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The Translatability of French Drama into Kiswahili: A Case Study of Molière's '*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*'

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Abstract:

Translation refers to the process of rendering source language meaning (SL) into target language meaning (TL). This study explored the challenges involved in translating 'cultural referents' in Molière's play: Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. The play was translated from French to Kiswahili. This paper is grounded in Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence theory whose main idea is that while translating culturally-bound messages, dynamic equivalence should be given priority over formal equivalence. A sample of 36 participants consisting of translators, interpreters and teachers of French and Kiswahili was selected from Kisoro Municipality, a border town located at Uganda's south-western border with Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The findings of this study confirmed what other scholars have previously established: dramaturgical texts are a specialised type of texts

that ought to be translated differently compared to literary texts of general nature. It was also found that both direct and oblique translation strategies complement one another while rendering theatrical texts because they help to circumvent literalness in translated texts.

1. Introduction

This study sought to translate the literary genre of drama from a European language (French) into an African indigenous language (Kiswahili). French and Kiswahili are two languages with fundamental differences in terms of their syntactic and morphological structures. The study sought to identify the challenges faced while translating 'cultural referents' in Molière's play (*Le bourgeois gentilhomme*) written in French with the aim of suggesting practical translation solutions. By definition, cultural referents refer to lexical items that may or may not exist in the source or target language cultures; they refer to lifestyles, ideas and objects and are embedded in idioms, metaphors, clichés, proverbs, etc. Cultural referents may deviate in terms of denotation or connotation from one target culture to another.

In this study, the translated cultural referents included literary devices like proverbs and sayings, metaphors, idioms, synecdoche and so on. A hypothetical premise that guided this study stated that literal translation cannot singly produce accurate and faithful renditions of cultural referents. The above hypothesis was qualitatively tested and verified on the basis of the evidence generated from the data.

Molière is a renowned French poet and dramaturgist who is widely regarded as one of the greatest authors of French classic literature. He was endowed with mastery of French comedy. In the investigated play, Molière explores the themes of marriage, education, wealth and hypocrisy among the Medieval French aristocracy. He is best

known for satirical comedies that are full of farces and puns or play-on-words (Nicholas, 2020).

The choice of translating Molière's play into Kiswahili was motivated by a number of factors, one of which was that Kiswahili is one of the new subjects currently promoted in Uganda's primary and secondary schools. In learning this subject, students are mostly exposed to two literary genres - the novel and poetry. However, from experience, it was observed that most students of Kiswahili were enthusiastic about learning the drama genre which, to them, could widen their opportunities on the labour market. Experience had also revealed that there was a scarcity of teaching/learning materials in Kiswahili. Hence, this study sought to raise awareness among Uganda's linguists, researchers and teachers of Kiswahili to consider translation as a reliable tool in providing reading materials on the theatrical genre.

Accordingly, the Uganda government has possibly made some tangible efforts in promoting Kiswahili in the country. Policies have been enacted and passed by Parliament to elevate Kiswahili to the level of Uganda's second official language (The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 2005). The Ministry of Education has also played its role through popularising Kiswahili teaching at primary, secondary and university levels. This role is characterised by developing a Kiswahili syllabus, recruiting Kiswahili teachers and rolling out the new competence-based curriculum in favour of Kiswahili.

However, despite all such measures, little has been done to provide adequate teaching materials to schools to implement these policies (Ruhumbika, 2013). In schools where Kiswahili is taught, pupils, students and teachers continue to complain about the lack of reading materials in form of Kiswahili text books, novels, plays and poems.

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by a theoretical framework that subscribes to a set of 'translation equivalence theories' (Baker, 2013; Panou, 2013; Nida 2001; Nord, 1997). These theories refer to a set of constructs that work in tandem to achieve accurate renderings from and into the source and target languages. It should be noted that this study did not apply all the existing translation theories under this construct. On the contrary, it restricted itself to Nida's 'formal and dynamic equivalence' (Nida 2001; Nida and Taber, 1982) which was complemented by Nord's *skopos* theory (Nord, 1997) and Mona Baker's translation model (Baker, 2013). In conducting this study, the researchers were inspired and guided by Nida and Taber's assertion (Nida 2001, p.107) that supports the triangulation of the above theoretical constructs:

> […] No single theory of translation provides a coherent set of […] propositions used as principles to show how translation works […]. In fact, several theories combined help […] in understanding the nature of translating or assessing particular translated texts.

