

LOST THROUGH TRANSLATION: THE PRESENTATION OF NIGERIAN CULTURE IN FRENCH IN ADICHIE'S AMERICANAH

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Abstract

This study is based on the relationship between literature and culture. The research deals with translation as an art that goes beyond the transmission of linguistic codes from one language to another. Translating also involves the interpretation of worldviews, cultures and other extra/non-linguistic nuances transmitted through language. The objective of the study is to investigate proper presentation of the Nigerian cultural content in the French translation of Adichie's *Americanah*. The research is a comparative analysis of the English and French translation. Items evaluated are: marriage, African hair style, the Igbo language, religion, food, domestic help, life in Lagos and trade union strikes. Findings of the study show that the social and emotional effects of some cultural elements were lost in the target text. There are cases of improper rendition of cultural items, and misrepresentation of meanings in contexts. This implies that the translator, though competent, had a poor knowledge of the Nigerian culture. The difference in the linguistic structure of the French and English languages, the interplay between language and culture and the effects of culture on creative writing led to the problems discovered.

Key Words: translation, evaluation; culture; analysis; literary texts; literary translation.

1. Introduction

Translation is an art of communication and language (verbal or non-verbal) is its tool. The act of translating goes beyond replacing words from one language to another, it involves the transfer of linguistic and extra linguistic nuances. Language takes its root from culture and may be considered as part of culture. According to Roger Fowler (1986:27): “Linguistic codes do not reflect reality neutrally, they interpret, organise and classify the subjects. They embody theories of how the world is arranged, worldviews and ideologies”. The relationship between language and culture makes translation a cultural activity.

This study deals with African literature. African literature may be defined as creative writing in which experiences of African origin are authentic (Ngara 1982:2). Literature is a mirror through which one sees a society –*la littérature est un miroir où on peut voir les événements d’une société* (Tousaint 2008:37). Therefore, African literature is a mirror through which one may see Africa.

African literature written in a European language may be considered a translation –*on pourrait décrire la littérature africaine écrite en langue européenne comme étant une traduction* (Akakuru and Chima 2013:NP). This is because it presents sometimes sentences or expressions formed through word for word translation from an African language. African writers often create in their works a new brand of the European language being employed. On this issue, Chinua Achebe comments (1965:160):

I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experiences. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communication with its’ ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surrounding.

This research takes note of the difficulties faced by African writers in depicting African experiences in a non-African tongue, Anohu (1996:411) comments on these difficulties thus: “Since language, world view or ideology share an intrinsic relationship, one can infer the peculiar problem of any writer faced with the task of creating literature in an alien language.”

This research aims at offering a solution that may fill the cultural gap that exists between African literary texts and the non-African translator. Since literature cannot be separated from culture, the translator of a literary work is a cultural mediator (Benacka 2014: 113). In translating literary works, proper mediation without loss of meaning is not only desired but even demanded. Critical analysis of literary translations ensures the respect of this demand. Therefore, critical analysis of literary translations constitutes the focus of the study.

This research, therefore, proposes that literary translations, before being published should be subjected to criticism by one who is at home with both the linguistic code and culture of the source language. Though some translation researchers had previously offered solutions to the challenges faced by writers creating African literature in non-African languages, few explored pre-publication criticism as a means of resolving cultural problems in translation. This study adopts the English and the French versions of *Americanah* as source and target texts. The original version of this novel was written in English by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and published in 2013 by KACHIFO. The French version was translated by Anne Donour and published in 2014 by GALLIMARD.

Every translation criticism must have a clearly defined objective (whether negative or positive) and must be supported by examples –*Chaque critique de la traduction qu'elle soit positive ou négative, doit être définie d'une manière explicite et soutenue par des exemples.* (Yong 2012:39). This study also has a clearly defined aim: to investigate the presence of the social and emotional effects of Nigerian culture in the French translation. The specific objective of this research is to analyse the target text with the intention of verifying the presence of the author's intended meaning with particular reference to the presentation of Nigerian culture. The research interrogates the use of pre-publication criticism or peer review as a means of resolving cultural problems in literary translation.

