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See table of contents

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Article abstract

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Abstract
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Keywords: cultural knowledge, cultural representation, African cultural identity, critical intercultural communication, Chinua Achebe

Résumé
La traduction de *Things Fall Apart* (*TFA*) en allemand a suscité un intérêt pour l'interaction des langues et surtout pour la communicatiotn textuelle interculturelle germano-africaine dans le cadre plus large des relations culturelles et postcoloniales euro-africaines. La publication d'une troisième traduction allemande de *TFA*, *Alles Zerfällt*, en 2012 par Uda Strätling promet une lecture alternative et peut-être une représentation plus vraie des connaissances culturelles et de l'identité africaines par rapport aux deux traductions précédentes. S'appuyant sur la théorie de la signification d'I.A.

Richards, la théorie du skopos et les théories postcoloniales, cette étude examine, par le biais d'une analyse interculturelle critique d'unités culturelles textuelles sélectionnées, le transfert de savoirs culturels africains du texte source dans les trois traductions, afin d'élucider la manière dont l'identité culturelle africaine est représentée au lectorat cible. Si la version de Strätling semble représenter plus adéquatement les connaissances culturelles et l'identité du texte source, notre étude montre qu'elle perpétue néanmoins l'exotisation de la culture africaine comme archaïque, primitive et inférieure.

Mots-clés : connaissance culturelle, représentation culturelle, identité culturelle africaine, communication interculturelle critique, Chinua Achebe

Introduction

The cultural turn in translation studies in the 1980s emerged from the insight that literary texts were primarily constituted of culture not language; language itself being a reflection and vehicle of culture (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990). Thus, translation does not take place between languages but between cultures (Snell-Hornby, 1988, p. 46). This insight shifted the focus from translation as text to translation as culture and politics, and from translation as equivalence to translation as rewriting and manipulation. Translation studies now takes into consideration textual meaning production, transfer, and reception, as well as the cultural, political, and ideological contexts and conditions of knowledge, questions of cultural knowledge, cultural identity claims and ascriptions, (mis)representation, and power.

Consequently, it becomes possible to examine translation-mediated textual communicative relations between the supposedly former colonizer and colonized cultures and societies of Europe and Africa and thus to engage the motivating question for this study: How are the people, culturally defined and presented as an identity in the source text, translated in relation to "the cultural other" of the target text within the dialogic discursivity of the translated text?

The concept of identity has been problematized, especially in postmodernist thought, which has distilled it into a hybrid multifocal phenomenon that is fluid, unstable, changeable at will, and, ultimately, "unidentifiable" (Bauman, 1996, p. 18; see also Eke, 2012, p. 22; Forghani *et al.*, 2015, pp. 99-102). Francis Fukuyama, however, conceived identity as "the authentic inner self" that is "the basis of human dignity" and primarily grows "out of a distinction between one's true inner self and an outer world of social rules and norms that does not adequately recognize that inner self's worth

or dignity" (2019 [2018], pp. 9-10). Stuart Hall, in his analysis of cultural identity in the Caribbean diaspora, articulates two conceptual positions. First, he conceives cultural identity as "one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self,' hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves,' which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (1990, p. 223). Within this conception, "our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people,' with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history" (*ibid.*). Second, he accounts for the discontinuities and transformations of "being" brought about by "the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power" (*ibid.*, p. 225), which emphasizes the formation of hybrid and multicultural identities that are both "being" and "becoming" (see also Eke, 2012, pp. 22-23).

Fukuyama and Hall share the insight that there is a defining and stable core of identity to which other transient, always evolving and changeable categories attach themselves. But while identity may be attached to this core, it can still be differentiated from it. With respect to the multicultural constitution of the Caribbean self, for example, Hall identifies three distinct presences or "selfs": *Présence Africaine, Présence Européenne*, and *Présence Américaine*, meaning that there are identifiable and distinguishable African, European, and American cultural identities within the Caribbean self, despite the hybrid or multicultural identities it accommodates. Of *Présence Africaine*, Hall notes:

> *Présence Africaine* is the site of the repressed. Apparently silenced beyond memory by the power of the experience of slavery, Africa was, in fact present everywhere: in the everyday life and customs of the slave quarters, in the languages and patois of the plantations, in names and words, often disconnected from their taxonomies, in the secret syntactical structures through which other languages were spoken, in the stories and tales told to children, in religious practices and beliefs, in the spiritual life, the arts, crafts, musics and rhythms of slave and post-emancipation society. Africa, the signified which could not be represented directly in slavery, remained and remains the unspoken, unspeakable "presence" in Caribbean culture. It is "hiding" behind every verbal inflection, every narrative twist of Caribbean cultural life. It is the secret code with which every Western text was "re-read." It is the

> ground-bass of every rhythm and bodily movement. *This* was—is—the "Africa" that "is alive and well in the diaspora." (1990, p. 230)

Though African cultures are pluralistic and diverse, an African cultural identity is here conceived in the singular, inspired by Hall and following Udeani, in reference to those shared traits, attributes, and features of African cultures, which "when considered together make all the rest a logical complement, i.e. non-Africa, non-African" (Udeani, 2001, p. 46).

This study is situated within the dialogue of cultures between Africa and Europe as they are represented in the German translations of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (*TFA*). Whereas European proto-narratives presented Africa as being without culture and history, Achebe argues differently by inscribing elements of "African" cultural knowledge and identity that run counter to this perception. Specifically, the German translations of *TFA* are examined through a descriptive-comparative identification and analysis of culture-specific elements in the source and target texts, and of the translation strategies mobilized by the translators.

1. Context and Study Design

1.1 Cultural Knowledge and Representation

The discursive-narrative mode of generating intelligibility or knowledge that belongs to a particular culture and society, that is, cultural knowledge, used by Chinua Achebe in *TFA* and replicated by the literary translators, emerges from long-standing traditions of storytelling, oral history, accounts of personal and group memory, and a variety of literary genres that incudes historical writing, the novel, and scientific accounts of cross-time change (Gergen, 2005, p. 100; Ruelle and Peverelli, 2016, p. 3). Through the construction, affirmation, and representation of cultural identity, discursive narrative generates cultural knowledge by presenting a way of talking or telling that is unique to narratives. By telling its story discursively, narrative weaves cultural knowledge into a coherent whole, such that to narrate is to engage in a dialogue that also creates and represents.

