

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This research looked at the approaches that the SABC embarks upon during its Sotho news translation processes. The news translations that were involved in this research are in Sepedi, Setswana and Sesotho. The study was firstly carried out with the intention of comparing the SABC's strategies with those that are provided by translation theorists or authors such as Mona Baker (1992), Gideon Toury (1980), Christiane Nord (1991 & 1997), and many others, and secondly, it was carried out in order to find out if Stephen Maphike's (1992) hypothesis still stands.

From the data gathered for this study, it could be inferred that the majority of the strategies that the SABC uses are similar to those provided by Mona Baker (1992). This argument originates from the fact that among all Baker's eight strategies of translation, only one of them has not been used in the SABC's Sotho news translations, and that is "translation by illustration". The obvious reason for this strategy not to be used is that it is irrelevant for this purpose. As Baker has highlighted, this strategy is relevant to situations where the translations are jotted down and not where the translations are verbally read out, like in the case of TV news. To use her own words, translation by illustration "is a useful option if the word which lacks an equivalent in the target language refers to a physical entity which can be illustrated particularly if there are restrictions on space and if the text has to remain short, concise and to the point" (Baker, 1992: 42).

However, as pointed out before, some of Baker's strategies are similar to Peter Newmark's (1981), and as a result, it could also be argued that the SABC uses strategies that are similar to those provided by both of these authors in its translation processes.

Furthermore, from the findings of this study, it could be concluded that Stephen Maphike's (1992) perception that "the greatest mistake made by news translators is word translation instead of concept translation" is not valid anymore (Maphike in Kruger, 1992: 21). As mentioned earlier on, from all the SABC's Sotho news translations that were studied for this research purpose, there were only three

sentences that were found to back up the above Maphike hypothesis. In all the other translated sentences, a conceptual approach to translation was applied.

Following this, this research concludes that the SABC translators' "mistake" of using a word translation in three sentences only, does not warrant a generalisation that they are still translating word for word instead of translating conceptually, as Maphike once mentioned. What one believes is that the SABC translators are trying their best to produce translations that are accurate but just as Mona Baker (1992) has foreseen, "every translation has points of strength and points of weakness and every translation is open to improvement" (Baker, 1992: 7).

From a functionalist perspective, it can be argued that such an improvement must be based on the purpose of the translation itself. The reasons for this viewpoint lie in the fact that "each text is produced for a given purpose and should serve this purpose" (Vermeer 1989 in Nord, 1997: 29). In simple terms, one may argue that a functionalist approach advocates that each text is produced with a function attached to it, and as a result, it should perform that particular function. The meaning of the word "text" is complex as it includes various documents and different genres. According to the Collins Concise dictionary (2001), this word "text" may mean "the words of something printed, written or displayed on a visual display unit". From this meaning, it is clear that translations are also regarded as texts. Therefore, when taking into consideration the above quotation by Vermeer (1989), it, in other words, means that each translation is produced for a given purpose and should serve that particular purpose.

As the literature review of this research has already indicated, a functionalist approach to translation is based on "Skopostheorie", which maintains that the prime principle of determining any translation process is the purpose or the skopos of the overall translation action. For this reason, Reiss and Vermeer (1984) argue that within a functionalist perspective, the end of a translation action justifies the means by which the translation action is carried out. In other words, this means that the purpose of a translation must be a deciding factor as to what kind of means or strategies are supposed to be used in that particular translation.

Taking this into consideration, one feels compelled to take a look at what the purposes of the SABC's news translations are. In order to do this, one must first establish what the purpose of the original or source text news is. In the literature review, I have already stated that the function of the news is to inform and entertain the public. Then, if this is the case, this means that the function of the translated versions of the news should also be to inform and entertain the public or the audience. This function of the news is what one may also refer to as "the purpose" of the SABC's Sotho news translations. This is so because just like the original English news, the purpose of these Sotho news translations is to convey informed messages to the audiences and give them some entertainment too.

Such entertainment is provided through the broadcasting of soft news. Soft news is usually reported in a humorous way to enhance the interest of the audiences. This usually involves sports news and other entertaining news such as the reports about musical festivals or any strange happening. Consequently, the translations of such news also include some kind of humour which originates from the source text.

For example, when reporting about a Pantsula music festival that took place in Sandton, the English news reporter started his report by saying "***Sandton Square came alive with foot-tapping and jiving today***". Thereafter, he reported that scores of mapantsula gave onlookers just a little taste of their Arts Alive performance to celebrate heritage month. With these words, the audiences' attention could be easily drawn because they might be interested in knowing more about this foot-tapping and jiving. In the Setswana translation of this report, there is also some form of amusement in a way the report was phrased. In that translation version, it is reported that "***Sandton Square e ne ya tsabakela ka dithase ka nako yeo bajanala ba motanso wa sepantsula ba lekgolo ba neng ba diragatsa mo tshokologong ya gompieno***". This literally means "***Sandton Square was filled with sparks when 100 pantsula dancers were performing today***".

But for an information to be thoroughly perceived, there are certain norms that must be fulfilled by the participants in any given communicative context. This implies that there is a certain degree of cooperation that (must) exist(s) between the participants which plays an important role as far as communication is concerned. In Geoffrey

Finch's (1998) words, "it is because of the sheer volume of possible meanings which could be inferred from utterances that we depend most crucially on the principle of cooperation in our everyday exchanges" (Finch, 1998: 164).