Eight cultural elements drawn from six chapters of *Americanah* are examined. These are: marriage, African hair style, African food, religion, life in Lagos, domestic servants, the Igbo language and trade union strikes.

The text *Americanah* has fifty-five chapters. However, this study limits its analysis to six chapters: chapters 1-3, chapter 8, chapter 34 and chapter 50. The selected chapters were chosen based on the presentation of Nigerian culture (noting that *Americanah* presents American, African and British cultures).

2. Critical analysis of literary translations

Translation criticism is the art of analysing the translated version of a work with the aim of testing its fidelity to the original text. A work is examined for its content, style and sometimes also its esthetical character (Reiss 1971: 2). Translation criticism is therefore the examination of a translation through the comparison of the source text and the translated version. This comparison should evaluate the content, style and aesthetic presentation, noting that aesthetic language is particular to literary texts.

One of the major principles of translation is to respect and maintain the intended meaning of the author. In this regard, critical analysis is necessary to ensure the respect of this principle. Literary texts contain a lot of cultural presentations, the presentation of these elements are usually symbolic and connotative and rarely denotative. To prevent loss of meaning in translation, critical analysis of the re-expression of cultural elements is necessary.

A translator should possess a few qualities to enable him perform his tasks: linguistic competence, knowledge of translation methodology and knowledge of the subject matter. These qualities are also required from a translation critique. In critiquing literary translation, one must possess knowledge of source and target languages, and knowledge of the culture in which the work is set and proper comprehension of the authors philosophy. According to

Reiss (1971:39), “Translation criticism is possible only by persons who are familiar with both the target and source languages, and is accordingly in a position to compare the translation directly with the original”. To avoid loss of meaning and ensure proper cultural mediation, this study recommends that translation criticism of literary works should be done before publication.

3. Analysis of the presentation of Nigerian culture in *Americanah*

In her book *Translation Studies*, published in 1980, Susan Bessien states that every act of translation criticism must have an objective. The objective of the analysis done in this study is to ensure proper mediation of Nigerian culture in the French translation of *Americanah*. The study is not geared towards condemning Anne Donour’s work but to validate it.

This study examines eight aspects of Nigerian culture. The first being marriage. Nigerian English can be described as a brand of English language constructed through direct translation from a Nigerian indigenous language. Nigerian English is employed in presenting marriage as seen in the following extract, drawn from the 34th chapter of *Americanah*:

Her mother asked, ‘Is he a Christian?’ ‘No’. He is a devil-worshipper.’
 ‘Blood of Jesus! her mother shrieked’. ‘Mummy yes he is a Christian,’ she said. ‘Then no problem,’ her mother said. “When will he come to introduce himself? You can plan it so that we do everything at the same time – door-knocking, bride price and wine-carrying - it will cut costs and that way he does not have to keep coming and going, America is far...’ (EV³ 314).

This is rendered in French as :

Sa mère demanda : Il est chrétien? –Non. C’est un adorateur du diable. –
 Jésus tout-puissant ! s’écria sa mere. –Maman, oui, il est chrétien. - Alors
 pas de problème, répondit sa mère. Quand viendra-t-il se présenter ? Tu
 peux t’arranger pour que nous fassions tout en même temps- les visites, le

³EV: English version, extracts drawn from the source text

prix de la mariée, l'offre du vin-, ce sera moins cher et il n'aura pas besoin de faire des allées et venues. L'Amérique est loin (FV⁴ 350).

One can observe the use of expressions such as *door knocking* which is not English ENGLISH but Nigerian English. The Nigerian English presented in this text arose from literal translation by the author from Igbo to English. The first stage of marriage in Igbo culture involves an intending groom knocking on the door of the home of his fiancée with the intent of introducing himself to her parents. Hence the expression *iku aka n'uzo* which may be translated as ENGAGEMENT CEREMONY or INTRODUCTION. The novelist however opted for literal translation door knocking.