Cultural knowledge is here broadly conceived as the body of knowledge of a people that has the potential of identifying and differentiating them as a distinct cultural group and of shaping or influencing perceptions of, and attitudes and behaviours towards them. This comes from an awareness of or familiarity with their

(entire) way of life, including their values, beliefs, habits, customs, traditions, institutions, environment, and everyday social lives—the "mentifactual, sociofactual and artifactual aggregates which in turn define and constitute the way [they] are born, live, die and are buried" (Afigbo, 2000, n.p.). This knowledge thus embodies all the cultural elements or features unique to a people, constituting, as it were, their cultural personality or identity. Encapsulating the concept of cultural knowledge, George Dei notes that "cultural knowledge speaks to the dynamism of cultures, a significance of a rootedness in place, history and culture" and "positions identity and, by extension, identifications as historically constituted and laden with politics" (2011, pp. xii-xiii).

The literary translator occupies a strategic position in the narrative communicative space of cultural knowledge, acting as the intervening agent through whom this knowledge is textually transferred or exchanged between different cultures and languages. The translator's strategic role is related, on one hand, to the cultural diffuseness of the literary text and, on the other hand, to the immense significance of cultural knowledge in the formation of impressions of cultural identity and the shaping of attitudes, behaviours and responses in intercultural relations. Although the translator's status as an author, co-author or non-author is still being debated (Schulte, 1993; Venuti, 2014 [1995]; Zeller, 2000; Pym, 2011; Khatun, 2018), the significance of his/her creative ability to bring the message of the source text to a readership in a different language and culture is not in doubt. Moreover, the translator's differentiable narrative voice bears the voices of both the author and source text narrator, which, in translation, may also diverge from either or both. (Hermans, 1996, pp. 27-28; Chiavi, 1996, p. 3; Munday, 2008, pp. 14-19; Zhang, 2016, pp. 179 and 181). The translator's voice is critical to the integrity of the message and meanings being translated, insofar as it represents the source culture and shapes its cultural identity in the perception of the target readership.

Representation in this study references the production of meaning across cultures using language (words, signs, images) to describe or depict definite conceptions and perceptions of the phenomena (including events, places, relationships, activities, objects, institutions) and people of one culture by another culture (Hall, 1997, pp. 15-16 and 61). The conceptions and perceptions of this other produced through words, signs and images become the tool for

conditioning the thoughts or the "thinking" about this other culture, its cultural phenomena and its people.

In *TFA*, Chinua Achebe discursively and dialogically narrates an African culture into textual existence in an "english" that is subsumed in the Igbo culture and that interrogates and refutes the colonizers' and excolonizers' denial of African identity (see Achebe, 1965, p. 30 on the nativization of English; Igboanusi, 2002 on Igbo English). His narration has a double-pronged authorial communicative purpose. While for the African reader, he writes:

> I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my [African] readers that their past…with all its imperfections was not one long night of savagery from which the Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them (1975, pp. 44-45);

for the non-African and, especially, European reader he writes:

> African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, […] their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, and […] they had poetry, and above all, they had dignity. (1973, p. 8)

In translating the Igbo source culture and identity for a German target readership, the German translators produce a narrative rendering of Igbo African "knowledge." This study is concerned with how adequately the German translations represent this knowledge within the asymmetry and conflict of postcolonial relations.

1.2 Problematizing the Study—Translations of *Things Fall Apart* into German

The most outstanding credit to Chinua Achebe in his African classic *Things Fall Apart* is that, successfully, he narratively weaves together the disparate details, images, and themes of an African culture, the Igbo culture, into such splendid and convincing coherence and harmony that the European proto-narrative arguments on the non-existence of culture and "humanity" in Africa collapsed (Irele, 2000, p.1; Alam, 2014; Awa, 2018, p. 16). Achebe's accomplishment opened the floodgates to a wave of research on postcolonial, dialogical, and discursive-textual relations between Europe and former colonized third-world countries (Okpewho, 2003). One area of interest to have emerged from this is the translation of African cultural texts into European languages and cultures, including German.

The translation of *TFA* into German has elicited interest not only in terms of language interaction, but also in German-African textual intercultural relations within a broader Euro-African postcolonial context. Two German translations of *TFA* (1958) were published prior to 2012. The first was *Okonkwo oder das Alte Stürzt* translated by Richard Moering, published in 1959 (Henry Goverts Verlag, Leipzig), and republished 17 years later as *Ausgabe für die sozialistischen Länder* [edition for socialist states] in 1976 by Aufbau Verlag (East Berlin and Weimar), the largest East German publisher specialized in socialist and Russian literature (Hueting, 1984, pp. 52-53). This later edition presumably passed through the strict censorship controls, because literary works and translations allowed into communist East Germany had to promote and strengthen socialist world views, values, social cohesion, and culture (Thomson-Wohlgemuth, 2003, pp. 243-248; Blum, 2022, pp. 292-293 and 305). The second was *Okonkwo oder das Alte Stürzt* translated by Dagmar Heusler and Evelin Petzold and published in 1983 (Suhrkampf Verlag, Frankfurt am Main).

The publication of a third German translation of *TFA*, *Alles Zerfällt*, in 2012 by Uda Strätling (S. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main), completes a trilogy, as it were, of German translations of *TFA*, representing an up-to-date, comprehensive German textual response to the narration of an African cultural identity in the Achebean African classic. Given that Strätling's translation appeared in the post-Cold War period following the reunification of the former two Germanys in 1990, it promises an alternative reading to the two earlier translations and, possibly, a truer representation of the African cultural identity presented in *TFA*. Indeed, the potential for a new reading is suggested by Olalere (2021), who claims that at the time of Strätling's translation, Igbo culture had gained international familiarity, and Achebe had already been positively received in the German literary scene. This translation, however, has not been examined through the lens of a postcolonial analysis that takes into account textual dialogue between Europe and Africa and the discourse on cultural identity and representation that emerges from it.

