The purpose of this paper is to report on the translation of Camara Laye’s novel “L’enfant Noir”, originally written in French. The researchers discussed the challenges involved in the translation with particular interest in cultural aspects that are typical of Guinean culture. Also discussed are some strategies which translators can use to solve to some extent culture-related problems while translating from a source into a target language for the national audience in general and for the young generations in particular.

While the Latin aphorism goes that “Traduttore, traditore!”, it was found that although translating from a Romance language into a Bantu language is so difficult mainly because they are two distant languages from two far different cultures, through translation one speech community know some cultural aspects from the source language context..
Translation consists of rewriting and transferring a message from one language into another so that the meaning expressed in the original text is rendered in the receptor language text. Since the researchers in this study are well equipped with Kinyarwanda— their mother tongue, and since they use French as a Second Language, they decided to translate a French version into Kinyarwanda with the belief that Rwandese people who cannot understand well French will know about Guinean culture and related literary values. The text resulting from this translation will help in developing and cultivating skills in the Kinyarwanda mother tongue since Rwandese children and even their parents do live and think within their culture and language even when they are speaking French or any other foreign language. This book is interesting to Rwandans because childhood education as a theme in this novel is an essential issue in Rwandan society. More so they will appreciate and like it, then more books will be translated from foreign languages into Kinyarwanda and vice versa.

The idea of translation across cultures seemed interesting in view of the fact that this particular book “L’Enfant Noir” is very much concerned with Guinean culture, yet it seemed valuable for the population of Rwanda. In essence, the message conveyed in it is that children growing up in any society need cultural guidance from the adults, more especially their own parents, or else they will be misled and end up in serious trouble.

**Problem Statement**

French and Kinyarwanda are two different languages which belong to two distant and separate cultures. One is a Bantu while another is a Romance language in the Indo-European family. There are challenges especially when it comes to translating a novel written from within one of these linguistic cultures into the other given that the problem of writing and reading what it is written in foreign languages has been common in Africa. This concern about lack of reading culture is felt by many African countries, Eastern and Western Africa, as confirmed by Rosenberg (2003), Magara and Batambuze (2005), Commeyras and Mozile (2011). It has been remarked that in Africa, especially in Rwanda, people do not have a culture of reading and writing. Some people say that they face difficulties in reading as many books are written in foreign languages - French and English for example, that many Rwandans don’t understand or master well. More importantly, Nyandwi & Bazimaziki (2019) opine that Rwandese people face a serious problem of lack of enough African novels written in Kinyarwanda while those written in foreign languages hold relevant messages including African culture and values. As such, one of the solutions to this issue is to resort to translation. It is in that regard that researchers wanted to translate the book: “L’Enfant Noir” by Camara Laye from French into Kinyarwanda to bridge the gap and trigger others to write and develop an idea of translating more other books written in foreign languages into Kinyarwanda and many other African native languages. The researchers believe it is a means to provide resources written in other languages than French and English, particularly to bring other contexts in Kinyarwanda culture as embodied in a common language to all natives of Rwanda country (Bazimaziki, 2018). Simply put, the problem is that in Rwanda, many books found in libraries, bookshops, schools are written in foreign languages—like French, English and Swahili languages which are not mastered by all Rwandans and yet they want to read books of different cultures to get something beneficial to their culture. Translating the book “L’Enfant Noir” will bridge the gap and contribute to the solution to the problem in hands.

**Purpose of the Study**

Both oral and written Communication among people can be successful through a common code or by translating from one language into another. While Kinyarwanda speech community, Rwandans in particular, communicate using that common language, many books found in Rwandan libraries and bookshops are written in foreign languages i.e. French, Kiswahili and English which are not understood by many people in Rwanda. The aim of this study is to bridge the gaps in that situation. The researchers wanted to:

a. Carry out a translation of a novel from a Romance language into a Bantu language;
b. Demonstrate that the message conveyed in L’Enfant Noir is not only relevant to Guineans but also to other communities;
c. Explore challenges encountered in translating a literary text from a Romance language into a distant Bantu language;
d. Demonstrate that Camara Laye’s L’Enfant Noir exhibits cultural aspects that are relevant in Rwandan context;
e. Explain how Kinyarwanda literature can be promoted through translation of literary texts written in foreign languages.
Conceptualization and Study significance

In "L’Enfant noir" describes how a Guinean child is educated by everyone in the society; starting from his/her parents, grandparents and the whole community. In this novel, the leading theme is child education. It is an autobiographical prose in which the author describes his own life from childhood to manhood. While Human Rights Declaration has stated it that “Any child is entitled right to education”, Rwandan children are not exception as the constitution of the Republic of Rwanda in its article 27 states that both parents have the right and duty to bring up their children; while article 28 states that every child is entitled protection by his or her family, society and the State, depending on the status of the child, under the protection of national and international law (Constitution of 2003 as revised in 2016). This encourages Rwandans to educate their children starting from home. Thus far, once put in their mother tongue, the message embodied in this autobiographical prose narrative will be beneficial to Rwandans as regard cultural aspects in particular.