In this context, translation equivalence requires that both the source and target texts should demonstrate a certain degree of similarity, referred to, by Panou (2013), as 'sameness'. Whereas Nida and Taber (1982) look at translation equivalence from the formal and dynamic viewpoints, Newmark (1988) considers translation equivalence from the semantic and communicative perspectives. As for Baker (2013), she argues that translation quality assessment should be assessed at five different levels, namely at word, collocational, above-word, text and pragmatic levels.

In view of the above, it should be argued that in order to achieve dynamic equivalence, a translator should render a text into the target language by focusing, first and foremost, on the meaning intended for the audience (sense-for-sense) and

should consider formal equivalence in the second place. Whereas dynamic equivalence allows greater flexibility in expressing meaning of the source language text (SL), formal equivalence, on the other hand, seeks to preserve the grammar, vocabulary, structure and idiomatic expressions of the source text. As for the *skopos* theory, translation equivalence is achieved by reflecting on the functional and socio-cultural factors portrayed in both the source and target languages (Basnett, 2014; Nord, 1997). In other words, the process of translation should focus on the cultural norms of the target audience, its expectations, values and life experiences (Basnett, 2014). Reliance on the *skopos* theory also implies that translation decisions are determined by the 'translation purpose' (Nord, 1997). By subscribing to the above complementary theories, the researchers of this paper intended to reduce the degree of literalness in the translated texts. The *skopos* theory also???…' this study to complement linguistic approaches with culture-sensitive factors, hence marking a shift from words, sentences and texts towards culture. In translation studies, Snell-Hornby (1990) refers to this shift as the "cultural turn".

On the Concept of Translation

The concept of translation is defined differently by translation scholars. This term is defined to cover the purpose for which any translation is intended. In other words, translation can either be an 'activity' or a 'product' of that activity (Shreve & Angelone, 2010). Robinson (2003, p.6) explains this point succinctly: "Translation means different things for different groups of people. For people who are not translators, it is primarily a text; while for translators, translation is primarily an activity." Hence, translation is primarily a human activity that deals with rendering texts from a source language (SL) into a target language (TL). Bassnett (1991) argues

that a translator should, for all intents and purposes, ensure that the surface meaning of the two languages is approximately preserved and, secondly, the structures of the SL text are reflected, as closely as possible, in the target text.

Put differently, a translator should not render mere words from one language into another for the sake of it. Instead, they should seek to achieve a certain degree of sameness (Panou, 2013) in both the source and target texts. This is justified by Newmark (1988, p.7) who defines translation as the replacement of "[…] a written message and/or statement in the source language by the same message and/or statement in another language." Lastly, Nida and Taber (1982, p.12) define translation as a process that consists of "reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalence of the source language message, firstly, in terms of meaning and secondly, in terms of style."

Overall, it can be deduced that translation is highly dependent on meaning whose equivalence is achieved by reflecting on the target language norms, that is to say, the target language used in any translation should be the idiomatic or figurative language used by native speakers themselves. Effectively, when all the above definitions are compared, what matters in any translated task is not the substitution of single words of one language with words of another. On the contrary, it is a matter of understanding the 'thought' expressed in one language and then re-expressing it using the linguistic and cultural resources available in another language.

The above standpoint is supported by Bassnett (1991, p.6) who confirms the cultural role of a translator:

> Today the movement of people around the globe can be seen to mirror the

> very process of translation itself, for translation is not just the transfer of texts from one language into another; it is now rightly seen as a process of negotiating between texts and between cultures, a process during which all kinds of transactions take place mediated by the figure of the translator.