Specifically, the present study investigates the impact of Uda Strätling's translation on the German and European response to the Achebean classic through its representation of African cultural knowledge and identity claims for a German readership. It examines whether authorial purpose has been preserved in the translation, the latter's influence on German perception of African cultural

knowledge and identity, and the effectiveness of translators' and publishers' translation approaches and techniques in conveying cultural knowledge and identity. These questions will be considered against the backdrop of the two previous German translations and within the context of European and African textual, intercultural, and postcolonial dialogue.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This study draws on three complementary theories: I.A. Richards' context theory of meaning (1950 [1936]) adapted to intercultural communication theory (Griffin, 1997, pp. 57-68), postcolonial theory, and the skopos translation theory of Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer (1984).

Richards' theory of meaning claims that misunderstanding in communication is chiefly a result of "proper meaning superstition" (1950 [1936], p. 11)—the wrong but widely held belief that each word has a precise, correct, proper use and meaning of its own and that when people use these words they are communicating effectively. Richards asserts that meaning does not reside in words and texts but emerges from people's experiences and interactions in socio-cultural contexts (Ogden and Richards, 1923, pp. 9-12, 14 and 210). While this theory ignores ideologies and motives in the use of words by not considering intentionality in conversation or communication, it is useful in this study for analyzing the meaning-value of words and expressions that translators choose to represent the socio-cultural discourse arising from communicative contexts.

Postcolonial theory holds that the postcolony—the geographically unmarked space of encounter and interaction between supposedly former colonizer and colonized societies and cultures—is still marked, on the one hand, by domination and subservience, exploitation, expropriation, and cultural erasure; displacement, exclusion, and exile; alternity, sub-alternity, hybridity, and silence and, on the other hand, by asymmetry and conflicts, resistance and defiance carried over from the era of geographically marked imperial colonization (Said, 1994 [1978], pp. 39-41 and 43-44; Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994; Ashcroft *et al.*, 1995, p. 2; Quayson, 1998, p. 578). As Michael Nausner notes, the theory shows that "indeed the 'post' in postcolonial theory […] cannot be understood as a chronological description of a new time span but rather needs to be seen as a prefix qualifying a cultural atmosphere shot through with subtle

power mechanisms that are a legacy of old style colonialism" (2012, p. 1). These relations continue today with expanding capitalism and globalization. Postcolonial theory explains the context of asymmetry and conflict in intercultural relations.

In skopos theory, Reiss and Vermeer contend that translation strategies and target text outcomes are determined by the purpose of the target text as set by commissioners (those who contract out the translations) and in the translation briefs (the instructions given by oneself or by someone else). These outcomes can diverge from or completely evade the authorial purpose and function of the source text through the manipulation of the latter's function and message (Reiss and Vermeer, 1984, pp. 95-96, 100 and 134; Schäffner, 2001, pp. 235-236; Eke, 2016, pp. 350-354). Skopos theory thereby reveals the power that translators, clients, commissioners, publishers, editors, and receivers have over texts; they are communicative agents who are active within the overall process of realizing the skopos of a translation activity (Yi, 2013, pp. 75-76; Chesterman, 2017, pp. 63-64). Their power over texts refers to their ability to influence, manipulate, and reorder knowledge in the translated text and to determine how a source text and culture may be read, understood, viewed, and engaged by the target/receiver readership and culture. Importantly, skopos theory explains and establishes the question of motive in translation-mediated intercultural communication and has been used to explain translation approaches, techniques, and outcomes in relation to purpose.

1.4 Methodology

This is a text-based descriptive-comparative study of purposively selected cultural text units (CTUs) that carry aspects of cultural knowledge or representation of culture, and of postscripts or blurbs from four texts (a source text and its three translations into German) across eight cultural categories adapted from Peter Newmark (1998, p. 95). The cultural categories are: proverbs (PVB); cultural idioms and figurative usages (CIFU); personal and kinship names and honorifics (PKNH); customs and ceremonies, rituals and observances (CCRO); ecology, terms, and concepts (ETC); material culture and artefacts (MCA); organizations, institutions, divinities, and cults (OIDC); and body-text cultural signifiers (BTCS). The four texts are: *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe (1958—ST); *Okonkwo oder das Alte stürzt*, translated by Richard Moering (1959—TT1); *Okonkwo oder das Alte*

Stürzt, translated by Dagmar Heusler and Evelin Petzold (1983—TT2); *Alles Zerfällt*, translated by Uda Strätling (2012—TT3).

Based on their potential as cultural signifiers, a total of 146 CTUs were isolated from the ST for analysis across the three German translations (making a total of 438 CTUs for the three TTs) in the following distribution and percentage across the eight cultural categories: (1) PVB=34 [23.3%]; (2) CIFU=32 [21.9%]; (3) PKNH=12 [8.2%]; (4) CCRO=11 [7.5%]; (5) ETC=8 [5.5%]; (6) MCA=24 [16.4%]; (7) OIDC=18 [12.3%] (8) BTCS=7 [4.8%]. Due to space constraints, 51 CTUs (i.e. 204 CTUs for the four texts and 153 for the 3 TTs) representing over one third or 34.9% of total isolated CTUs were selected for analysis by purposive quota sampling from each of the eight cultural categories in the following distributions: PVB=11, CIFU=11, PKNH=4, CCRO=4, ETC=3, MCA=8, OIDC=6, BTCS=4. The selection of individual CTUs from each of the categories for analysis was deliberate and focused on the aims of this study. Data were subjected to critical content and translation analysis and simple percentage presentations.