This study strongly rejects the French translation of *door knocking* as *la visite* and *bride price* as *le prix de mari*. These French translations lead to loss of local flavour and also loss of the symbolic meaning borne by the cultural elements. One would propose *l'introduction* or *la presentation* for *door knocking* and *le dot* for *bride price*.

Literal translation from English to French- *offre de vin* - was used by the translator to express Nigerian English *wine carrying*. This study does not reject this translation as this stage involves offering wine to the bride's father.

African hair style is the second aspect of culture to be considered in this research. This aspect of culture is presented in an extract from the first chapter of *Americanah*:

But she did not like that she had to go to Trenton to braid her hair. It was unreasonable to expect a braiding salon in Princeton – the few black locals she had seen were so light-skinned and lank-haired she could not imagine them wearing braids – and yet as she waited at the Princeton junction station for the train, on a hot afternoon ablaze with heat, she wondered why there was no place she could braid her hair. (EV3)

⁴FV: French version, extracts drawn from the target text

The French translation of this sentence goes thus:

Mais elle n'aimait pas devoir se rendre à Trenton pour faire tresser ses cheveux. Esperer trouver un coiffeur de tresses a Princeton n'était pas raisonnable- les rares residents noirs qu'elle y avait vus avaient la peau si claire et les cheveux si raides qu'elle ne pouvait les imaginer tresses-et pourtant en attendant son train a la gare de Princeton Junction, par un apres-midi blanc de chaleur, elle se demandait pourquoi il n'existait aucun endroit ou elle pourrait se faire coiffer. (FV13).

The use of the term *se faire coiffer* (to have one's hair done) is an under translation of the Nigerian culture borne by this sentence. The author of *Americanah* is explicit, stating that there were few Africans in Princeton and the few black locals did not wear braids. For this reason, Ifemelu (the principal character in this novel) had to travel to Trenton to do African braids. A better French translation would be to repeat the term *tresser ses cheveux* (to braid or weave one's hair).

Another presentation of African hair style maybe seen in the third chapter of the novel:

Ifemelu had grown up in the shadow of her mother's hair. It was black-black, so thick it drank two containers of relaxer at the salon, so full it took hours under the hooded dryer, and, when finally released from pink plastic rollers, sprang free and full, flowing down her back like a celebration. Her father called it a crown of glory (EV 41).

French version of this extract reads:

Ifemelu avait grandi dans l'ombre des cheveux de sa mère. Ils étaient noir-noir, si abondants qu'ils absorbaient deux flacons de démêlant quand on la coiffait, si épais qu'il leur fallait rester des heures entieres sous le casque du sechoir, et quand enfin libérés des bigoudis de plastique roses ils s'échappaient en une masse libre et volumineuse, ils se repandaient

jusqu'en bas de son dos comme une fête. Son père les appelait sa couronne de gloire (FV55).

Literal translation is only a problem if it causes loss of meaning in the target language. One appreciates and accepts the use of *couronne de gloire* to depict *crown of glory*. This is a case of proper implementation of literality. However, the use of *demelant* to express *relaxer* is considered inappropriate. *Demelant* may be considered as *conditioner* or *detangler*. Nigerian women use *relaxer* to straighten their hair, to make it smooth and lanky. A better term would have been *crème de defrissage*.

Religion is the third cultural element to be studied by this research. By religion, one implies Christianity (no other religion is mentioned in the text). Elements of Christianity may be found in French and English versions of this expression: *Mrs Ojo ministered to me* (EV 42) translated as: *Mme Ojo est venue me convertir* (FV56). One can note another presentation of Nigerian English *ministered*. The term *ministered* in this context does not mean to *serve* but *preached*. The French translation adopts *converti* (converted), conversion takes place after one accepts a message. The term *minister* means to give the message. A better translation would be *preché*.