Currently, child education, especially youth education, is a serious problem in Rwanda. The researchers decided to translate this book for it has some moral lessons of educating children in all places: at home, at school, in the church, within the society; and in all times: from childhood to adulthood. In this connection, the significance of the present study is three fold: First Kinyarwanda teachers will gain additional and new textbook to teach their students in secondary schools. Secondly, People of Rwanda will become more cosmopolitan because they will have an idea about Guinean culture from childhood to manhood or womanhood. Literate Rwandan parents will know that it is necessary to guard a child from their birthday until manhood/womanhood. They will know a role of a father and a mother in Guinean culture and compare that culture with their own one. They will know better the role of a society for a child’s education particularly in line with the government policy of “Take any child as yours”. Finally, the translation will contribute to the development and enrichment of Kinyarwanda language, by increasing written literature in Rwandese mother tongue. It will also motivate other scholars to translate not only books from foreign languages into Kinyarwanda, but also from Kinyarwanda into foreign languages.

Methodology

The methodology used in this study was dictated by its nature. Basically, the researchers relied on document analysis and its translation with the support of external sources that were consulted such as English-French Dictionary and Kinyarwanda-French Dictionary commonly termed as “Inkoranya y’Ururimi rw’ikinyarwanda”. Not all the eight commonly used methods of translation were used in this study. Rather, the researchers resorted to some of them namely word-for-word translation as based on word order including cultural words which needed to be maintained accordingly in the target language. More so, where the researchers realized that there is no direct equivalent in the target language, resort was made to literal translation in a bid to be closer to the nearest equivalents of the target language. Thus, the researchers proceeded with intensive reading and understanding of the corpus novel, discussion, document contextual analysis in tandem with the source and target cultures, then translation. It follows that the researchers discussed the culture bound elements found in the book and how they would be rendered into Kinyarwanda, a far distant language from French. Contextual analysis has been a building stone all along the process.

Book author: Who is Camara Laye?

Camara Laye was born on January 1, 1928 in Kouroussa, a town in what was then the colony of French Guinea. His family members were Malinke, and he was born into a caste that traditionally worked as blacksmiths and goldsmiths. His mother was a Daman, another race from the village of Tindican, and Camara’s immediate childhood surroundings were not predominantly influenced by French culture. He attended both Koranic and French elementary schools in Kouroussa. At age of 15, he went to Conakry, the colonial capital, to continue his studies. He attended vocational studies in motor mechanics. In 1947, Camara travelled to Paris to continue studying mechanics. There he worked and took further courses in engineering and worked towards the diploma degree. Camara Laye published his first book in 1953, the autobiographical, “L’Enfant noir”. The book won the “Prix Charles Veillon”, in 1954. He wrote other 3 novels: Le Regard du Roi (The Radiance of the King), in 1954; Dramouss (A Dream of Africa), in 1966; Le Maître de la Parole (The Guardian of the Word), in 1978. In 1956, Camara Laye returned to Africa from France to Guinea, where he held several government posts. He left Guinea for Senegal in 1965 because of political issues and never returned to his home country. He died in 1980 in Dakar of a kidney infection.
Kinyarwanda version: Kamara Leyi ni muntu ki?


Book content: What is in “L’Enfant Noir”?  

