



IGBO-ENGLISH TRANSLATION COMMENTARY OF CHIDI EMENIKE'S POEM 'ATILOGWU'

IHECHI OBISIKE NKORO

Department of Foreign Language & Translation Studies
Abia state university, Uturu, Nigeria



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ABSTRACT

The Paper attempts to translate an Igbo poem 'Atilogwu' by Chidi Emenike into English with a view to sharing his indigenous Igbo creativity with English readers. Literature and development are inseparable as every era has its philosophical undertone. Literary traditions of international repute often include translated literature. African multilingualism has given birth to a generation of African Scholars who not only create artistic works in African and non-African languages, but contribute greatly to world literature through literary translation. The Igbo of South-eastern Nigeria are rich in creative works expressed in Igbo language and other international languages like English, French and German. Bearing in mind the fact that the beauty of poetry lies in its sonorous presentation of the subject-matter, efforts have been made to reproduce in English the most dynamic and most natural equivalent of Chidi Emenike's original message in his poem 'Atilogwu.'. Although there is a significant loss of certain sonorous effects in our translation, English readers cannot but appreciate Chidi Emenike's poetic ingenuity as he eulogizes the Igbo dance 'Atilogwu' in this poem. It is concluded that literary creativity in indigenous African languages should be encouraged without fear of the artists being unknown to the international community as Africa's multilingualism has produced indigenous scholars who can translate African literary thoughts into English and other languages of the world.

Keywords: Africa, Igbo poetry, Emenike, Atilogwu, English translation, Entertainment

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INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal and international relations are indispensable. The Igbo saying "onye ije ka onye isi awo ama ihe" that is to say, he who travels is wiser than the gray-haired paints this succinctly. Every human being has a limited knowledge, hence the need for interpersonal interaction which increases one's knowledge. Every linguistic community expresses its world view and culture through a given language. Since there are thousands of linguistic communities and languages in the

world, access to other peoples and their experiences is a perennial need. From very ancient times, humans have resorted to interpretation and translation for intercultural communication. While interpretation addresses the oral medium, translation deals with written communication. The views expressed hereafter will revolve around translation since the study sets out to translate an Igbo poem 'Atilogwu' by Chidi Emenike into English.

To us translation is essentially an attempt to reproduce an equivalent of a written message of

one language in another language taking cognizance of the meaning and style of the original message. Since the second half of the last century till date, many scholars have deliberated on the theory and practice of translation. Newmark notes that in transferring a written message of one language to the other, that there is always a measure of loss (7) while Nida and Taber point out that it is pertinent to reproduce in the target language the closest natural or most dynamic equivalent of the source language message in terms of meaning and style (11) Although there is an inevitable loss in the translation activity especially in questions of form or structure, translation continues to play a major role in written intercultural communication as the content of a message is often successfully reproduced from one language to another. Religious, scientific, technical, literary and cultural information continue to transcend national and cultural boundaries through translation. In her recent study on 'Literature as communication', Ndukauba opines that translation links two languages, two cultures and ensures the exchange of linguistic, textual and cultural education (112). If there is a time in human experience when cultural exchange should experience a geometric growth, it is now, courtesy of ICT. The global impact of TED.com which has been able to marry 'Technology, Entertainment and Design' (TED) is quite insightful. Indeed, TED.com translation program which seeks to make its materials available in as many languages of the world as there are volunteer translators, is an eye opener to the ever-increasing need for intercultural communication among humans. Today many non-Jews could be seen answering Bible names like Abraham and Sarah through their reading of the Bible in their mother tongue.

Literature or works of imagination and aesthetics often linked to a culture, a people and a language, could be written or oral. African experience shows that until a people have their literature written down, they may remain unknown to the international community. Literary translation helps to disseminate literary thoughts from one culture to the other. For instance, English readers of Mokitimi & Mbbiti's *Proverbs of the Basotho* (1997), share in the wisdom of the Basotho of South Africa.