Three translation approaches also adapted from Newmark (1982 [1981]) are used to frame the analysis: the semantic, communicative, and semantic-communicative approaches to translation, as well as the techniques that underpin each of them. Techniques associated with the semantic approach mostly privilege the source text, paying close attention to its form or its aesthetic and expressive values. They attempt to convey the source text message without interpretation, ensure the referential accuracy or truth of the information conveyed, and focus on the source text function and the source text author's intention (*ibid*., pp. 39 and 47; Chen and Qian, 2022, p. 2). Translation, here, operates at the level of the source culture, ensuring its accessibility to the target reader (Bandia, 1993, p. 58). The communicative approach and its techniques involve modifications and alterations to the source text. Translators attempt to improve on the meaning and message of the source text (unit), often with the expectations and acceptance of the target culture and readership in mind (Newmark, 1982 [1981], pp. 39 and 42). This approach "tries to avoid foreignness in the choice of words and sentence structures" (Reiss, 1983, p. 302) and gives the translator greater freedom to interpret the source text, adjust the style, eliminate ambiguity, and even correct the author's mistakes. In prioritizing the communicative purpose and target text function, it may "break the limitation of the original text" (Chen and Qian, 2022,

p. 2). The semantic-communicative approach is based on the adoption of mixed semantic and communicative techniques to achieve a more or less semantic or communicative result. In our analyses, we emphasize the extent to which the approaches and techniques employed ensure accurate representation of source cultural knowledge and identity in postcolonial (textual) relations.

Adequacy is conceived here as the cultural appropriateness of translation decisions and "the choice of linguistic signs in relation to the purpose of translation (though the purpose of the translation may not be that of the source text)" (Reiss, p. 303). Given that skopos theory does not provide a step-by-step strategy for achieving the skopos in the translation process or for knowing the skopos of a translated text (Sunwoo, 2007), and in the absence of paratexts that could provide clues as to the translators' objectives in undertaking their translations of the Achebean text (Eke, 2011), this study adopts, for the purpose of analysis, the working hypothesis that the translators intended to pursue the same skopos in the TTs as the author did in the ST, which, briefly put, is to show that Africa has culture, identity, and human dignity. The purpose and cultural content of the ST are, therefore, the points of departure for the analyses (see Chesterman, 2000).

Translations are classified as inadequate or adequate according to the presence or absence of errors in the transfer of a cultural text unit. Translation errors are defined as anything that obstructs the purpose of a translation to achieve a particular source text function in the target text (Nord, 2018, p. 68). In our analyses, this points to the difference between what the cultural source text unit conveys about the source culture and the translator's rendering of this in the target text in a way that—intentionally or not— misinforms about cultural knowledge, misrepresents the source culture and its cultural identity, or deviates from the author's overall communicative purpose. This difference may take the form of mistranslation, under-translation, over-translation, or non-translation. However, "mistranslation" is sometimes used in this study to stand for "translation error" generally.

2. Three Sample Analyses

Given the vast amount of data obtained in this study, three sample analyses have been purposively selected from three cultural categories to demonstrate the application of the theoretical framework and foreground the translation approaches and techniques used. The cultural categories are cultural idioms and figurative usages (CIFU),

customs and ceremonies, rituals, and observances (CCRO), and material culture and artefacts (MCA).

SAMPLE 1: CIFU

ST **The church had led many astray not only the low-born** (p. 139)

TT1 *Die Kirche hatte manche Seele auf Irrwege gelockt, nicht nur die niedrig Geborenen* (p. 192)
[The church had lured many souls astray, not only the low-born]

TT2 *Die christliche Kirche hatte manche Seele in die Irre geführt; nicht nur Menschen von geringem Ansehen* (p. 192)
[The Christian church had misled many souls; not only people of low repute]

TT3 *Die Kirche hatte viele vom rechten Weg gelockt, nicht nur die niedrig Geborenen* (p. 190)
[The church had lured many away from the right path; not only the low-born]

Translation approaches and techniques

TT1	Semantic-communicative:	literal, explicitation
TT2	Semantic-communicative:	literal, explicitation, elaboration, modulation
TT3	Semantic:	literal

Analysis

The translations of TT1 and TT2 use the semantic-communicative approach, which includes literal translation, explicitation of context, elaboration, modulation of perspective, and slight stylistic variations. The semantic approach has been deployed in TT3 using the literal technique and retaining the information of the source text unaltered. TT2 adds *christlich* [Christian] to qualify church, and both TT1 and TT2 add "souls" as the object qualified by "many" in the source text unit, thus highlighting the religious context in which the spiritual essence of a person is the soul. TT2 translates 'low-born' as people of low repute.

"Low-born" in the source text refers to a "commoner"—*Ofeke*, in Igbo (Opata and Asogwa, 2017, p. 3) and *ein Bürgerliche*, in German —, somebody without noble rank or title. He is contrasted to a "worthy man" (*TFA*, p. 139), a man of title, "whose word was heeded in the assembly of the people," like Ogbuefi Ugonna "who had taken two titles" (*ibid.*). The translation of "low-born" as "people

of low repute" in TT2 thus modulates the cultural perspective of the text unit.

However, this translation of the idiomatic phrase can be regarded as an improved rendition of the narrator's use of the expression, since the literal meaning of "low-born" is misleading within a proper contextual understanding of the source culture. Indeed, whereas the term connotes a hereditary class rank of being born into a commoner's family, the source culture's traditional or noble titles are not inherited (Iwuagwu, 2010); rather "a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father" (*TFA*, p. 7). The intervention in TT2 is thus significant for its use of a term that contrasts the noble title in German traditional culture, inherited by every legitimate child of a nobleman (Almanach de Saxe Gotha, 2022), in which "low-born" [*Niedriggeborene*] and "high-born" [*Hochgeborene*] are descriptions of titular non-inheritance or inheritance, respectively. The TT2 translation thus appears to be particularly sensitive to the target culture and readership while also adequately representing source-culture knowledge.