Fasting (prayerful abstinence from food for the purpose of spiritual meditation) is a component of Christianity. This may be seen in this extract: offering starvation in exchange for prosperity (EV 42). The novelist had employed the term *starvation* which shows extremism, starvation was translated as *privation* in French: *offrant la privation pour devenir riche* (FV56). The study accepts *privation*, the novelist presented Ifemelu's mother as going beyond fasting to starving herself. This analysis, however, prefers *richesse* as a better translation for *prosperity* instead of *devenir riche*.

Christians believe that there is a heaven and that it is their final resting place. They also believe that heaven is up and one needs wings to fly to it. The wings are our faith. Heaven

can be seen in the English and French versions of this extract: “he will get into heaven on the wings of her faith” (EV 42)– “il irait au ciel porté par la foi de sa femme” (FV 56). The extract was drawn from the third chapter of *Americanah*. It is believed that one flies to heaven. However, Ifemelu’s father did not go to church and so will go to heaven transported by his wife’s wings (faith). The term “wings” is missing in the French translation. One would propose that wings be literally translated: *il ira au ciel porté par les ailes de sa femme*.

The source text presents the mode of celebrating Easter. Extended family forms a major part of Nigerian culture. During religious festivals – Easter, Christmas or New Year- one invites relatives to eat and celebrate together, as seen in this extract: “there would have been cooking and bustling, many pots in the kitchen and many relatives in the flat” (EV 42). Anne Donour translates this extract as : « avant tout le monde se serait affairé, il y aurait eu des marmites plien la cuisine, une flopée des parents dans l’appartement » (FV57). The use of literal translation for *des marmites plien la cuisine* (pots filled the kitchen) changes the linguistic pattern of French the language. A better and grammatically correct translation is *il y aurait eu beaucoup de marmites dans la cuisine*.

Lagos was the capital of Nigeria; it is still considered to be her commercial capital. Life in Lagos is the fourth aspect of Nigerian culture to be examined in this study. *Americanah* presents a major aspect of Lagos – its busy nature. In the fiftieth chapter, one finds:

She told him about her flat and how she had a driver who drove her to work, and how on Sundays she loved to drive herself because the roads were empty; Lagos became a gentler version of itself. the people in their bright church clothes looked like flowers in the wind (EV420)

This extract goes thus in the French translation:

Elle lui décrivait son appartement, lui disait qu’elle avait un chauffeur qui l’emmener au bureau.... et qu’elle aimait conduire sa voiture le dimanche parce que les routes étaient desertes ; Lagos devenait une ville plus aimable

.... les gens dans les atours colorés du dimanche ressemblés de loin à des fleurs dans le vent (FV463).

This study accepts most of the translation of this extract except for the translation of *Lagos devenait une ville plus amiable* (Lagos becomes a more likable town). This is different from the author's intended meaning. The novelist did not speak of liking Lagos, she intended to present the busy nature of Lagos from Monday to Saturday, and its leisurely and freer nature on Sunday. A better French version would be: *Lagos devenait une ville plus calme*. This analysis specially appreciates the translation of the figurative expression *flowers in the wind* as *des fleurs dans le vent*.

Lagos is free on Sundays because most Lagosians are in church, this is seen in chapter three of *Americanah*: "the bus stop was early empty and she imagined all the people who would have been crowded here now in churches singing and praying" (EV 52) - *l'arrêt de l'autobus était étrangement désert et elle imagina la foule qui s'y pressait habituellement en train de chanter et de prier dans les églises* (FV67).

The expression *early empty* is lost in the French version. The story shows us that the bus stops are usually occupied at this time but they were empty for most Lagosians were in church. The term *étrangement* is inappropriate. It was not strange that the bus stop was empty as this is the practice every Sunday.

Food may be considered as part of culture, it is the fifth aspect of culture to be examined by this study. Nigerian food can be seen in the second chapter of *Americanah*:

In the car on the way home from Chiefs' party, Kosi said, Darling you must be hungry. You ate only that spring roll and suya. You need to eat. Thank God I asked Marie to cook she said and added giggling, me I should have respected myself and left those snails alone. I think I ate up to ten. They were so nice and peppery (EV33).