In the same vein, French readers are able to appreciate the literary wisdom of the Chilean author Paz as they read the French version of his novel *Papelucho* translated by Duviols. Again, Igbo readers are able to enjoy some of Kafka's writings as they read Ibemesi's *Soro Okwu M... (N'akuko Ndi Ozo)* (2005) translated from the German texts.

Written Nigerian literature is expressed in different languages that to us cover three categories. The first category has to do with literature in indigenous Nigerian languages such as Nwana's *Omenuko*, Fagunwa's *Ogboju Ode ninu igbo irunmole* and Achara's *Ala Bingo*. The second category has to do with works written in English or Pidgin English, French and other non-Nigerian languages such as Tutuola's *The Palm wine drunkard*, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Fatunde's *La Calebasse cassée*. Our third category of Nigerian literature represents translated literature such as Soyinka's English translation of Fagunwa's *Ogboju Ode ninu igbo irunmole* as *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* and Ibemesi's Igbo translation of Kafka's works as *Soro Okwu M... (N'akuko Ndi Ozo.)* Most studies on translated Igbo literature focus on Igbo literature written in English as could be seen in the studies of Ugochukwu (2006), Mokobia and Mebitaghan.

The focus of this paper is on Igbo literature written in Igbo language. The Igbo who speak the Igbo language are found in South-East Nigeria. Igbo, which belongs to the Kwa group of languages is one of the National languages of Nigeria along with Hausa and Yoruba. It is spoken by approximately 24 million speakers (Wikipedia). Igbo literature and culture have since the 1950's been exposed to non-English readers through the translations of Achebe's works in 'more than 50 languages of the world' (washintonpost.com). Igbo contemporary literature include translated literature like Moliere's *Filamint na Ndi otu ya* translated from French into Igbo by Ezeh and La Fontaine's 'Nwanyi mmanu na ite mmanu ya' translated from French into Igbo by Anyaehie. Translation of Igbo literary thoughts into other languages is also an on-going activity which includes works like Obakhena's Igbo-English Anthology *Olisa Amaka* (2001) and Nwanjoku's *The Bingo Kingdom*. an English translation of Achara's

Ala Bingo and Nkoro's *Au Royaume de Bingo*, a French version of Achara's *Ala Bingo*.

'Atilogwu': An Igbo poem by Chidi Emenike and its English Translation.

Godwin (101) points out that 'in Tiv the notions of songs, music and dance are intrinsically interwoven and thus applied interchangeably.' This applies also to Igbo oral poetry. Nevertheless, as could be seen in a write-up by Anya Ezeagu Organization 'Atilogwu, Ohafia dance and Nkwa Umu Agbogho' have grown to become popular dances in Igbo contemporary society. In the context of this study, 'Atilogwu' is a contemporary Igbo poem by Chidi Emenike which appears in *Akpa Uche, An Anthology of modern Igbo verse* edited by Ekechukwu. We chose to undertake an Igbo-English translation commentary of this poem because of its message which has to do with leisure and entertainment in traditional Igbo society. Different cultures have their ways of leisure and entertainment. In his study on leisure in Greece, Rome, USA and Nigeria, Ladani shows that leisure is common to ancient and modern cultures. Furthermore, *Fairer-Wessels's study on 'Motivation and behaviour of serious leisure participants: the case of the comrades' marathon'* shows that there is current need for more research on leisure in Africa. Furthermore, Coleman et al in their study on 'Leisure and health: The role of social support and self-determination' show that 'Companionship in shared leisure activity appears to provide effective relief for people as they deal with excesses of daily life stresses. On her part, Caldwell emphasizes on maximizing the therapeutic possibilities of leisure. Again, Cashman in his study 'Fabricating Space: Postmodern Popular Music Performance Venues on Cruise Ships' indicates that geography can be fabricated or constructed for entertainment as could be seen clearly in the tourism industry today.

