

Translation and National Growth and Development: Implications for Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Political, economic, social and cultural advancement has been the yardstick for determining the level of development of any country. In view of this, this paper seeks to examine the role of translation in fast-tracking national growth and development. Existing literature was reviewed to ascertain the contributions of translation to national development. In the course of the work, it was revealed that translation has had what the researchers called primary and secondary effects on national development. The primary effects refer to the provision of direct access to knowledge needed for development while the secondary effects have to do with positively reshaping the attitudes of recipients so as to create the enabling environment for economic activities to thrive. It was therefore recommended that governments at all levels should encourage the study and practice of translation through appropriate policies and legislations.

Keywords: Translation, Development, National growth, Effects of translation.

INTRODUCTION

National development has been described as “a multi-dimensional process involving the transformation and improvement of the economic, social and political situations” [1]. The issue of national growth and development has dominated national discourse in Nigeria in both the electronic and print media. While most Nigerians would quickly assert that the country has not made much progress in this crucial aspect of her national life, few would argue that appreciable progress has been made especially in the last democratic dispensation. Successive administrations have, at different times, assembled economic experts to brainstorm on the way forward for the country; yet so much appear not to have been achieved in this regard after close to fifty-five years of nationhood.

There is no doubt that during these brainstorming sessions, the experts focused on the primordial economic considerations by examining the performance of the factors of production-land, labour and capital. They must also have examined the cost of funds, labour and availability

of land. Suggestions relating to transfer of technology and attracting foreign direct investments must also have been made. There is no doubt that these beautiful suggestions had been made in the past and the country has remained under developed in spite of the implementation of these measures. If so much has been tried and very little has been achieved, the stakeholders should therefore take a second look at the steps so far taken. It is either that the right things have been done in the wrong ways or that all the vital steps have not been taken. Such countries as India and China that people often cite may have taken additional steps that the under developed ones, in their ignorance, neglected. Since much of the knowledge Nigeria needs to develop are expressed in foreign languages especially English [2], it might be necessary to examine the role translation, a professional activity that ensures effective transfer of knowledge across cultural boundaries, could play in bringing about national growth and development.

Being a mediator of source ideas across cultural and national boundaries, the translator is in a better position to understand development issues [3]. The translator may not be an economist but he could help in bridging the knowledge gap that exists between the Nigerian economists and their counterparts in India or China. He may also not be a sociologist but he could use his translated works to provide the right social environment for economic activities to thrive. Unknown to many developing countries, the highly advanced countries of the world have since realised the potentials of translation and have, over the years, exploited them not only for their economic gains but also to ensure sustainable national growth and development.

It is in realisation of the above that we have undertaken, in this study, to examine the role of translation in national growth and development. To achieve our objective, we wish to put the concepts of national growth and development in their proper perspectives. The concept of translation especially as mediation across cultural lines will also be highlighted. The specific role translation plays in national growth and development will also be x-rayed. There will finally be recommendations and conclusion.

The concepts of growth and development

These two concepts have often been used to assess the progress made by a given state. Viewed in this context, the Chambers 21st Century Dictionary defines growth as "an increase in economic activity or profitability". The word development is derived from the verb 'develop' which the same dictionary defines as "to bring into fuller use the natural resources of a country or region". From the above, we can infer that the concepts of growth and development can be taken to mean the optimal utilisation of the natural endowments of any country for economic gains. These natural endowments include both the human and material resources. This no doubt is the perception of most economists; hence they usually brandish the Gross Domestic

Product [GDP], the total value of all goods produced and all services provided by a nation in one year as the yardstick for assessing the level of development of any nation.

There are some, however, that feel that this view is not holistic since it does not capture the other vital aspects of the national life. Development, they argue, is not only made on the economic front. The concept of development has to be viewed from different angles; social, economic, political and cultural [4]. Okemakinde in his article "Women Education: Implication for National Development in Nigeria" quoted [5] as having stressed that:

Development is a process of economic, social, political and cultural change engineered in a given society by the efforts of all stakeholders both internal and external.