In agreement, Robinson (2003, p. 35) argues that translation is basically a human activity that subscribes to five fundamental principles: (1) it is more about people than about words; (2) it is more about the way people see their world as opposed to the linguistic registers or sign systems used and (3) translation is more about creative imagination than it is about rule-governed text analysis and, in addition, (4) a translator is like an actor or a musician (a performer) than being a tape recorder and lastly (5) skilled translators of highly technical texts - in this case dramaturgical texts - are more like poets or novelists than like a machine translation system.

Principles and Challenges of Translating Dramaturgical Texts

Although the theatrical genre is rich in many respects, Yesufu (2008) revealed that limited research in the field of translation studies has been conducted to develop 'theatre studies' as a fully-fledged academic discipline. Consequently, many translators have expressed a less positive attitude towards translating theatre, thereby ending up translating theatrical texts in the same way they translate general language texts. This prompted Xu (2008, p. 8) to argue in favour of translating drama as a specialised genre. He asserts:

> Theatre texts cannot be read and hence translated in the same way as other prose texts. In fact, they must be read differently […] as something incomplete, rather than as a fully rounded unit, since it is only in performance

that the full potential of the text is realised.

In agreement, Bassnett (1991) argued that translating theatrical texts is rather complex compared to translating literary texts. This is because translators of theatrical texts are faced with the dilemma of translating drama as either a purely literary text or a specialised one (Bassnett, 1991). In conclusion, Wellwarth (1981, pp.140-141) outlines a series of principles that should be followed by the drama translator. He emphasises:

> The dramatic translator must have a sense of rhythm of speech patterns, particularly colloquial ones, as well as the ability to recreate the tension of dramatic situations without falsifying the playwright's intention or losing dramatic credibility within the new context. It is absolutely imperative […] to translate a play aloud and to listen carefully to even savour the various versions into which every conceivable line can be translated into a target language. Having done that, the translator should read his translation aloud to someone totally unacquainted with the play, preferably an actor. […] the dramatic translator must watch out for […] awkward consonantal clusters that may make a line hard to pronounce rapidly and thus may cause difficulties in sound projection. The language must fall easily and should be familiar in the ears of the audience.

Strategies for Translating Cultural Referents

Translating texts that belong to the dramaturgical genre entails a set of lexical, semantic, grammatical, cultural and rhetorical shifts and challenges (Baker, 2018; Mathieu, 2015). Translators of theatrical literature face challenges related to identifying text types and genres (Mathieu, 2015). To address such challenges,

translators are advised to be aware of the rules that govern cultural habits of the speakers involved (Mathieu, 2015).

In this context, several translation strategies have been developed. The latter are broadly divided into two broad categories: direct and oblique translation strategies (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995). Oblique strategies are applied when both the structural and conceptual aspects of the source language are incompatible with the target language.

In comparison with French, Kiswahili portrays fundamental syntactic and morphological differences. As a result, the researchers opted to focus less on direct strategies. Instead, they mostly sourced from oblique strategies. According to Vinay and Dalbernet (1995), direct translation strategies include borrowing, calque and literal translation. On the other hand, oblique translation strategies consist of various classifications. These include: transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation (Vinay and Dalbernet, 1995). In transposition, a translator changes parts of the text order (syntax) but retains the same meaning. Transposition applies when dealing with grammar shifts (Newmark, 1988). For example, a verb phrase in the SL can become a noun phrase in the TL; even a noun can be adjusted to become a verb in the translation. As for modulation, it refers to a translation strategy which is used by translators to adjust or modulate a point of view to suit the TL, enabling the translation to flow naturally (Vinay and Dalbernet, 1995). Modulation gives a sense of 'nativeness' to the translation because it involves translating thought or meaning categories as opposed to grammatical categories (Newmark, 1988).

Another oblique translation strategy is the 'equivalence strategy' which is believed to be the most suitable strategy in translating proverbs/wise sayings and idioms as

well as rendering advert slogans and clichés. In this study, the researchers resorted to using this strategy by applying the technique of reformulation to produce an equivalent idea accepted by the Kiswahili-speaking audience. Translators who use the 'equivalence strategy' express meaning using different linguistic and cultural expressions as opposed to how they appear in the source language.