Atilogwu

Egwu ndi Igbo

Egwu di egwu djazi omimi

Egwu anaghị agwu ike nkili

Egwu ụwa dum mara maka ya.

Egwu ndi ikolobia na ụmụ agbọgọ

Egwu ike na ndi rijuru afọ

Onye ike na-adighi anaghị agba gi

Ọ bụ gi ka e jiri mara ndi Igbo

I nwere anwansi di egwu

Taa, ekirienu m gi, i ju m afọ

Ahụ m na-ama jijiji n'anurị

Obi m na-echekwa oge m g'ihụ gi ọzọ

Echi, aga m ikili gi ọzọ, Mana afọ agaghị kwa iju m ma ọlị

N'ihì na gi bụ egwu di iche

Egwu di omimi n'agaghị anwu anwu.

(Emenike 27)

English Translation

Atilogwu

The Igbo dance

The dance that one never tires of watching

The dance that is known all over the world

The dance for young boys and girls

The acrobatic and energetic dance for the well-fed

You are not for the weak

You have placed the Igbo on the world map

Your aura is captivating

Today, I have watched you

How I enjoyed you.

I am so happy that I have watched you

And I am already dreaming of

When I will watch you again

Tomorrow, I will watch you again

I know I will never tire of watching you

Because you are a unique dance

Yes, you are an extraordinary dance

You will never die

4) Thematic Analysis.

In this section we intend to present a brief thematic analysis of 'Atilogwu' as we draw ideas from Uzochukwu's study on Igbo poetry (37-58).

a) The Igbo and Igbo Culture

Firstly, the poet makes it clear that the Atilogwu dance is an Igbo dance

i) Egwu Ndi IGBO / The Igbo dance

ii) O bu gi ka ejiri mara ndi Igbo / You have placed the Igbo on the world map

b) Leisure and Entertainment

Atilogwu is presented as an outstanding way of leisure and entertainment among the Igbo.

Egwu na-anaghi agwu ike nkili / I know I will never tire of watching you

c) Youthfulness

Certain human activities could be particularly for the young or the aged. Atilogwu is a dance for the young :

Egwu ndi ikolobia na umu agbogo / The dance for young boys and girls

e) An Acrobatic Dance

Atilogwu is an energetic and acrobatic dance hence its reserve for the youths and exclusion of the aged:

i) Egwu ike na ndi rijuru afo/ The acrobatic and energetic dance for the well-fed

ii) Onye ike n'adighi anaghi agba gi / you are not for the weak

e) Hope

Atilogwu does not just have an ephemeral and effervescent effect on its watchers but instills a living hope that equips the watchers look forward to watching it again and again:

i) Obi m n'eché kwa oge m g'ihu [sic] gi ozo / And I am already dreaming of
When I will watch you again

ii) Echi, aga m ikili gi ozo, mana afo agaghikwa iju m ma oli / Tomorrow, I will watch you again
I know I will never tire of watching you

f) Surrealism or Utopia

There are some surrealistic or utopian elements in the poem:

Egwu di omimi n'agaghi anwu anwu / Yes, you are an extraordinary dance

You will never die

5) Poetic elements of the Original poem and its translation.

5.1 Assonance (Repetition of vowels)

Igbo :

a = Atìlògwù, echekwa, diazi, afo, agbogo

e = echekwa, echi,

i = obi, echi, iche, ndi, Igbo

i = Atìlògwù, diazi, anaghi, adighi

o = Igbo, obi, oge, ikolobia, omimi

o = afo, Atìlògwù, agbogo, oli

u = rijuru, dum, Egwu, egwu

u = umu, Atìlògwù, g'ihu, ahu

English: Absent

5.2) Alliteration (repetition of consonants)