SAMPLE II: CCRO

ST	**(a) naming ceremony**	**(b) naming ceremony** (pp. 61 and 62)
TT1	(a) *Zeremonie der Namengebung*	(b) *Namengebung* (pp. 87 and 88)
	[(a) name-giving ceremony	(b) name-giving]
TT2	(a) *Taufe*	(b) *feierlichen Namensgebung* (pp. 88 and 89)
	[(a) christening	(b) ceremonial name-giving]
TT3	(a) *Zeremonie der Namengebung*	(b) *Namenszeremonie* (pp. 94 and 95)
	[(a) ceremony of name-giving	(b) naming ceremony]

Translation approaches and techniques

TT1	(a) Semantic: literal	(b) Semantic: literal
TT2	(a) Communicative: substitution	(b) Semantic: literal
TT3	(a) Semantic: literal	(b) Semantic: literal

Analysis

TT1a and b, TT2b and TT3 have been translated semantically using the literal technique with slight variations in style. TT2a, is, however,

translated communicatively with the substitution technique and introduces ambiguity to the source cultural knowledge conveyed in the text unit. "Naming ceremony" is used in the narrative in relation to the recurring child-deaths suffered by Okonkwo's second wife, Ekwefi, for whom "the naming ceremony after seven market weeks became an empty ritual" (*TFA*, p. 54). When on the instruction of a medicine-man, she had to go and live with her old mother in another village during her third pregnancy, she only returned after the birth of the child "three days before the naming ceremony" (*ibid.*, p. 55).

While both "naming ceremony" and "christening" entail giving a proper name to a newborn child, they are associated with different cultures and religions, one traditional and animist, the other "modern" and Christian. Viewing the Igbo naming ceremony from the target culture's perspective of "christening" denies the indigeneity of the Igbo naming ceremony, imposes the target culture on it, and counters the source text author's communicative purpose, which, in this context, is to show that the Igbo have their own tradition of name-giving with its unique rituals and processes (Kalu, 1989, p. 14; Eke, 2011, pp. 259-260; Nwoye, 2014.)

SAMPLE III: MCA

ST **yam foo-foo and bitter-leaf soup** (p. 76)

TT1 *Yam-Foo-foo und bitterer Blattsuppe* (p. 106)
[yam foo-foo with bitter-leaf soup]

TT2 *Yamswurzelbrei—gennant FuFu und mit Lorbeerblättern gewürzte Soße* (p. 108)
[yam root mash—known as foo-foo with bay laurel leaves]

TT3 *Yams-Fufu und Bitterspinatsuppe* (p. 112)
[yam foo-foo with bitter spinach soup]

Translation approaches and techniques

TT1 Semantic: literal, borrowing or transference

TT2 Communicative: functional substitution, transliteration.

TT3 Semantic: literal, transliteration

Analysis

TT1 and TT3 have followed a semantic-literal translation approach. Additionally, they make use of borrowing and transliteration

techniques, respectively. TT2 and TT3 have transliterated foo-foo into the spelling and sound of the target culture. TT2 also includes an elaboration that incorrectly explains yam foo-foo as *Yamswurzelbrei* [yam root mash or mashed yam root]. Although the elaboration technique used here is to correctly inform the target readers about the foo-foo, the clarification fails to properly identify it. Dough of mashed yam would be the closest, even if not the most apt, description of the yam foo-foo for a target reader unfamiliar with the food item. In German, this could be translated as *Yamteig* [yam dough].

"Bitter-leaf soup" is translated by the communicative approach using functional substitution as *Soße*, *die mit Lorbeerblatter gewürzt war* [soup that was seasoned with the bay laurel leaf]. The problem with using the bay laurel leaf as a functional replacement for the bitter-leaf is that, though it has a slightly bitter taste when fresh and has medicinal value, it is not a vegetable (like the bitter-leaf) but a spice that is added to meals for its flavour or fragrance rather than for its taste. Bay leaves are not considered edible. They are most often used whole and dried in small quantity and removed before serving. Though the leaves are not poisonous, it is not recommended to eat them, because, even after cooking, they remain very stiff and eating them whole may pose a risk of injury to the throat. The leaves have leather-like skin. A translation depicting the Igbo eating bay laurel leaves is a misrepresentation that may leave a negative or pejorative impression of the Igbo on the target reader. Furthermore, soup in Igbo culture does not really have the same texture as the German *Soße*, and the Igbo do not use the bay laurel leaf to prepare soups.

TT3 rendered "bitter-leaf soup" as "bitter spinach soup." Bitter leaf [*vernonia amygdalina*] and spinach [*spinacia oleracea*] are different and spinach is not really as bitter as the African bitter-leaf. While spinach may be similar in terms of its rich, green leaves, it is a poor cultural representation in the context. Though preferable to the TT2 translation, it is still inaccurate. A better strategy would be to translate "bitter-leaf soup" literally and then gloss it, instead of using the term spinach.

3. Summary of Overall Findings and Discussion

The analyses of the 51 CTUs (that is, 153 CTUs across the three TTs) yield the following findings:

(1) In all, a total of 97 CTUs (63.4%) have been adequately translated across the three German target texts in the following distributions: TT1=37, TT2 = 18, and TT3 = 42, representing 38.1%, 18.6%, and 43.3% respectively of adequately translated CTUs.

(2) In all, a total of 56 CTUs (36.6%) have been inadequately translated across the three German target texts in the following distributions: TT1 = 14, TT2 = 33, and TT3 = 9, representing 25%, 58.9%, and 16.1% respectively of inadequately translated CTUs.

(3) The use of translation approaches in terms of percentage and the adequacy and inadequacy of CTUs across the target texts on 51 CTUs per TT are set out in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Target Texts	Approaches	Total		Adequate		Inadequate	
		No	%	No.	%	No	%
TT1	Semantic	41	80.4	36	87.8	5	12.2
	Communicative	5	9.8	0	0.0	5	100
	Sem-communicative	5	9.8	1	20.0	4	80.0
	Totals	**51**	**100**	**37**	**72.5**	**14**	**27.5**
TT2	Semantic	18	35.3	14	77.8	4	22.2
	Communicative	20	39.2	2	10.0	18	90.0
	Sem-communicative	13	25.5	2	15.4	11	84.6
	Totals	**51**	**100**	**18**	**35.3**	**33**	**64.7**
TT3	Semantic	43	84.3	40	93.0	3	7.0
	Communicative	4	7.8	1	25.0	3	75.0
	Sem-communicative	4	7.8	1	25.0	3	75.0
	Totals	**51**	**99.9**	**42**	**82.4**	**9**	17.6

