

SELF-TRANSLATION AND INTERLINGUAL COMMUNICATION: ANYAEHIE  
TRANSLATED BY ANYAEHIE (*L'AURORE / THE DAWN*)

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ABSTRACT

Literary translation ensures the diffusion and dissemination of literature across languages and cultures. From ancient times, humans who can read and write two or more languages labour to share ideas and thoughts expressed in one language with other languages through translation. The Bible is read in several languages of the world through the efforts of translators. Beckett, Kafka, Nwana, Wa Thiong'o and Anyaehie are among authors whose creative works are read in more than one language. A literary work can be translated by the author of the work, by another person or by two or more persons. Hence, there are self-translators, team translators and other translators. This paper focuses on self-translation. Anyaehie's French play *L'Aurore* which he translated into English as *The Dawn* is the main data for the study. The study is based on Nida's (2006) functional and dynamic equivalence theory. The method of the study is analytical and comparative. The source text and the target text are compared to determine their semantic equivalence from a target-reader's perspective. The study concludes that self-translation contributes greatly to the growth of international literature and should be encouraged.

**Keywords** Literary Translation, Self-translation, International Literature, English, French.

Introduction

Translation is one of the human activities that from ancient times ensure interlingual exchange across cultures. There is no domain of human endeavour that does not benefit from translation. Therefore, translation attracts the attention of humans both as an activity and as a product. As an activity, it permits a message written in one language, that is, the source text, to be reproduced in another language, that is, the target text. The writer, from childhood is a beneficiary of translated texts because the Igbo Bible is the first book the writer read as a child. Apart from the Bible, the writer also read some of Kafka's works first in the Igbo version translated by Ibemesi (2005). The target text is often the product of translation as an activity. A conscientious producer or service provider often expects feedback from consumers for a better service. Target readers who are the consumers of a translated text often assess the quality of a target text from different perspectives. Literary translation is one of the domains of translation that easily provide data for analysis from different perspectives.

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The study focuses on self-translation of literary texts as it evaluates Evaristus Anyaehie's self-translation of his French play *L'Aurore* into English as *The Dawn*.

### Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

According to Grutman (2001:17) "...auto-translation and self-translation refer to the act of translating one's own writings or the result of such an undertaking. Translation scholars themselves have paid little attention to the phenomenon, perhaps because they thought it to be more akin to bilingualism than to translation proper." For Popovic (1976:19), cited by Montini (2010:306), self-translation is "the translation of an original work into another language by the author himself." Montini adds that 'because self-translation can't be defined as 'ordinary translation, it is still some what neglected in Translation Studies.' Noonan's study "Self-translation, self-reflection, self-derision: Samuel Beckett's bilingual humour' (2013), Takahashi's study of his self-translated autobiography (2023), Lyu and Han's study of a self-translated academic discourse by a Chinese medical student (2023) indicate that self-translation applies to literary and non-literary domains. Our chosen domain for the study is literary translation. Among self-translators who have helped international literature to blossom are: Samuel Beckett- *En attendant Godot* (1952) / *Waiting for Godot* (1965), Ngugi Wa Thiong'o-*Cataani Mutharaba-ini* (1980) / *Devil on the Cross* (1982), Evaristus Anyaehie- *L'Aurore* / *The Dawn* (1998), Effiong Ekpenyong. *Metaphors of God* (2010) / *Les métaphores de Dieu* (2010) and Ihechi Nkoro-*Ma vie m'appartient* (2013) / *My Life* (2015).