Anne Donour translates this sentence as :

Dans la voiture qui les ramenait chez eux, Kosi dit : Chéri, tu dois être affamé. Tu n'as pas mangé qu'un rouleau de printemps et de suya. Il faut que tu manges. Dieu merci j'ai demandé à Marie de nous préparer quelque chose, dit elle et elle ajouta en riant : pour ma part, j'aurais dû faire attention et ne pas toucher à ces escargots. Je crois en avoir mangé dix. Ils étaient si bons et si bien assaisonnées(FV43).

The use of two translation techniques – equivalents – to depict *spring rolls* as *rouleur de printemps* and proper noun to depict *suya* in the FV is acceptable and commendable. Nevertheless, the term *assaisonnées* which means seasoned does not depict the author's intended meaning. Peppered snails is a Nigerian dish, *assaisonnées* may imply the use of several condiments not just pepper. The term *peppery* may have been a better choice. This term is properly employed in an extract drawn from the same chapter of the novel: "Chief's steward always served fresh pepper soup, deeply flavourful pieces of fish in a broth that made Obinze's nose run" (EV25). One accepts and commends the French translation : *l'intendant lui servait toujours une soupe pimentée fraîche, des morceaux de poisson savoureux dans un bouillon qui lui piquait le nez*(FV37). *Pimentée* depicts "peppery" better than *assaisonne*.

Rice is a staple food in Nigeria. It is served often during celebrations and often consumed daily in many Nigerian homes rice is boiled and served with tomato or palm oil stew. It can also be cooked in a broth made of tomatoes and meat stock. This is called *jollof rice* which originated from Senegal. Rice is served with fried ripe plantain, green vegetables or salad. This can be seen in this sentence, "Marie knocked on his study door and came in with a tray of rice and fried plantain" (EV36) – *Marie frappe a la porte de son bureau et entra avec un plateau de riz et de bananes plantain frites*(FV48). This translation is considered appropriate. In this novel, Adichie also expresses the manner in which Nigerians appreciate local food:

At the buffet table, he saw a young man looking with sad dissapointment at the cold cuts and pasta. Obinze was drawn to his gaucheness; in the young

man's clothes, and in the way that he stood, was an outsidership he could not shield even if he had wanted to. There's another table on the other side with Nigerian food (EV 31).

Anne Donours' translation goes thus:

Devant le buffet, il vit un jeune homme qui contemplait d'un air désappointé les tranches de viande froide et les pâtes. Obinze fut attiré par son attitude embarrassée ; ses vêtements et sa contenance trahissaient un désarroi qu'il n'aurait pu dissimuler même s'il l'avait voulu. Il y a une autre table de l'autre cote avec de la nourriture nigériane. (FV 43).

Three items in this extract are worth some comments. The first is the fact that *pasta* is Italian, not English or French. This should have been retained without changes. Secondly, *outsider* is not depicted in *désarroi*. Actually, the young man felt lost not disappointed. The expression: *...une autre table de l'autre cote avec de la nourriture nigériane*, is an improper use of word for word translation. The preposition *avec* should have been replaced with *portant* – *une autre table de l'autre cote portant de la nourriture nigériane*.

In Nigeria, it is not uncommon for rich or middle class homes to have domestic servants. This phenomenon is also illustrated by Adichie in *Americanah*. While Aunt Uju was the General's mistress, she had domestic servants. Marie is Kosiso's househelp, Obinze's gateman, Mohamed, and Gabriel, his driver. Ifemelu also had a driver, though the name was not given. The French designations for these were properly given except for the use of *intendant* to depict *steward* in the second chapter. This wrong choice may be due to the use of the term "steward" instead of "server". Steward in this context means servant or waiter. A more appropriate French term may be *serveur*.