Last but not least, while translating drama, a translator may also resort to the strategy of compensation that consists of identifying losses and gains in terms of meaning. Translators do this by replacing broad words (super-ordinates) with specific ones (hyponyms) in the target language if such expressions may lack direct equivalents in the target language (Baker, 2013; 1992). Compensation requires coinage of words or expressions or even innovating whole paragraphs using the technique of 'paraphrasing' to preserve both text and meaning coherence in the target language (Shahla and Fahimeh, 2010).

2. Method

This qualitative study was informed by a combination of descriptive and case-study designs. A triangulation of these two (designs) resonated well with the qualitative nature of the study and data collected which assumed a multiplicity of interpretations voiced by the participants. The latter's voices were recorded, transcribed, coded, and were later used in the analysis stage. A case-study design was solicited by the researchers because it enabled them to generate data from three cohorts of participants in Kisoro Municipality: teachers of Kiswahili, translators and interpreters in Nyakabande Refugee Transit Centre in Kisoro. Focus group discussions were administered to the above participants to generate data on the challenges faced by the translators and how the latter attempted to address them.

Lastly, the data was transcribed, coded and analysed in accordance with the emerging themes: proverbs, wise sayings, idioms, synecdoche, metaphors, and euphemism.

The methodology adopted consisted of selecting and classifying 'cultural referents' from Molière's play. The latter were identified as a major source of challenges faced while translating dramaturgical texts. The researchers asked the study participants to identify cultural referents by reading Molière's play written in French, identify cultural referents that were likely to pose translation problems. This enabled them to engage in a fruitful debate during which the selected referents were contextualised by the Kiswahili-speaking community in Kisoro municipality. Table 1 below summarises the categories of participants, sample size and sampling techniques used:

Table 1: Respondents who Participated in the Study

Category of Respondents	Sample size	Sampling technique
Teachers of French and/or Kiswahili in	18	Purposive sampling
Translators in Nyakabande Refugee Transit	10	Purposive sampling
Interpreters in Nyakabande Refugee	8	Purposive sampling
Total Sample	**36**	

Source: Field data (2024)

The procedures followed in analysing the generated data consisted of identifying and describing the cultural referents, classifying them, comparing the translations proposed by translators and justifying the translation proposed and strategies used.

3. Results and discussion

The findings on the translatability of 'cultural referents' in Molière's play (*Le bourgeois gentilhomme*) revealed that the translators mostly resorted to literal translation which, in most cases, inadequately preserved the figurative meaning of the investigated cultural referents in the target language.

This study findings revealed that poor quality renditions were caused by lack of

adequate 'translation competence' by translators whose ability in negotiating the meaning of cultural referents in both source and target texts was generally average. It was found that lack of 'translation competence' was linked to their prior professional training during which period most of the investigated translators trained as secondary school teachers without any specialised training in the field of translation.

Data was analysed using both content and thematic analyses. In qualitative research, the latter are useful tools for identifying, classifying and arranging key recurring themes, patterns and underlying meanings in the data (Creswell, 2014). Cultural referents were classified under the themes of proverbs, sayings, euphemism, metaphors, synecdoche, idioms and so on. This methodology helped the researchers to explore hidden meanings and perspectives embedded in translating the selected cultural referents. After classifying the above literary devices, the researchers embarked on the process of assessing the accuracy and faithfulness of the translations proposed.

Translation of French Proverbs and sayings into Kiswahili

The researchers analysed and assessed the quality of the renditions on the theme of proverbs and wise sayings depicting the theme of anger. The findings are summarised in Table 3:

Table 3: Translating a French wise Saying on the Theme of Anger into Kiswahili

Translators	Source Text in French	Target Text in Kiswahili	Strategies Used
Participants	La colère fait de l'homme un animal.	**TR 12:** *Hasira humfanya mtu myama.* **TR 13:** *Hasira humgeuza mwanaume kama mnyama.*	Literal Literal