Writing on "Quality of Translation", House (2001:187), states that "Translation quality assessment presupposes a theory of translation. Thus, different views of translation itself lead to different concepts of translation quality, and different ways of assessing it..." Aire (2002:43) opines that "like writers who can at times be inspired by critics' comments and interpretations, translators can also benefit from critical appraisals of their painstaking task of increasing the readership of African literature through translation." Therefore, our study is in the domain of evaluation of translation or translation criticism which we consider to be an essential part of Translation Studies.. Given that every producer expects feedback from consumers, it is our view that Anyaehie, the self-translator chosen for the study, will benefit from our evaluation of his self-translated play *L'Aurore* / *The Dawn*. Maier (2001:209) notes that there are many ways in which reviewers and critics currently judge translations of literary texts. In line with Nkoro's study on evaluation of Achara's Igbo fiction *Ala Bingo* translated by Pritchett as *The Land of Bingo* and by Nwanjoku as *The Bingo Kingdom* (Nkoro, 2017), our evaluation is from a target-reader response based on Nida's (2006) functional and dynamic equivalence theory. In addition, the study draws from Newmark's idea that every translation is an attempt that goes with a measure of loss. (1981:7). It is evident that translation criticism is necessary because a translation may be good or bad but never perfect. Our conception of translation criticism in the study involves an evaluation of the message and style of the source text and the target text. How communicative is the message and what effects do the source and target texts have on readers? Simpson's study of Beckett as a self-translator (1978) and Salaudeen's critique of Ekpenyong's self-translated texts *God's Metaphors* / *Les métaphores de Dieu* (2020) show that self-translation features prominently in literary self-translation criticism. One recurrent issue in the discussion of literary self-translation is bilingualism and the bilingual text as sometimes the author-translator may not explain to his readers whether a bilingual text is produced simultaneously or consecutively. In his study on humour in Beckett's self-translated works, Noonan (2013:160-162) notes that "Bilingualism and self-translation have become increasingly prominent fields of Beckett criticism since the 1980s, though a recurring point of consensus is that accounting for this aspect of his work is a slippery task..." Our evaluation of Anyaehie's self-translated text is from the perspective of a consecutive bilingual where the author-self translator completes his original or source text in one language and decides later to translate it into another language for wider readership. Among such self-translated works is Wa Thiong'o's *Cataani Mutharaba-ini* (1980) / *Devil on the Cross* (1982) cited by Bassnett (2014:4142). It is noteworthy that in his bilingual publication *Textures of Dawn. (Poems, 1998)* / *Une calebasse d'Aubes (Poèmes)* (1999), Bestman the author-translator, explains when a poem in English is translated from the French original into English.

## Methodology

The method of the study is analytical and comparative. From a target-reader's perspective, the source text and the target text are compared to determine whether the message of the original text is equivalent to the message of the translated text with regards to meaning and style.

### Anyaehie's Linguistic Background and Synopsis of Anyaehie's *L'Aurore /The Dawn* (1998)

Evaristus Ogechi Anyaehie is a Nigerian of Igbo extraction. His first language (L1) is Igbo language. English is his second language (L2) while French is his third language (L3). The writer shares the same linguistic experience with Anyaehie. Anyaehie edited and translated into English three French plays written by three Nigerian authors. A French-English-bilingual edition of the three plays was published in a book entitled *Révolution en trois pièces / in Three Plays* in 1998. The sequence in which the plays occur in the bilingual edition is as follows: *Le Masque / The Mask* by Uzoma Chukwu, *Le Sorcier / The Sorcerer* by Theresa Anyadoh and *L'Aurore / The Dawn* by Evaristus Ogechi Anyaehie. Anyaehie clearly stated in the preface that the French texts are the original texts while the English texts are versions or translations of the original texts. According to him, "the translation of these three plays into English from the original French versions in the anthology titled *Three French Plays* has been done by Evaristus Anyaehie" (Preface, 1998, p.vii). Of the three plays mentioned, *L'Aurore /The Dawn*, written in French and translated into English by Anyaehie, is chosen for our study. The study is based on the bilingual publication of 1998, that is *Révoluton en trois pieces / in Three Plays*. The Setting of *L'Aurore /The Dawn* is in an Igbo village in South-East Nigeria. Some youth led by Obinna, the hero, revolt against oppression by killing their tyrant leader, hoping to usher in a free and fair era. As Obinna, the hero, is awaited to return to his home after the death of the tyrant leader, the news of his death caused by unknown assassins breaks out in the village. In the midst of this sad news, his pregnant wife, Chioma gives birth to a son who is named symbolically 'Anyanwu' (the dawn) as a symbol of hope for a new era in spite of Obinna's death. To us, Anyaehie's self-translated French-English text, *L'Aurore / The Dawn* is a good translation though not void of certain imperfections as expected of every human activity. In what follows, we try to highlight some merits and demerits of his self-translation.

#### A) Merits of Anyaehie's self-translation

Our reading of the original and target texts show that the message of the translated English text is equivalent to the message of the original French text in terms of meaning and style because revolution or call to change is the message in both texts. With regards to style, the author-translator succeeds in creating an equivalent effect for French and English readers.