The same author also quoted [6] as having opined that:

Development means greater understanding of social, economic and political process, enhanced competence to analyse and solve problems of day-to-day living, expansion of manual skills, greater control over economic resources, restoration of human dignity, self respect and equality.

The definitions given above have brought to the fore the other angles to national development. Instead of focussing on the economic life of a nation only, the searchlight should also beam on the social, political and cultural aspects for a more holistic appraisal of a country's level of development. The human resources that drive the development efforts were also not left out in this new perception of the concept. We can therefore assert that the concepts of national growth and development involve the optimal utilisation of a country's natural resources for the purpose of economic, social, political and cultural advancement. A country is said to be

doing well in terms of development when it has made appreciable progress in all these fronts. With the broad view of national growth and development in mind, we shall now examine another important concept in this paper-translation.

The concept of translation

Every theorist tries to give his own definition of the term, translation. However, there is a consensus about what this professional activity involves. All the theorists and practitioners will readily accede to the assertion that it is a professional activity involving the transfer of ideas across linguistic and cultural boundaries [7], [8], [9]

In his article "Accommodation in Translation" published in 2005, Aiwei Shi said:

We believe translation is not merely linguistic conversion or transformation between languages but it involves accommodation in scope of culture, politics, aesthetics, and many other factors

In her own contribution, [10] added that:

Translation is not merely an inter-linguistic process. It is more complex than replacing source language text with target language text and includes educational nuances that can shape the options and attitudes of recipients

From the above quotations, what can be described as the three salient features of translation has emerged. The first is that translation involves an inter-linguistic process. This implies that more than one language is usually involved in this process. The second feature is that there is a cultural nuance to this professional activity. This also implies that while transferring the ideas or message from the source language to the target language, the translator does so with due cognizance of and respect for the cultures of both languages. The third feature and perhaps the most significant in the

context of this study is the revelation in one of the quotations that the product of translation is capable of reshaping the attitudes of its recipients. This is very significant because we had earlier observed that translation as a professional activity is capable of creating the enabling environment for economic activities to thrive. Having clearly defined the key concepts involved in this study-national development and translation, we would now proceed by highlighting the specific role translation plays in bringing about national growth and development.

Translation in national development

The impact translation has had in national development is enormous. We have chosen to categorize this into two-primary and secondary effects.

Primary effects of translation on national development

This is a situation where translation provides direct access to knowledge for national development. It is said that knowledge is power and it is often said as well that knowledge rules the world. Translation can best be described as the purveyor of knowledge that drives economic and political development of nations. This was the idea expressed by [11] when she said:

Rather than merely supplanting one form of words for another, the translator has the capacity to enhance our understanding of development issues and indigenous cultures by mediating ideas across cultural and national boundaries.

A publication on the "The Role of Translation in Nation Building, Nationalism and Supranationalism" the Indian Translators Association highlighted the numerous areas translation has some impacts on as follows:

Whether it is a matter of bilateral relations or multilateral relations between countries or a matter related to

international conferences
buyer-seller meets,
cooperate mergers,
buyouts, technology
transfers or joint ventures,
translation is always a
necessity without which
such communication would
fail.

Given the above scenario, one can say that the translator can be likened to the doctor without borders since there is no restriction with regard to the areas he can get into and dig out information from. He makes the necessary information available for all the professionals who are at the centre of national development. Since it is also said that no nation rises above the quality of its teachers, it therefore follows that the level of competence of Nigerian professionals is directly proportional to the quality of knowledge mediated to them through the instrumentality of translation. We wish to highlight the specific areas translation has positively influenced tremendously. Though John Stuart Mill, a British economist popularised the doctrine of "Laissez-faire" [leave us alone] in his book entitled the "Principles of Political Economy" published in 1848, it is known that this doctrine had its origin in 18th century France as highlighted by Encyclopaedia Britannica Online:

The doctrine of laissez-faire is usually associated with the economists known as physiocrats who flourished in France from about 1756 to 1778. The policy of laissez-faire received strong support in classical

economics as it developed
in Great Britain under the
influence of economist and
philosopher Adam Smith

The slogan today in economic circles is deregulation and private ownership of businesses. This is not only peculiar to Nigeria or the continent of Africa but it has been part of business life of the developed countries for more than two hundred years. It is very interesting to note that an idea that was introduced in France some two hundred and fifty years ago and that has been working very perfectly for them for so long is still being received with scepticism in Nigeria in the 21st century. The point to note however is not whether the idea came late to the country or not but that this popular idea which originated in France passed to the rest of the world including Nigeria through translation. Since it has contributed to the economic advancement of many countries and peoples of the world, much of the credit should go to the mediator of this idea which is translation. Some business outfits especially the multinational companies seem to have realised the potentials of translation in growing their businesses by reaching out to more customers of different linguistic backgrounds. This they have demonstrated by ensuring that inscriptions on their products are written in the languages that are accessible to their target audience. Consequently, people now see products bearing inscriptions in two or more different languages. Below are inscriptions on two medical products- Purecal and Impipénème.

PURECAL	
Inscriptions in English	Inscriptions in French
Chewable tablets of milk calcium	Comprimé croquables de calcium au lait
As directed by the physician	Comme dirigé par le medecin
Keep away from children	A tenir loin des enfants

IMIPENEME	
Inscriptions in English	Inscriptions in French
Keep all medicines out of the reach of children	Garder tout médicament hors de la portée des enfants
For the preparation of intravenous solutions, indications, dosage and Administration, precautions and Contra-indication: please see package insert	Pour la préparation des solutions intraveineuses, les indications, la posologie et le mode d'administration les précautions et les contre- indications : prière se référer à la notice à l'intérieur de la boîte

The above which shows the trend of presentation of medical and other products by the multinational companies in particular indicate that quite a number of them have realized that they can enhance their economic fortunes by diversifying the languages in which such products are presented. This is indeed a plus for translation as a factor in the economic advancements of individuals, companies and nations.

Translation and political development

It is equally important to highlight the role of translation in the political advancement of nations including Nigeria. [12] in her paper "The Importance of Translation Studies in Development Education" said

Translating narratives from the global South is an invaluable source of knowledge about unfamiliar languages, indigenous cultures and experiences, and is immensely useful for gaining an understanding of

non-European societies. Moreover translation can also have a critical influence in politics and can act as an agent for reconciliation or social integration.

Perhaps the most influential work in political philosophy was the one given by a popular French writer and philosopher. The words, democracy and sovereignty reverberate in almost every country of the world. The younger politicians use them without knowing their origin or the meaning of the concepts. We can therefore say that the doctrine of "Social Contract" was about the greatest legacy bequeathed to humanity by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the popular French writer. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, we gathered that Rousseau highlighted in the Social Contract that

Sovereignty [or the power to make laws] should be in the hands of the people, he also makes a distinction

between the sovereign and the government. The government is composed of magistrates, charged with implementing and enforcing the general will. The "sovereign" is the rule of law, ideally decided on by direct democracy in an assembly.

Rousseau lived from 28th June 1712 to 2nd July 1778. His work "Discourse on Political Economy" which embodies this principle of social contract was published in 1762. This political theory propounded two hundred and fifty three years ago is still very much in vogue in almost all the countries of the world today. Any country that has not adopted these democratic principles is despised and treated as a pariah state by the older democracies. It has to be placed on record that it was through the instrumentality of translation that the principle of social contract was able to get to the numerous countries that do not have French as their language. Translation has, thus, contributed towards furthering democratic ideals.