Researchers	**Rsearchers:** *Mwenye kushuta na hasira, hujinyea mwenyewe.*	Equivalence Modulation

Source: Field data, 2024

Table 3 presents the findings on translating and assessing the quality of the translation by two Study Participants (TR 12 and TR 13). The table summarises the proposed translation and strategies used. According to the findings, two translators attempted to render a French classic wise saying into Kiswahili: *La colère fait de l'homme un animal*. While **TR12** rendered the saying using the literal strategy (*Hasira humfanya mtu myama*). **TR13** also translated the same proverb using the literal strategy but added a simile *kama*. The impact of their renditions demonstrated that the figurative meaning of the saying was lost. During the focus group discussions most of the investigated translators justified their versions with a narrow reason that their versions sounded like good Kiswahili without relating their translations with any theoretical construct. In addition, most of them admitted that they lacked specialised training in translation because they argued that they were trained to teach Kiswahili and not how to translate it as professionals. That is why most of their translations were literal and did pay attention to preserving or reflecting the figurative touch of the source language cultural referents.

However, in the translation proposed by the researchers (*Mwenye kushuta na hasira, hujinyea mwenyewe*), the latter focused on the figurative meaning of the saying without relying on the word-order in the SL text. This translation brought out the universal effect of anger as something that leads to loss for all people, at all times and in all aspects. The researchers' rendition was culturally deemed to be more acceptable by the Kiswahili-speaking community because its acquired impact universalised what anger does to all people wherever they are. Such an impact is

detectable in wise sayings and/or proverbs. The researchers' rendition is supported by Snell-Hornby's *skopos* theory according to which translators should be "culturally aware" of the impact of their renditions to target audience (Snell & Hornby, 1990). Additionally, the researchers adopted another translation strategy of 'modulation' to express the impact of anger as something that does not only affect animals but as something that transcends humanity as a whole. Modulation involves translating 'thought or meaning categories' as opposed to translating 'grammatical categories' (Snell & Hornby, 1990.). According to Newmark (1988), a translator can achieve modulation by making transformations at word, propositional and message levels. Hence, the researchers adjusted the 'point of view' of the wise saying so that its impact became felt. This is how they gave the wise saying a touch of 'nativeness' (Newmark, 1988).

Translating French metaphors

One metaphor was selected, translated and assessed by the researchers as shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Translating French metaphors

Metaphors in Source Text (French)	**Translation into Kiswahili by Participants and Researchers**	**Translation Strategies used**
Il dit qu'une **pluie de bonheur** tombe **sur le jardin** de votre famille.	**TR 6:** *Anasema kwamba* ***mvua ya amani*** *inyeshe juu ya* ***shamba*** *la familia yako.* **TR 8:** *Anasema kwamba* ***mvua nzuri*** *inyeshe katika* ***shamba*** *la* ***familia*** *yako.* **Researchers**: ***Anatakia moyo wa familia yako ijaae sifa.***	Literal/calque Literal/calque Equivalence/Modulation

Source: Field data, 2024

According to the findings obtained and summarised in Table 4, two participants

rendered three French metaphorical expressions into Kiswahili: ***pluie, bonheur, jardin***.

Whereas **TR6** rendered the metaphoric phrase *une **pluie** de **bonheur*** as *Mvua ya amani*, **TR8** translated the same phrase as '***mvua nzuri***. On the other hand, **TR6** rendered the metaphoric expression: *tombe sur le **Jardin** de votre famille* as *inyeshe juu ya **shamba** la familia yako* while **TR8** rendered the above French expression as *inyeshe katika **shamba** la **familia** yako.*

In terms of impact, although the investigated translators used literal translation, their renditions produced differing impacts. **TR6**'s rendition was more impactful than that of **TR8** because the former displayed better management skills in identifying metaphors and collocates in the source and target languages. Collocations are words that frequently appear in tandem to produce utterances that are acceptable by native speakers. Baker (2013) argues that collocations are 'culture-specific concepts which should always be identified and resolved by translators.

The *Online Oxford Languages dictionary* defines collocations as a predictable or natural combination of words that are closely affiliated with each other. The same source defines a metaphor as:

> A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literary applicable. A metaphor is a thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else.