Igbo

B = obi, bu

Ch = echekwa, echi, iche

D = ndi, di, diazi

G = agbogo, gi, oge, g'ihu, gi

Gb = agbogo, Igbo, agba

Gh = anaghi, adighi

Gw = Egwu, egwu,

H = ihi, ihu, ahu

J = rijuru, jiri, jijiji

K = ike, ikolobia, ekiriela m, nkili

Kw = echekwa

L = nkili, ikolobia, ekiriela m, oli

M = omimi, umu, dum, mara, maka

N = ndi, anaghi, anwansi, mana

Nw = nwere, anwansi

R = anuri, nwere, ekiriela m

Z = ozo, diazi

English: Absent

5.3) Lexical Repetition

Igbo: Egwu, ndi, ike, anwu, afo, ju, ghi, anaghi, mara, ozo, na, omimi, Igbo.

English: Igbo

5.4) Personification

One of the stylistic means employed by Chidi Emenike in this poem is personification as he ascribes human qualities to an abstract noun 'Atilogwu', taking it to be a person. An attempt was made to reproduce this quality in our translation:

i) Emploi du nom propre : Atilogwu (Igbo and français)

ii) Personal pronouns

Igbo = gi, I

English: you

5.5) Exaggeration

Exaggeration or hyperbole, that is, amplification of certain facts beyond human realism often seen in works of art is seen in this poem:

Igbo: Egwu uwa dum mara maka ya

Atilogwu: You have placed the Igbo on the world map

5.6) Metaphor

Metaphor or transfer of meaning by analogical substitution is one of the stylistic tools used by Chidi Emenike.

Examples:

i) Igbo: Taa, ekiriela m gi, i ju m afo

English : Today, I have watched you
How I enjoyed you.

ii) Igbo: Ahum n'ama jijiji n'anuri

English: I am so happy that I have watched you

5.7) Linguistic Deviation

Literary creation could go with a measure of deviation from linguistic norms. In the poem, the poet exploits Igbo dialectism to produce a stylistic effect:

Igbo : ikolobia, agbogo, g'ihu

English: Absent

This example shows that the noun 'ikolobia' which is a variation of the standard noun 'okorobia' and 'agbogo' which is a variation of the standard noun 'agbogho' as could be seen in English-Igbo Dictionaries of Nnaji and Echeruo.

5.8) Pun or Play on Words

Igbo a tonal language so the poet carefully exploits this to give rise to Igbo puns.

Igbo: Égwú (danse) / Égwù (fear)

English: Absent

Problems Encountered

Every human endeavor has its challenges. Moving from one language to the other often goes with a measure of loss as every language has its unique signs and symbols. Our attempt to translate Chidi Emenike's poetic message from Igbo into English goes with a total loss of tonal effect created in the original poem through the poet's choice of the nouns 'Égwú (dance) and /Égwù (fear). We could not also reproduce in English the sonorous effects produced through linguistic deviations in the original poem.

CONCLUSION

Entertainment is such a vital aspect of life that music and dance continue to play an important role in many modern cultures. Though in its traditional setting music and dance is essentially an outdoor and a neighbourhood event for the entertainment of the immediate linguistic community, modern means of ICT now enables a lot of intercultural interaction. The power of the written word continues to exert undeniable influence among humans. Hence the study attempted to share Chidi Emenike's poetic creativity by translating his poem 'Atilogwu', written in Igbo into English. Africa has ways and means of providing the entertainment and leisure needed for wholesomeness as Chidi Emenike carefully captures in his poem. This exercise shows to what extent through translation, Africa's Multilingualism becomes a strong tool for dissemination of African literary creativity in African languages to speakers of non-African languages.

It is regretted that we lost a number of stylistic effects in the original poem in our translation due to the structural differences

between Igbo and English. Such stylistic losses include: pun or word play created in Igbo through tonal differences, Igbo dialectism for which we could not find dynamic equivalents in English as well as some phonic effects produced by the repetition of certain consonants and vowels in Igbo. Nevertheless, it is evident that our English version would to a large extent help the English literary world to drink of the poet's creative prowess along with Igbo readers.

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