The results show how the different approaches are used together to achieve overall adequacy as well as the likelihood of each approach to produce inadequate translations. We also find the following:

(a) Overall, adequate translations most often correlate with the use of the semantic translation approach:

TT1→ Semantic (87.8%), Communicative (0.0%), Semantic-communicative (20.0%)

TT2→ Semantic (77.8%), Communicative (10.0%), Semantic-communicative (14.4%)
TT3→ Semantic (93.0%), Communicative (25.0%) Semantic-communicative (25.0%)

(b) Overall, inadequate translations most often correlate with the use of the communicative translation approach:

TT1→ Semantic (12.2%), Communicative (100%), Semantic-communicative (80.0%)
TT2→ Semantic (22.2%), Communicative (90.0%), Semantic-communicative (84.6%)
TT3→ Semantic (7.0%), Communicative (75.0%), Semantic-communicative (75.0%)

(4) The TT3 translation makes more frequent use of the glossary technique than TT1 and TT2. TT2 has a total of 12 footnote glossary entries on nine pages (pp. 12, 14, 18, 25, 68, 70, 90, 100, and 116), while TT3 includes 153 endnote glossary entries on 13 full pages (pp. 225-237. No glossary entries are included in TT1. Short in-text explanations are sometimes embedded in the narrative across the three target texts. The use of glossaries to explain terms and concepts represents the most overt intervention used by the translators to mediate the understanding of the source text. However, glossary entries can also be wrong. For instance, in explaining *Sieben Tage und Sieben Nächte* (p. 225), TT3 wrongly claims that the Igbo full week is seven days rather than eight. In the Igbo lunar calendar, one week is four days while a full (market) week is eight days (Kalu, 2019, pp. 23-24). The name *Ozoemena* is also incorrectly explained in a glossary entry on p. 233.

(5) The extent to which translators use the semantic, communicative, and semantic-communicative approaches is indicative of their treatment of the source culture in relation to the target culture and the quality of the representation of the source culture to the target readership. A predominantly communicative translation, TT2 (52% [39.2% + 12.75%] for half of the semantic-communicative), indicates that the ST has been primarily translated from the perspective of the target culture, as compared to TT3, which is a predominantly semantic translation, TT3 (88.2% [84.3% + 3.9%] for half of the semantic-communicative) and has translated the ST mostly from the perspective of the source culture.

(6) Of the three German target texts, TT3 is the most adequately translated (most aligned with ST function and purpose), while TT2 is the least adequately translated, as is evident in Tables 2a and 2b below showing the percentages of adequacy (Adq.) and inadequacy (Indq.) across the different cultural categories:

Table 2a

	PVB		CIFU		PKNH		CCRO	
in %	Adq	Inadq	Adq	Inadq	Adq	Inadq	Adq	Inadq
TT1	81.8	18.2	72.7	27.3	75.0	25.0	100	0.0
TT2	9.1	90.9	54.5	45.5	25.0	75.0	75.0	25.0
TT3	81.8	18.2	81.8	18.2	75.0	25.0	100	0.0

Table 2b

	ETC		MCA		OIDC		BTCS	
in %	Adq	Inadq	Adq	Inadq	Adq	Inadq	Adq	Inadq
TT1	66.7	33.3	50.0	50.0	83.3	16.7	50.0	50.0
TT2	66.7	33.3	50.0	50.0	16.7	83.3	0.0	100
TT3	66.3	33.3	75.0	25.0	100	0.0	75.0	25.0

Translations in TT2 that directly counter-narrate the source text and misrepresent source cultural knowledge in such a way as to refute authorial communicative and source text purpose have been corrected in TT3. A few examples will suffice:

> (a) Achebe uses a proverb with animal-behaviour imagery, dog play, in a bride price negotiation ritual to point out the wisdom of the culture. The bride price symbolizes the blood tie that henceforth binds two families and forbids them from hurting one another or settling disputes between themselves with fights (see Eke, 2012, pp. 30; 2013, pp. 65-66). In TT2, the imagery is communicatively translated using the substitution of a marketplace bargaining imagery that subtly and wrongly suggests that the bride price and its negotiation ritual represent the selling of the woman in the source culture. TT3 corrects this error by applying the literal technique in a semantic translation approach:
>
> **ST** **As the dog said, If I fall down for you and you fall down for me, it is play** (p. 58)

TT1 *Wie der Hund sagte: Geh ich für dich herunter und du für mich, so ist's ein Spiel* (p. 82)
[As the dog said, "I go down for you and you for me, then it is play"]

TT2 *Aber wie der eine zum anderen sagte: senkst du den Preis, dann will auch ich mich nicht lumpen lassen, denn dann ist's ein Spiel* (p. 83)
[But as one said to the other, "if you lower the price, then I will also be generous, for then it is a play"]

TT3 *Doch wie der Hund sagt: Wenn ich mich für dich hinwerfe und du dich für mich, ist es ein Spiel* (p. 90)
[As the dog says, "If I fall down for you and you fall down for me, it is play]

(b) The reminiscence of the District Commissioner on his efforts to "bring civilization" to different parts of Africa, as voiced by the narrator, has been respectively translated in TT1 and TT2 as to bring *die Segnungen der Kultur* [the blessings of culture] and *die Segnungen der Zivilisation* [the blessings of civilization]. The narrative unit is presented here as a "thinking aloud" of the DC that ironically satirizes the self-claim and self-praise of Europe to have brought civilization to Africa while in actual fact it destroys or displaces African civilizations (*TFA*, p. 141). However, the noun phrase "the blessings of" inserted into the target text is a communicative approach intervention on the part of the translator that introduces a subtext. The phrase is meant to be read like a harmless intensifier of the "satirical fact," but it subtly supports Europe's justification for the colonization of Africa: colonization is a blessing to Africa (Eke, 2011, p. 277). TT3 removes these misrepresentative additions in TT1 and TT2 by adopting the literal semantic approach that retains the source text information.