From the above definitions, it can be deduced that each language has metaphors and collocations that are culturally specific to it. Therefore, the investigated participants lacked the needed 'translation competence' of identifying and resolving collocates and metaphors in the target language.

Let us examine the role of context in translating the above metaphoric utterances and how they were used in one of the scenes from Molière's play as summarised below:

Mr. Clèonte pays a courtesy visit to Mr. Jourdain, his father-in-law-to-be. He intends to declare his intentions to marry Mr. Jourdain's daughter called Lucile. When Clèonte arrives at his father-in-law's home, he greets his father-in-law in Turkish and Covielle (the interpreter) interprets the greeting into French as follows: He is overwhelmed with the extreme ***happiness*** *that has been* ***ushered*** *into Mr. Jourdain's family!*

Having taken the above contextual background into consideration, the researchers were able to propose the following rendition in Kiswahili: ***Anatakia moyo wa familia yako ijaae sif*** This rendition takes into account the premise that metaphors are best translated if more than one translation strategy is used (Mona Baker, 2013). In this case, the researchers used the strategies of equivalence and modulation instead of simply relying on the 'literal or word-for-word' strategy which is not recommended as a suitable strategy for translating metaphors or collocations (Mona Baker, 2013). In addition, the researchers' translation was equally as idiomatic as the original version in French.

Translating French idioms

In Table 8, the investigated translators rendered a French idiom (*perdre la tête*) and were assessed by the researchers.

Table 5: Translating French idioms

Idiom in source text (French)	Translation in Kiswahili by Participants	Translation Strategies Used
Où est-ce qu'il a donc perdu la tête ? **Source idiom:** ***Perdre la tête***	**TR 22**: *Kichwa chake kimepotelea wapi?* **TR 23:** *Kichwa chake kimezimilia wapi?* **Researchers:** ***Hivi sasa amekosea wapi mwelekeo?***	Literal Literal Equivalence/Modulation

Source: Field data, 2024

The idiomatic phrase in Table 5 was translated by two respondents and assessed by the researchers. It should be noted that whereas the investigated translators singly relied on the 'literal' strategy, the researchers applied both equivalence and modulation to sound as natural as possible.

In the literature reviewed, translators are advised to be careful while translating idioms because the latter are culture-specific. The Online Oxford Languages dictionary (2024) defines an idiom as a "saying/expression that contains a figurative meaning which is different from the literal meaning of words within it". In the same source, an idiom is also defined as "a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words."

This implies that in rendering idioms, translators should avoid translating individual words in idioms given that idiomatic meaning is always deduced. Therefore, translators should negotiate meaning from both the source and target languages. While translating the French idiom '***perdre la tête***', it is evident that the investigated translators preserved the SL expression '***Kichwa chake*/ his head**'. By preserving the same vocabulary in the Kiswahili translation (*kupotelea kichwa/kuzima kichwa*), the investigated translators produced a rendition that was deemed by the researchers to be literal, inaccurate and unfaithful.

By extension, the literature reviewed shows that translators of idioms should either resort to the 'equivalence' strategy of selecting idioms of similar meaning or applying the strategy of paraphrase that consists of translating by omission, addition or substitution (Baker, 2013). It is therefore safe to conclude that faithful renditions were produced by the researchers because they combined both the equivalence and modulation strategies.

Translating the synecdoche figure of speech

As presented in Table 12, the following findings were obtained while translating the synecdoche literary device.

Table 12: Translating the synecdoche figure of speech into Kiswahili

Source Language	**Target Language**	**Strategies use**
Le Bourgeois gentilhomme	**TR1**: *Bepari muungwana* **TR 2**: T*ajiri muungwana* **Researchers**: ***Bwanyenye muungwana***	Literal Literal Equivalence/ modulation

Source: Field data, 2024

The title of Molière's play '*Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*' presents a good example of a synecdoche which is a literary device "in which a part is made to represent the whole or vice versa" (Online Oxford Languages Dictionary, 2024). Mansoor and Pourmohammad (2016) argue that a synecdoche is closely related to a metonymy. Hence, in translating the title of the play under investigation, the translation proposed by the researchers regarded Mr. Jourdain (the play protagonist) as the gentleman (part) who represents the entire French class of the 'bourgeoisie middle class' of the seventeenth Century (whole). In other words, by following Mansoor and Pourmohammad's example of using non-figurative language to translate figurative language, the researchers ended up making additions and omissions in order to generate the meaning of the title in the target language.