The novel also shows the way domestic helps are treated as seen in this extract:

The last house girl, brought by a relative of Gabriel was thickest and had arrived clutching a duffel bag. He was not there when Kosi looked through

it- she did that routinely with all domestic help because she wanted to know what was being brought into her home- but he came out when he heard Kosi shouting, in that impatient shrill manner she put on with domestic help to command authority, to ward off disrespect. The girl's bag was on the floor, open, clothing fluffing out. Kosi stood beside it, holding up, at the tips of her fingers, a packet of condoms. What is this for? Eh? You came to my house to be a prostitute? The girl looked down at first, silent, then she looked Kosi in the face and said quietly, in my last job, my madam's husband was always forcing me. Kosi's eyes bulged. She moved forward for a moment, as though to attack the girl in some way, and then stopped. Please carry your bag and go now-now, she said (EV34).

The French translation reads:

La dernière domestique, présentée par un parent de Gabriel, était trapue et était arrivée chez eux serrant un fourre-tout contre elle. Il n'était pas présent lorsque Kosi l'avait inspecté- ce qu'elle faisait en général avec tous les domestiques parce qu'elle voulait savoir ce qu'on introduisait dans sa maison- mais il sortit quand il entendit Kosi hurler de cette voix impatiente et aiguë qu'elle prenait avec les serviteurs pour affirmer son autorité, parer à toute tentative d'irrespect. Le sac de la fille était sur le sol, ouvert, débordant d'un flot de vêtements vaporeux. Kosi se tenait à côté, brandissant du bout des doigts un paquet de préservatifs. Et ça, c'est pour quoi faire ? Eh ? Tu viens dans ma maison pour te prostituer ? La fille avait d'abord baissé les yeux, silencieuse, puis regardé Kosi en face en répondant calmement : Dans ma dernière place, le mari de ma madame était toujours en train de me forcer. Kosi l'avait regardée les yeux exorbités. Elle s'était avancée, prête à frapper la fille, puis s'était immobilisée. Fais-moi le plaisir de prendre ton sac et de partir sur le champ (FV46).

It is pertinent to comment on the translation of “Please carry your bag and go now-now”, into French as *Fais-moi le plaisir de prendre ton sac et de partir sur le champ*. Though the term *please* was employed, the novelist presented that Kosiso did not intend to be polite. The expression *partir sur le champ* expresses politeness; it may be better to say *partir immédiatement*.

Language is part of culture and Igbo language is the seventh aspect of Nigerian culture to be examined by this study. In the source text, one may note the use of some Igbo expressions: *kedu, ogini, ngwa, kedu ebeino*. One accepts and appreciate the fact that the translated version did not change these into a foreign tongue but retains them in Igbo.

From the second chapter, comes this extract: “I would have said you should come and help me but no, you’re too soft, you speak too much English. I need someone with *gra-gra* » (EV23) - *je pensais que tu pourrais m’aider dans mes affaires, mais non, tu es trop mou, tu parles trop anglais. J’ai besoin de quelqu’un avec du gra-gra*(FV34). One appreciates *gra-gra* being retained in Igbo language. However, the use of *je pensais* changes the author’s intended meaning, it may have been better to say *j’aurais dit*.

One can note Nigerian English in this expression: “He still thinks that I will agree for him. Ha, o di egwu, for where? » » (EF25) – *il croit encore qu’un jour je lui dirai oui. Ha, o di egwu, pour aller où?»* (FV35). This study appreciates *o di egwu* being retain in the Igbo language. However, *for where* does not mean where, in Nigeria context this means impossible or never.

The eighth and final aspect of Nigerian culture to be considered by this study is trade union strikes. From 1984 to 1999, Nigeria experienced fifteen years of uninterrupted military government. The military dictatorship caused ASUU (Academic Staff Union of Nigerian

Universities) to embark on incessant strikes. Chapter eight of *Americanah* presents these strikes as shown in this extract:

Strikes now were common. In the newspapers, university lecturers listed their complaints, the agreements that were trampled in the dust by government men whose own children were schooling abroad... (EV 98)

Anne Donour translates this thus:

Les grèves étaient désormais fréquentes. Dans les journaux, les maitres de conférences étaient leurs revendications, les accords qui étaient foulés aux pieds par les membres du gouvernement dont les enfants faisaient leurs études à l'étranger... (FV 116)

The strikes were as a result of failure on the part of government to keep the agreements reached with ASUU. One appreciates the re-expression into French of the figurative statement *the agreements that were trampled in the dust by government men* translated as *les accords qui étaient foulés aux pieds par les membres du gouvernement*. The translation technique employed in this case is the use of equivalent, this means that the translator sought for a term in the French language which has the same meaning as the source expression. Instead of translating the term “dust”, a standard French equivalent was used.