ST **In the many years in which he had toiled to bring civilization to different parts of Africa, he had learnt a number of things** (p. 166)

TT1 *In den vielen Jahren, in denen er sich abgemühte hatte, in verschiedenen Teilen von Afrika die Segnungen der Kultur verbreiten, hatte er verschiedene Dinge gelernt* (p. 230)
[In the many years in which he had struggled to spread the blessings of culture in different parts of Africa, he had learnt various things]

TT2 *In den vielen Jahren, in denen er sich redlich bemüht hatte, in einigen Teilen Afrikas die Segnungen der Zivilisation zu verbreiten, hatte er eine Reihe von Dingen gelernt* (p. 226)

[In the many years in which he had sincerely endeavoured to spread the blessings of civilization in several parts of Africa, he had learnt a number of things]

TT3 *In den langen Jahren, die er sich nun schon abmühte, diversen Teilen Afrikas die Zivilisation zu bringen, hatte er so manches gelernt* (p. 224)
[In the many years that he has endeavoured to bring civilization to different parts of Africa, he had learnt several things]

(c) The translation of the source text title *Things Fall Apart* in TT1 and TT2 as *Okonkwo oder das Alte stürtzt* applies amplification and substitution techniques in a communicative approach. Achebe found in W.B. Yeats' poem "The Second Coming" a poetic expression—"things fall apart"—that is a suitable metaphor for the reality of the Igbo cultural situation, while the German translators of TT1 and TT2 chose a double-part title with the second part, *das alte stürzt*, taken from a line in Schiller's German classic *Wilhelm Tell* (1804, Act 4, Scene 2, p. 175) to serve as a substitute metaphor. This translation choice for the title is faulty in at least three respects. Firstly, though the poetic line in the title of TT1 and TT2 points ostensibly to the same Igbo cultural situation as that of the ST title, it presents different and conflicting perspectives. *Things* in the ST title refers neither to "all things" nor to only the old or "all old or former things," as may be deduced from *das Alte* in the TT1 and TT2 translations (Mayanja, 1999, p. 189). Whereas the Igbo society in *TFA* suffers the withering of its political power and religious unity, it still finds synthesis in compromise with the intruding colonial culture, retaining aspects of its culture, for example, its kinship system, communal values and deities, among others. Brought by the colonizers, Christianity becomes just another religion. However, whereas the Igbo society moves on with the remnants of its culture, Okonkwo cannot find that compromise and synthesis and thus dies as a result (*ibid*.; Ibemesi, 2015, pp. 349-350). Secondly, it isolates Okonkwo from the cultural community and puts undue emphasis on him as the central focus of the narration, rather than on the cultural community whose cultural knowledge and identity the author sets out to present (Mayanja, 1999, p. 349*).* Thirdly, Okonkwo is falsely represented as the replica of every Igbo man (Eke, 2011). TT3's *Alles Zerfällt* improves upon the previous two translations by using a near literal semantic approach that preserves the ST message. However, it still ambiguously assumes that *Things* in the title of the source text means "Everything" in the source culture.

ST ***Things Fall Apart*** (cover page)

TT1 *Okonkwo oder Das Alte stürzt* (cover page)
[Okonkwo or the old collapses]

TT2 *Okonkwo oder Das Alte stürzt* (cover page)
[Okonkwo or the old collapses]

TT3 *Alles Zerfällt* (cover page)
[Everything disintegrates]

(8) German language choices in TT3 better represent *some* of the source cultural terms and concepts, especially in the material culture category, and provide better clarifications in the target text for the target readership. Examples of inadequate cultural translation in TT1 and TT2 include *Yamwurzeln* [yamroots] (Moering, pp. 20 and 28; Heusler and Petzold, pp. 21 and 29) for "yam" (pp. 2 and 3), *Zerstampfte Yamwurzeln* [mashed yam root] (Moering, p. 44; Heusler and Petzold, pp. 45 and 111) for "pounded yam" (p. 29). Strätling corrects both terms by translating them respectively as *Yam* (pp. 24 and 39) and *zerstoßene Yams* [pounded yams] (pp. 54 and 115). The "coco-yam" (p. 18), omitted by Moering (p. 29) and translated as *Kokosyam* [coconut] by Heusler and Petzold (p. 30), has been more equivalently rendered by Strätling as *Taro* [taro tubers] (p. 41).

(9) Ideological biases with regard to a more communist oriented TT1 and a more capitalist TT2 have also been considerably rectified in TT3. Two examples will suffice:

(a) In *TFA* Chapter One, the narrator spotlights the rising profile of Okonkwo in his struggle to set aside and rise above the poverty, indignity, and social stigma that his late lazy, improvident, and untitled father had bequeathed to him. His advantage in this endeavour is thus presented:

ST **Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father** (p. 7)

TT1 *Zum Glück beurteilten seine Stammesgenossen einen mann nach seinem Wert und nicht nach dem Wert seines Vaters* (p. 14)
[Fortunately, his tribesmen judged a man according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father]

TT2 *Zum Glück wurde ein Mann nach seinem eigenem Verdienst und nicht nach dem seines Vaters beurteilt* (p. 14)
[Fortunately, a man was judged according to his own personal earnings and not according to those of his father]

TT3 *Zum Glück beurteilten dortzulande die Leute einen mann nach seinem eigenen Wert, nicht nach dem seines Vaters* (p. 26)
[Fortunately, in those parts the people judged a man according to his own worth not according to his father's]

The ideological bias between TTI and TT2 is mainly in the rendition of the source text unit "among these people." TT1 translates this as *seine Stammesgenossen* [his tribesmen], emphasizing a volkish, ethno-communitarian unity that tends to align with communist ideology. TT2, more oriented to capitalist ideology, overtly omits it, arguably by making use of implicitation within a communicative translation approach. TT3 is able to remain neutral with respect to the ideological positionings of TT1 and TT2 because it was not under pressure to side with either following the collapse of communism as a political bloc in 1990.