The novel, originally written in French by Camara Laye under the title “L’Enfant noir”, in 1953, after it was translated into English by James Kirkup as “The African Child”. In the book, the author describes life, growing up as an African child in Guinea, West Africa. Deeply, nostalgic, the book is an autobiography portraying a vision of Islamic and ancient African community in the pre-colonial era, a time when tradition engendered mutual understanding and respect for all. Laye grew up in an environment where he was greatly loved. Both his parents had something supernatural about them. His father was a Malinke by tribe, and a blacksmith who used to make ornaments out of gold, inspired by the power of a black snake, which used to visit him in his dreams and daily life. His mother, too, had special powers. One time, his mother was called to help a horse got back to its feet. As if by magic, the horse rose up, after Laye’s mother had said a few words to it. His mother was of another clan whose totem is the crocodile. While people feared to fetch water from the river infested with crocodiles, Laye’s mother fetched water and no crocodile touched her. Laye grew up alternating homes between Tindican and Kouroussa. In Tindican, his mother’s village, Camara Laye lived with his grandmother. There him and his age mates watched over the fields, harvested rice and grazed animals. Laye started school, first in a Moslem and then at a French school. At a French school, he found a friend girl, Fanta, a friend of his sister. There also, Camara Laye and his friend Kouyate were bullied by big boys at school but that came to an end when Laye’s father beat up the head teacher. Away from school, Camara Laye undergone circumcision, a key ritual in many parts of Africa signifying the passage into manhood. For him, circumcision transformed him into a grown man, and he began to stay in his own hut. At 15 years, Camara Laye left home for Conakry, to pursue a course in technical studies. He stayed with his uncle Mamadou and his two ants. Every holiday he returned home. In his third year of technical college, he won a scholarship to France. Laye was extremely sad, to leave his country, his family and his girlfriend Mary.

Kinyarwanda content: Ni ibiki bivugwa mu gitabo cyitwa “Umwana w’umwirabura”?

Some cultural aspects identified in translating the book “L’Enfant Noir”

Critics assert that translation is more than transporting words or sentences from one language to another. It involves the translation of feelings, emotions and thoughts. It is for that reason that translators are accused of being traitors. Even if a translator is capable to convey the message, he or she may still lack the ability to transform either music, rhythm or deeper meaning of certain words and expressions. Sometimes one needs to translate using understandable terms to his audience and the translator’s choices are derived from the culture and history of the target language because one cannot always use footnotes to clarify certain things. While translating, a translator encounters a number of challenges. A good translator should be familiar with the culture, history and beliefs of the people who speak both languages. If the translator is not fluent in both languages, his/her success is threatened. This is also a challenge while translating. In this project, we encountered different challenges of translating terms related to culture, music, lexicology, phonology, grammar, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics, all of which determine the language forms, style, idioms, fluency, etc. As Kinyarwanda language doesn’t have the same word to word meanings that corresponds with French, we preferred to use meaning based translation rather than using literal translation. This helped us to overcome challenges related to the challenges we mentioned above. While translating this text, there were numerous challenges concerning certain belief; practices, concept, images, symbols, names, proverbs and others which are culture-bound and do not have specific equivalents in Kinyarwanda language such as Unknown concepts, Proper names and Musical terms.

Unknown / unfamiliar concepts

Unknown concepts were one of the challenges we encountered in this project. In our translation, there were many unknown concepts or unfamiliar concepts in this book “L’Enfant noir”. We came across names of place and people, objects, names of things, etc. In order to make the translation understandable to our Kinyarwanda, we used some of the following ways: use a descriptive phrase or compound word; use a word that is general in meaning; use a word or a phrase that is more specific in meaning; for instance Le chemin de fer / railway or train: Umuhenda wa gari ya moshi; Le train / train: Gari ya moshi; Métro / underground: Umuhanda unyura mu nsi y’ubutaka; Excision / Excision: gukebwa kw’abakobwa; Linceul / winding sheet or shroud: umwenda wirabura bambika abafuye mbere yo kubashyingura; Métisse / halfcaste / crossbreed :icyotara; and so forth.

Proper names

Names are terms used for identification. Names can identify a class or category of things, or a single thing, either uniquely, or within a given context. “Translation has many challenges, one of which is the problem of translation proper nouns (PNs), a term used here interchangeably with the term “proper names” adequately from one language to another. There is no doubt that translation personal names should not be assumed to be very troublesome in practice and needs very sensitive decision-making on the part of the translator within the translation process. Translators do not always use the same strategy for translation of all personal names in all kinds of texts Personal names in some cases can reveal some information by themselves. The translators knowledge of such information can sometimes be very effective in the translate process. Generally, personal names represent a real challenge for both professional and novice translators; therefore, they merit attention from researchers and scholars in the field of translation studies. Proper names, personal names included, represent a translation difficulty in different text type. In this translation we decided to translate the names of characters and places in the book by only showing how they can be written and pronounced in Kinyarwanda language so that we keep their meanings in Guinean culture. We did what is known as translation for instance writing a foreign word in the alphabet of another
Translation challenges from a Romance language into a Bantu language: Exploring Cultural Aspects in Camara Laye’s L’Enfant Noir