Maitre de conference is employed as an equivalent for university lecturers. The strikes were embarked upon by all teaching staff, *maitre de conference* refers to the professors (the highest rank of lecturers). A more appropriate French translation is *les enseignants universitaires*.

Americanah also presents two major effects of the strikes, the first being an empty campus: “Campuses were emptied, classrooms drained of life” (EV 98)–*Les campus se vidaient, il n’y avait plus aucune animation dans les classes* (FV 116). The classes were empty due to the fact that the striking lecturers were not teaching; students were, therefore, forced to leave the campus. The expression *aucune animation* implies that the classes were not lively. But this is

not the case. The classes were empty and drained of human presence. A better French term would be *les classes semblent comme étant morts*.

The second effect of the incessant strikes was an exodus – many lecturers and students relocated abroad. This is seen in:

Everyone was talking about leaving. Even Emenike had left for England... Ranyinudo, who had a cousin in America, applied for a visa but was rejected at the embassy by a black American who she said had a cold and was more interested in blowing his nose than in looking at her documents. (EV98).

This is rendered in French as:

Tout le monde parlait de s'en aller. Même Emenike était parti en Angleterre... Ranyinudo, qui avait un cousin en Amérique, fit une demande de visa mais dit qu'elle avait été refoulée à l'ambassade par un Noir américain enrhumé qui avait passé plus de temps à se moucher qu'à examiner ses papier (FV116).

In Nigerian history, this period is referred to as the *brain drain* (a period in which the best of intellectuals were lost to the Western world). The brain drain can be seen in: "Nigeria is chasing away its best resources, Obinze's mother said" (EV100) –*le Nigeria chasse ses meilleurs ressources, dit celle-ci* (FV119). The French translation is not improper.

Due to the strikes, the school calendar was often altered and students spent more years in school than they ought to. Students were not sure of when they would graduate from school, this made many young Nigerians desperate to study abroad. The desperation to leave Nigeria can be seen in this extract:

Sister Ibinabo started the student visa Miracle vigil on Fridays, a gathering of young people, each one holding out an envelope with a visa application form, on which sister Ibinabo laid a hand of blessing. (EV 98)

The French version reads :

Sœur Ibinabo organisa une Veillée miraculeuse des Visas le vendredi, une réunion de jeunes gens qui brandissaient une enveloppe contenant un formulaire de demande, que sœur Ibinabo bénissait de sa main FV.

One can remark an interplay of two cultural elements in this extract; the presentation of the strikes and religion. The young ones believed in a supreme being (God) who worked through a human being (Ibinabo); they believed this being could facilitate a visa for them. This was very well rendered in the French translation.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, from the analyses in this study, it is safe to posit strongly that translation is truly a cultural mediation, as it represents the event and lifestyle of a people to a given audience. The audience in case in this study is the French speaking world. Adiche's text is, therefore, a mirror through which one may see Nigeria.

The study suggests three solutions to the problems raised through this comparison. The first is socio-cultural consultation. By this we mean that the translator should have done a research to investigate the cultural context of the element presented in the text. The second proposition made by this study is an interview with the author of the source text. The art of translation is simply the representation of the author's intended meaning. This intended meaning may be uncovered through a discussion with the author. Pre-publication review done by one who is at home with the language, culture and translation techniques is the third and most important proposition. Therefore, the study ultimately proposes pre-publication review as the solution to the problem of cultural representation in translation. Publication review done by one who is conversant with both the language of the source text and the cultural context on which a text is set prevents errors and ensures proper cultural mediation.

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