Another direct effect of translation in promoting national development is in the area of bridging the language barrier among business partners, thereby facilitating economic cooperation in one form or another across the globe. This is usually achieved through oral translation usually called "interpreting". To boost economic activities among individuals, public enterprises and nations, economic experts and business moguls move across the globe and sometimes venture into places where they encounter language problems. During such difficult moments or even before embarking on the trip, they usually solicit the assistance of interpreters who make their services available to them during such hours of great need. This same view was expressed by [5] when they pointed out that:

People have to criss-cross the globe for political, diplomatic, scientific, economic, sporting and religious reasons. All the situations cited above

require the use of language. Since no one can ever speak all the world's languages, the need to translate ideas, concepts, notions and words from one language into another cannot be over emphasized.

It has to be stressed that where language barrier exists, cooperation among individuals and groups for whatever reason would be very difficult. Therefore, facilitating interpersonal and international cooperation is another sure way translation furthers national development. Having seen the primary effects of translation on national development, we will now examine the secondary effects of translation on national growth and development.

Secondary effects of translation on national development

We had earlier pointed out that translation could contribute towards creating an enabling environment for economic activities to thrive. Creating enabling environment in this case refers to shaping the attitude of the human elements in the production chain for maximum productivity. It is incontrovertible that no meaningful development can take place in an environment that is ridden with crises. The insurgency in the North East of Nigeria has virtually crippled political and economic activities in the states that are grappling with it. The devastation of the environment and the crippling of economic activities were caused by human beings and not by plants or lower animals. The kind of education the insurgents received through the kinds of literature they read and the kind of teaching they were given contributed in no small way to the type of orientation they have about human life and the way they see public property.

It is also true that people with more positive attributes would have been produced if they had teachers that inculcated in them the need to uphold the sanctity of human life. Such teachers would also have exposed them to other forms of literature that give them hope

about life and portray human beings as people who aspire to greatness through imbibing good virtues and not by harbouring and nurturing destructive tendencies. There is no doubt that most great men have been made by the kind of schools they attended and the forms of literature they read as well of course by the kind of company they kept. Most people, however, are unaware that some of those great books that had tremendous effects on their lives are translations of works written in foreign languages. The Holy Bible, for instance, which has shaped the lives of many and which has revolutionized religious practice in the entire world, was originally written in a language no other group but the Jews could have deciphered. In the same vain, "The African Child" has been read by many Nigerians and the younger generation must have learned how to cherish their traditions from it. The book, however, was not originally written in English. The author, Camara Laye came from Guinee and he wrote his work in French with the title "L' Enfant Noir". For many years, translated literature has influenced humanity in various ways. [8] made it clear when she said that "translations can shape the options and attitudes of recipients"

In his contribution, Dr Suh Joseph Che of the University of Buea, Cameroon said:

Translation can be considered to be that indispensable cohesive element which mediates between the well over 280 different Cameroonian ethno-linguistic and cultural groups.

If translation has successfully mediated between the over 280 different linguistic and cultural groups in Cameroon, it could do the same in Nigeria with well over 500 linguistic groups. It is also possible that the utter neglect of this very important discipline by the successive governments in Nigeria has contributed to the tales of woe in the country with regard to interpersonal and inter-ethnic relationships. Inter-ethnic rivalry has been experienced in both the Northern

and Southern parts of the country. Sometimes these have degenerated into hostilities. Thorough investigation could reveal that communication gaps resulting from linguistic barriers are at the centre of these ever recurring inter- ethnic conflicts.

Translation therefore can lead to better understanding among the different linguistic groups, enhance harmonious coexistence and create a more favourable climate for economic, political and social activities.

Unknown to many, anybody that has gone through the formal system of education has benefitted in one way or the other from translated works. Most of the educational theories in use in our schools today are derived from philosophies and theories propounded by Greek and French philosophers. The ideas of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rene Descartes and Denis Diderot have continued to influence teaching and learning in one way or the other. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for instance, maintained that once a child has been taught to 'reason', he has no need for further education. Today, we talk about Quantitative and Verbal Reasoning at the lower levels while logic constitutes a major aspect of philosophical study in tertiary institutions. It should be pointed out that because of the skilful way the translator does his work, most people read these translations without knowing that these are works translated from other people's original works. These treasures hidden in numerous books written in foreign languages all over the world would have been lost for ever but for the noble profession of translation. When people say that knowledge is power or that knowledge rules the world, they should remember to give the credit to translators who work day in day out to make this knowledge available to men at little or no cost.