##### Examples

##### Préface

"...La traduction de ces trois pièces en anglais, à partir des versions originales françaises, dans l'anthologie intitulée: *Three French Plays*, a été effectuée par Evaristus Anyaehie..." (p.vi)

##### Preface

"...The translation of these three plays into English from the original French versions in the anthology titled *Three French Plays* has been done by Evaristus Anyaehie..." (p.ii).

##### *L'Aurore* (Extraits)

##### Résumé

"Des jeunes vllageois ont mêné une lutte violente et implacable contre les forces de l'oppréssion et la corruption dans leur patrie. Le tyran est abbatu. On attend le retour du héros de la révolution, Obinna, et le début d'une vie nouvelle marquée par la liberté, l'égalité et la fraternité. Cette nouvelle vie prend, pourtant, une allure qu'on n'avait pas tout-à-fait prévue." (p.57)

*The Dawn* (Excerpts)

Summary

“The youth in the village have waged a violent and relentless war against the forces of oppression and the corruption in their father land. The tyrant has been killed. The hero of the revolution, Obinna is being awaited, just like the new era in which freedom, equality and fraternity will prevail. But the new era assumes a dimension which no one had envisaged.” (p.58).

### B) Demerits of Anyaehie’s Self-translation

Although we consider Anyaehie’s translation a good attempt, there are some demerits as outlined below.

#### (i) Wrong Use of the French Word ‘Mère’ in the Presentation of Characters in The Original French Text

<i>L’Aurore</i> (Extraits)		<i>The Dawn</i> (Excerpts)	
Personnages		Cast	
Ikenna	Père de famille	Ikenna	family head
Ihuoma	Sa mère	Ihuoma	His wife
(p.57)		(p.58)	

In the above excerpts, the use of the French word ‘mère’ which means ‘mother’ in the original French text to describe Ihuoma as Ikenna’s ‘wife is an error we judge to be avoidable through editing because this error neither occurs on this page of the English text nor on any other page of the English text.’ Since the English word ‘wife’ correctly describes the relationship between Ikenna and Ihuoma contextually, we do not consider it to be a mistranslation.

#### i) Omissions

<i>L’Aurore</i>	<i>The Dawn</i>
Obinna, le héros (absent)	Obinna, the hero (absent)
(p.57)	(p.58)

We observe that the hero, Obinna’s name does not appear among the cast in both the original French text and the translated English text. Again, we think editing could help to avoid this omission’ However, the studies of Simpson (1978:69), Aire (2002:50), Chima (2012:41) and Nkoro (2017:52) depict that omissions are common in translated texts whether the translation is done by the author or by another translator.

#### ii) Additions

*L’Aurore*

Adaobi: ...[...le père de famille entre sur la scène avec l’air inquiet] (p.65)

Ihuoma Mais belle-soeur, pourquoi est-ce qu’Obinna n’est pas rentré avec Ndubuisi? (p.69)

*The Dawn*

Adaobi: ... [the family head, Ikenna, comes onto the scene with a worried look] (p.66)

Ihuoma...But, aunty, why did Obinna not come back with Ndubuisi? Has he not finished with his revolution? (p.70)

In the above example, the underlined words and expressions in the English text are additions that do not occur in the original text. We think these additions are unnecessary. As in the case of omissions, the studies of Simpson (1978:70) and Aire (2002: 52) indicate that unnecessary additions feature in translated texts whether the translation is done by the author-translator or by another translator.

## Conclusion

Ekpenyong (2023:48) notes that his contributions to scholarship include creative works in English translated into “French achieved through the process of self-translating i.e. writing and translating my novels into French.” Though machine translation has greatly improved information exchange globally, the writer has not yet read a literary work translated by a machine. International literature that the writer has benefited from through literary translation has been solely by the efforts of humans. A literary work can be translated by its author or by others. Literary self-translation has not only contributed to the growth of international literature but has also provided data for Translation Studies especially in the area of translation criticism and pedagogy. Our evaluation of Anyaehie’s French play *L’Aurore* translated by Anyaehie into English as *The Dawn*, published in the bilingual anthology *Révolution en trois pièces / in Three Plays* (1998); reveals that a good translation, that is, a translation that has an equivalent message and effect in the target language, can emerge from an author-translator. For quality assurance, a translated text should be evaluated from diverse perspectives because a self-translated text is as imperfect as a text translated by another person. In conclusion, we are of the view that self-translation should be encouraged because it contributes immensely to the growth of international literature and interlingual communication.

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