Hence, the researchers translated the play title into Kiswahili as *Bwanyenye muungwana.* Some investigated translators rendered *Le bourgeois* as *Bepari* while others used the term *tajiri*. These investigated translators who rendered the title of the play as *Bepari muungwana* and *tajiri muungwana*, respectively, fell short of

giving a faithful translation because they applied the literal strategy that was simply based on word-order renditions. However, the researchers proposed a rendition that adopted the strategies of equivalence and modulation which provided a more accurate rendition that conforms with Kiswahili cultural conventions: ***Bwanyenye muungwana***.

Translating euphemism from French into Kiswahili

In Table 13, the translation of the euphemism figure of speech in Molière's play is summarised.

Table 13: Translating euphemism from French into Kiswahili

Source Language	**Target Language**	**Strategies used**
Tu vas **recevoir ma main sur ta figure.**	**TR 31:** *Utapokea mkono wangu kwenye uso wako.* **TR 32:** *Utapata mkono wangu katika sura yako.* **Researcher:** ***Utapata cha mtemakuni***.	Literal Literal Equivalence/euphemism

Source: Field data, 2024

The online Oxford languages dictionary (2024) defines euphemism as a "mild or indirect word or expression substituted for or considered to be harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing". Similarly, the Collin's Dictionary (2010) defines euphemism as the substitution of an offensive expression with something that is pleasant. The latter definition subscribes to Nida's dynamic equivalence theory whereby he urges translators to render content that is culturally acceptable by mitigating harmful content as a result of cultural awareness by the translator in both the source and target languages (Nida and Taber, 1982).

According to the data collected on translating euphemism by the investigated participants, it is clear that the latter failed to resolve the harsh French expression "**recevoir ma main sur ta figure"**. This explains why they did not use any euphemism to mitigate the harsh statement in the source text. In fact, Baker (2013) argues that translation challenges of non-equivalence between the source and target language texts can occur at five levels: at word, collocational, above-word, text and pragmatic levels. As for Nida and Taber (1982), they refer to euphemism as a softening translation strategy that mitigates emotional harm. They note that translation problems cannot be resolved without discussing the cultures of respective languages since language and culture work in tandem (Nida and Taber, 1982).

In view of the above, the researchers applied the strategies of euphemism and equivalence to arrive at the rendition: *Utapata* ***chamtemakuni.*** This rendition was deemed is culturally acceptable to the Kiswahili-speaking audience. In theatrical texts, some words and expressions change meaning due to the need to preserve tone, tempo, intention and intonation. Therefore, euphemism and equivalence strategies would jointly help to produce more accurate and faithful renditions as shown in the above example.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, it can be concluded that the objective of this study - that sought to translate cultural referents in Moliere's play from French into Kiswahili - was broadly achieved. An attempt has been made in this paper to translate 'theatrical texts' not as mere 'literary texts' but as a specialised type of texts that are written to be acted or performed before an audience. In achieving this objective, the researchers avoided relying on the literal translation strategy. Instead, they mostly relied on equivalence and modulation strategies to render cultural referents in the play. On the other hand, the researchers agreed with a few translations whose literal renditions

produced a less effective impact. Most of the translators justified their translated versions form a narrow perspective, arguing that their translations were simply guided by producing utterances that sounded acceptable by the Swahili people without supporting their translations with any valid theoretical construct. This study found that word-for-word translation cannot singly render cultural referents faithfully. Lastly, the study recommended that specialised translator training workshops should be organized by Nyakabande Refugee Transit Centre for the benefit of translators.

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