(b) A similar ideological bias between TT1 and TT2 is seen in the translation of the ST idiom. Okonkwo prepares yam seedling with his son, Nwoye, and Ikemefuna, but he worries about Nwoye whom he feels shows early signs of laziness. He does not want:

ST **a son who cannot hold up his head in the gathering of the clan** (p. 26)

TT1 *Ich will keinen Sohn haben, der auf den Stammesversammlungen den Kopf nicht hoch tragen kann* (p. 38)
[I cannot have a son, who in the gathering of the clan, cannot hold his head high]

TT2 *ich will keinen Sohn haben, der nicht mit hocherhobenem Haupt im Ältestenrat erscheinen kann* (p. 42)
[I will not have a son who cannot appear in the gathering (or council) of elders with his head erect]

TT3 *Ich will keinen Sohn, der nicht erhobenen Hauptes in den Versammlungen des Klans sitzen kann* (p. 51)
[I will not have a son, who will not sit with his head erect in the gathering of the clan]

TT1 follows the source culture closely in translating "the gathering of the clan." In this instance, both the "communal" society of the source culture and the "communist" society of the target culture share comparable concepts of social organization. TT2 replaces "the gathering of the clan" with "the gathering of the elders," ignoring the ST and suggesting "the unequal social structure in the capitalist system that gives more recognition to the ruling class" (Fakayode, 2012, p. 117). TT3 discards these ideological differences and maintains the sense of the ST.

(10) All three target texts include promotional blurbs of varying lengths to summarize the content of their translations and elicit

target readership interest. The blurb is an intervention by a communicator agent that contributes to realizing the skopos of the translation. Usually written by the translator or publisher, it frames how the target readership is to view and understand the text. It is to that extent a gloss on the meaning of the target text and thus a part of the translation. The Moering blurb, in the 1979 publication by Aufbau Verlag, describes the source culture in relation to Okonkwo as *der traditionellen Lebensvorstellungen und Gebräuche* [traditional ideas of life and customs], while the Heusler and Petzold blurb refers to *der traditionsreichen Ibo-kultur* [the tradition-rich Igbo culture], and the Strätling blurb on the back page of the dust cover jacket refers to *die ambivalenten Konflikte in einer archaischen Kultur* [the ambivalent conflicts in an archaic culture]. The blurbs are cultural identity ascription tags that align with or deviate from the skopos of the source text and condition the target readership's attitude toward the source culture. Those for Moering's (TT1) and Heusler's (TT2) translations appear to align with the ST skopos, whereas the blurb for Strätling's (TT3) deviates from it.

Conclusion

Drawing from theories of intercultural meaning, as well as from postcolonial and skopos theories, this study has proposed a critical analysis of three translations for a European/German readership of purposively selected cultural text units in *TFA* that represent African cultural knowledge and identity. The analyses have shown that the working hypothesis according to which the translators intended to respect the skopos or authorial communicative purpose of the source text in the target text is not equally valid for all three translations. Specifically, target-culture perceptions of the source culture, together with the ideological environment underlying the translators' role as in-between communicators, are reflected in their translation decisions, approaches, and techniques. In turn, these decisions show the extent to which on-going perceptions of the source culture are projected onto the target readership within the asymmetrical and conflictual—yet evolving— context of African-German postcolonial relations.

Indeed, the predominant use of the semantic translation approach by the translators of TT3 and TT1, on the one hand, and of the communicative approach by the translators of TT2, on the other hand, speaks of their differing attitudes towards the source

culture. That said, as the findings of this study show, the mere fact of translating semantically or communicatively does not in itself guarantee a translation's adequacy or inadequacy, respectively. Other underlying factors may come into play, such as the sufficiency of the translator's knowledge of the source and target cultures, the instructions of the translation commission, and the ideological bias in the target culture and/or of the translator and others.

Thus, Uda Strätling's translation of Chinua Achebe's *TFA* most closely and adequately represents the cultural knowledge and identity of the source culture. It is also the most aligned with the communicative purpose of the author and the author-intended function of the source text; thereby validating the working hypothesis. Richard Moering's translation, TT1, comes next in the adequacy of source culture knowledge and identity representations and in its close alignment with the authorial purpose of the source text, but maintains ideological affiliation to the East German communist ideology of its time and only partially validates the hypothesis. Moreover, TT1 struggles with several source cultural terms that presumably had not become globally familiar or standardized in the target culture vocabulary at the time of the translation. These include terms and concepts like "coco-yam," "pounded yam," "plantain." Dagmar Heusler and Evelin Petzold's translation, TT2, is overtly inclined to preserve the norms of the target culture, the ideological biases of neo-liberal capitalism, and the views of the target culture about the source culture. This target-oriented approach, which is taken as far as possible, though sometimes very subtly, entirely negates the skopos of the source text.

That said, the translations' promotional blurbs reveal a rather ironic ambivalence on the part of the translators/publishers towards the source culture, especially in the case of TT2 and TT3. Whereas TT2 still subtly ascribes inferior status to African culture on some essential points, its blurb nonetheless acknowledges the existence of a rich and "traditional" African culture, which also comes through in Moering's translation. This African culture, perceived as embodying time-honoured values and observances, thus retains its relevance for its people. By contrast, though TT3 provides the most adequate representation of this culture's knowledge and identity, as well as the skopos of the source text, its book cover blurb outrightly dismisses the same culture as "archaic," implying that it either has been or should be entirely replaced.

The significance of the blurb entries is that the two most circulated and read translations of *TFA* in German (the Moering version has long ceased to be published) still manage to retain, either in the translation or in the blurbs or both, the exoticization of the African culture as archaic, primitive, strange, and inferior. It thus appeals to and/or reaffirms the target readership's core imaginary and perception of the source culture, while also exploiting this for material gain in market sales. The translators' ultimate adherence to the target culture's proto-negative perception of the source culture, combined with their ideological environment, largely account for their inability to fully achieve the skopos of the source text in the target text, despite the possibility that this may have been their initial intention.

The translation of *Things Fall Apart* by Uda Strätling certainly marks a considerable improvement over the two previous German translations in representing the source culture to the German target readership and in aligning with the source text skopos. It also provides an alternative reading of the African culture that is no longer bound by the ideological positioning of the two former Germanys. However, it still retains traces of the revised European/Western projection of difference and inferiority onto African cultures. This enduring asymmetry and conflict must continue to be challenged through text, discourse, postcolonial intercultural dialogue, and translation.

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