language, naturalizing it according to the phonology of the receptor language (Macmillan 2007). In Kinyarwanda language, “Proper nouns of persons and places of foreign origin which are not religious and foreign proper nouns of countries and regions are written as they are pronounced in Kinyarwanda, and their usual spelling in the original language is put between parentheses.” Ministerial Instructions No 001/ 2014 of 08/10/2014 Governing the Orthography of Kinyarwanda. Following are proper nouns examples encountered and how they were translated into Kinyarwanda:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proper nouns in the novel</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camara Laye</td>
<td>Kamara Leyi (Camara Laye)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tindican</td>
<td>Tendika (Tendican)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kouroussa</td>
<td>Kurusa (Kouroussa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conakry</td>
<td>Konakiri (Conakry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dakar</td>
<td>Dakari (Dakar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kankan</td>
<td>Kanka (Kankan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kouyaté</td>
<td>Kuyate (Kouyaté)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check Omar</td>
<td>Ceki Omari (Check Omar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himourana</td>
<td>Himurana (Himourana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanta</td>
<td>Fanta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mamadou</td>
<td>Mamadu (Mamadou)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Music related terms

The novel “L’Enfant Noir” exhibits some musical terms, musical instruments specifically, which caused difficulties to find equivalence in Kinyarwanda. The researchers in this study preferred to maintain the same terms by bringing them in the context of Rwandan culture. For Example; Banjo: Inanga yitwa banjo; Coro: Inanga yitwa Koro; Son phono: icyuma cye cy’umuzika; some kind of danse like: Coba: koba; Soli: soli. For the equivalence of a song sung in the novel: “Coba! Aye coba, lama!”, the researchers resolved to translated it as “Koba! Aye koba, lama!” which sounds Kinyarwanda like.

Taken together, it is important to recall that Kinyarwanda language doesn’t have word to word meanings that correspond with French language. This is the reason why the researchers faced a number of challenges while translating certain beliefs which don’t have specific equivalents in Kinyarwanda language. Most difficulties encountered are related with unknown concepts in Rwandan culture while the source language speech community knows them very well. Other difficulties are related with proper nouns which are terms used for identification. These were translated by only showing how they can be written and pronounced in Kinyarwanda as allowed in Ministerial Instructions No 001/ 2014 of 08/10/2014 governing the orthography of Kinyarwanda, mentioned above. To cope with difficulties in translating musical terms, like musical instruments whose equivalence could not be found in Kinyarwanda, the researchers maintained them and looked for the related concept in the target language. For the equivalence of a song sung in the mother tongue of the novel’s author, it was maintained taking into account the sounds in it.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Translation is not faithful to the text but is important for some speech communities to know about others’ culture and values. The present study was concerned with the translation of a French novel book entitled “L’Enfant Noir” (The African Child). The book was written by Camara Laye, a Guinean writer who was born in 1928 at Kouroussa and died in 1980 at Dakar in Senegal. The choice of the book was not randomly made. Rather, it is a book in which the author talks about education that every parent should give to his/her children from the childhood to adulthood. Through this translation, those who will read the translated novel will know that it is necessary to guard a child from his/her birthday until their manhood/womanhood. They will know a role of a father and a mother in Guinean culture and will compare that culture with their own. They will know the role of a society in a child’s education. The translation is thus relevant in that it conveys to Kinyarwanda speech community some African cultural concepts beside the
message that any child should be well treated; a policy that the government of Rwanda put into practice in accordance with children rights. Since translation is one of the main means that help in promoting and developing African local languages, it would help in standardizing orthography, vocabulary and other language features of the mother tongues and this would contribute enormously to the Language and culture safeguarding. Very few Rwandans are familiar with foreign Languages. Therefore translation needs to be done strongly so as to allow all the targeted audience to read and understand books written in their mother tongues even books written in foreign languages to be translated into Kinyarwanda. As information sharing is a key factor in order to achieve the Rwandan long term vision, it is better if it is done using the language understood by all citizens. Hence, all government policies should be translated in Kinyarwanda in order to allow all Rwandans to understand them and be able to implement what they understand very well. Kinyarwanda, like any other African mother tongues, should be empowered through the language and other government policies so as to help in their promotion and development. Enough local Libraries should be built closer to people to get Kinyarwanda books of stories, proverbs, tongue twisters, folk stories, poems and songs. This will help people especially youth to learn the standard words to use in Kinyarwanda and the proper use of their mother tongue. African curriculum should always put emphasis on the mother tongues as one way to develop them and preserve their cultures. Mobilization in all sectors need be increased so as to develop Kinyarwanda as mother tongue and as the national Language. The researchers recommend other scholars and translators to keep on translating more books written in foreign languages so as to allow Rwandan citizens to get a hold of any communicated messages straightforwardly not only in literary field but also in other domains such as science, politics, or the like.

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