of resolving his contradiction of selfhood, is dependent on the fate of the community and its culture. The community is above the individual; Okonkwo is subsumed in the community not the other way. The acquiescence of the communal culture to the intruding colonial culture led Okonkwo to resign himself to the fate he suffered. The Umuofia community continued, though no more clothed in the full regalia and coherence of its traditional mores and customs, and Okonkwo failed "not because 'the old collapsed' but because he rejected without compromise any synthesis of the two cultures" (Mayanja 1999:189 [trans.]).

The second proposition implied in the "or" namely that Okonkwo is the replica of every Igbo man is not valid. The analysis above and the portrayal of Okonkwo in the *TFA* plot shows that he is a psychologically troubled man, a man on the run from himself, who neither fully understands himself nor does he fully appreciate the deep bonds of communality that holds the community together. While championing the course of cultural preservation of his community, he at the same time set himself against it with his excesses.

The second part of the German title "Das Alte stürzt" ignores the various levels of conflict at which the cultural encounter unfolds, for "Things' by no means refers only to 'the Old'" (Mayanja 1999:189). Again, Ibemesi takes a critical exception to this part of the German translation with details:

> The second part of the title by the translators as *Das Alte stürzt*which translates *The Old Crumbles* paints the picture of total destruction or collapse of a system. In other words, the African tradition crumbles on coming in contact with another. Achebe tries to portray in this novel series of conflicts in Igbo society at the point of contact with European colonizers. The conflicts are not restricted to institutions of religion and politics. The novel also thematises the conflicts of generations as shown for example in the relationship between Nwoye and his father Okonkwo. Conflict of generations is not a peculiarity of any culture. It is a phenomenon which is present in every culture. The novel is therefore neither a heroic novel in the tradition of a psychological novel nor a presentation of an overthrow of one tradition by another as some foreign interpreters tend to make it. The one major achievement which the author has aimed at, and succeeded is to counter the thesis that Africans have no culture before the coming of the Europeans. Therefore, Achebe cannot be crumbling a system which he tries to protect and to preserve for posterity (2005:315).

The translation of the *TFA* title is grossly inadequate. However, UdaSträtling (Achebe 1958/2012) in the latest translation of *TFA* into German renders the title briskly as "ALLES ZERFÄLLT", that is, "EVERYTHING FALLS APART". UdaSträtling avoided the error of the previous two, East and West German, translations of *TFA* title that obscured the communal cohesion of the Igbo culture, imposed western individualism on the culture, misconceived the nature of the cultural conflict, and stereotyped every Igbo to be 'Okonkwo', but it introduces a new arguable error of assuming that "Things" in Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" means 'everything'.

Conclusion

Postcolonial interculturality references both the difference and otherness of languages and cultures in asymmetrical, unequal and conflictual postcolonial interactions and also the communicative possibilities for dialogue and mutual understanding inherent in these relations. Postcolonial translation is one of these communicative possibilities.

Otherness results from the diversity and difference between cultures and languages creating the need for dialogic mediation to the challenges of difference in order to possibly achieve understanding for mutual coexistence. The natural and normal difference between cultures and languages is complicated by the ethnocentric self-indulgence of societies and cultures in their quest to appropriate unequal global worth and privileges. This self-indulgence thus creates a postcolonial condition in which the resultant dichotomy between the now hegemonic/imperial and the dominated/subject cultures and societies dovetail into overt and subtle struggles to retain hegemony on one hand and to assert and liberate the cultural self on the other hand. Intercultural mediation, therefore, must acknowledge and manage this conflict with all its implications. Mediation takes place mainly on discursive and dialogic communicative platforms that permit interlocutors to engage the conflict and discover themselves.

Postcolonial translation communication is one of such communicative platforms. The illustrations with text units from Chinua Achebe's *TFA* translated into German show how translations and translators of African postcolonial narratives can subtly, perhaps with the translators not being fully aware of it all the time, but strategically and certainly contest the counter-narratives to European negative and flawed proto-narratives on Africa through the dialogic and discursive engagement with the African postcolonial text. The gradual building of syntheses (mutual understanding and possibly agreements) in open-ended compromises is also seen in the mediation of UdaSträtling in the latest translation of *TFA* into German in which the counter-narrating of the Igbo African cultural identity in earlier German translations is apparently being corrected in many instances.

These evidences emphasise the relevance of critical engagement with African postcolonial texts translated into foreign languages, particularly into European languages. Such engagements would rectify distortions of African or/and European cultural identity details and enhance dialogic discourses that could bring about positive outcomes in textual communicative relations between Africa and Europe.

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