Implications of the study to Nigeria

This study on Translation and National Growth and Development has a lot of implications for Nigeria. Nigeria is a country in the West African sub-region with a population of well over one

hundred and seventy million people. The country also has over five hundred ethno-linguistic groups as Anyabuiké observed in his article entitled "The National Language Question in Nigeria: The Way Out". The country is bedeviled with a lot of political, economic, social and cultural challenges arising from linguistic diversity and multiple ethnicities. This study has revealed that the geographical entity called Nigeria has a lot to benefit from translation, the professional activity that ensures the free flow of ideas across cultural boundaries.

The country is in dire need of current ideas to improve the skills of its professionals in the various sectors of the economy. From the study, it is obvious that translation can make these ideas available to those that need them from any part of the globe.

Nigeria has also been grappling with the intractable problem of uniting its citizens who have been singing discordant tunes since independence due to linguistic and religious differences. These differences which have caused and may continue to cause serious problems for the people if

not properly handled can easily be resolved through the instrumentality of translation. If translators are engaged to translate the two religious books used by both the Christians and Muslims in the three major Nigerian languages, Nigerians will be amazed at the result this effort will yield. Nigerians from different parts of the country will begin to embrace one another for they would have realized that they had been saying the same thing all these while but in different words. May be it is only then that Nigerians will begin to talk about genuine reconciliation and more enduring peace in the land.

The country, Nigeria is also bothered by the negative tendencies of its youth. This study has also shown that people's attitudes can be reshaped by what they read. Seasoned translators can be engaged to provide the needed forms of literature that can give the Nigerian reading public especially the youth the type of orientation they need in life. From all indications, Nigeria has so much to gain and nothing to lose by engaging the services of translators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The policy makers in Nigeria should realize the immense benefits the country can derive by engaging the services of translators in the various sectors of the economy. They should therefore formulate and enact appropriate laws to facilitate this.
2. Different translation teams should be commissioned by government to work on identified areas of need to further the country's political, social, economic and cultural development. There should at least be three teams. The first should be made up of literary translators who will look out for books written in foreign languages that could be translated for the sole purpose of positively influencing the behavior of Nigerian youth and adult population alike. Such books and others like them could be made compulsory in the public secondary schools so as to reach

the targeted readers. The second team will work on other books that provide general knowledge for the professionals in the other fields. The third should serve as in-house translators charged with the responsibility of translating government policies into the three major Nigerian languages-Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. Other business outfits and multinational co operations should also be encouraged, through appropriate policies and legislation to engage the services of in-house translators to take care of their day to day translation needs and to accompany officials on overseas trips.

3. Having realized the importance of translation to the life of any country, governments at all levels should encourage departments offering Translation Courses in the colleges and universities through

scholarship awards and grants for the provision of facilities in such schools.

4. Government should also encourage the establishment of Translation

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the contributions of translation to national growth and development as well as the implications of this to Nigeria. In this paper, growth and development were taken to mean the optimal utilization of a country's human and material resources for economic gains. It was discovered that translation has had tremendous effects on the social, political, economic and cultural development of many nations because the theories and philosophies that have shaped the conduct of professionals in the various sectors of the economy have

Anyabuiké Associations in the country. Such professional associations are very important as they regulate the conduct of members to enhance standards.

been made available to the experts through translation. We observed that Nigeria needs urgently the services of translators as these professionals could deploy their skills in tackling most of the political and economic problems that have impeded her growth and development since independence. Appropriate recommendations were therefore made which, if adopted, could be very useful in harnessing the potentials of translation for the country's optimal growth and development.

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