To illustrate this point further, Finch provides Paul Grice's (1991) "Cooperative Principle", which is characterised by four maxims in relation to communication. Those maxims are the maxim of quantity, the maxim of relation, the maxim of manner and the maxim of quality. According to Finch (1998), the maxim of quantity is concerned with the amount of information which we expect from any conversational exchange. In Finch's own words, this means that "when we speak to someone, we feel obliged to give them enough detail to enable them to understand us. If we don't, we are not really being cooperative" (Finch, 1998: 165). In this maxim, however, it is also pointed out that we have to avoid providing too much information which will obscure the point we are making when communicating.

As for the maxim of relation, it is argued that this means that we have to organise our utterances in a way which is relevant to the conversational exchange, whereas the maxim of manner "obliges us to organise our utterances in an orderly manner" (Finch, 1998: 166). As Finch argues, the last maxim, which is the maxim of quality, assumes that we are saying what we believe to be true.

Then, bearing the above maxims in mind, one may realise that there are certain situations where some of these maxims were flouted in the SABC's Sotho news translations. For example, with regard to the maxim of quantity, it could be argued that the sentence "***Mugabe extended a hand of friendship***", which has already been cited, may also be regarded as an example where the maxim of quantity has been flouted. This could be the case because the translator has not given enough detail to enable the audience to understand him or her thoroughly. As was stated earlier on, this sentence is ambiguous, and therefore, it is not easily comprehended.

Another example includes the phrase "air combat" in the sentence "***Air combat has been taken to a new level***", which was mistranslated as "***a combat against air***", instead of "***a combat in the air***". In fact, all the three sentences that could have been used as examples to prove Stephen Maphike's hypothesis right, (but could not and

cannot be because they are so few in number), may also be used as examples of situations where Grice's maxim of quantity was flouted, because in all these sentences, the translator has not provided enough information that was necessary for the sentences to be thoroughly understood. Furthermore, these sentences can also serve as examples of situations where the maxims of relation and manner were flouted because here, the translator has neither organised his utterances in a way which is relevant to a conversational exchange, nor in an orderly manner.

Another situation where a maxim was flouted involved a maxim of quality. This maxim was flouted in situations where the Sotho news translations gave wrong interpretations or provided some shifts in meanings as compared to the English news.

It can be argued from a functionalist's viewpoint on translation that the above examples show that the translations have failed to fulfil their purposes. Instead of informing the audience the translations here are misinforming them. However, there are also some situations where the information in the SABC's Sotho news translations has been thoroughly presented. These include all the situations in which the translators were able to use correct translation strategies taking into consideration the cultural aspects of both the source text and the target text. Because of some cultural aspects, translators are sometimes forced to make some drastic changes in their processes of translation. Some translation theorists refer to these cultural aspects as the norms that govern translation. According to Gideon Toury (1980), "norms are operative at every stage in the translation process and at every level in its product, the translation itself" (Toury, 1980: 53).

In Toury's view, there are two larger groups of translation norms, namely the preliminary norms and the operational norms. The preliminary norms, he says, have to do with a translation policy and a translation directness. By "translation policy" he refers to factors affecting or determining the choice of works to be translated, and by "translation directness", he refers to the direction that a translation takes, that is, from what source language is the translation done, and from what period is it done? The operational norms, in his opinion, direct actual decisions made during the process of translation and "they affect the matrix of the text, that is, the modes of distributing

linguistic material (especially of larger units) in the text, and the actual verbal formulation of the text” (Toury, 1980: 54).

From a functionalist perspective, the operational norms are the most critical ones as they are the ones that come into the picture depending on different purposes attached to different translations. It is because of the operational norms that relevant changes are made during translation processes. These include changes such as cultural substitutions, omissions and many other translations strategies that could be used in order to retain the message or meaning of the source texts in the translations.

According to Burton (1990), “how messages are put together is bound to affect how they are understood” (Burton, 1990: 23). Burton also realises the importance of context in relation to the comprehension of messages or meanings. This is revealed when he says “the context always affects how the communication is understood, and maybe how it is put together in the first place” (Burton, 1990: 23). To emphasise this point, he says:

A news item on television is not the same thing as it is on radio, even though both are broadcast media and tend to cover the same topics. For example, if you have pictures of an event they provide an immediate sense of action and background, of being there” (Burton, 1990: 23).

The above viewpoint was evident in the SABC news bulletins that were studied in this research, and it is still evident in the SABC’s daily news bulletins. It is an obvious fact that television news will never be similar to radio news as it also includes pictures to elaborate or emphasise every point that is reported. The inclusion of pictures in television news is vital because it helps in making the meanings clear or vivid. For example, in one of the Sotho news items the word “*computers*” was coined as “*dikomporo*” which is a coinage derived from this English word “*computers*”. Initially, I could not make sense of this word as it is not an original Sotho word. But from the pictures of the computers in the news items, I was then able to understand that this word means “*computers*”. Without the pictures, it would have been difficult for me to understand what it meant. This shows how important pictures are in television news. Taking this view into consideration, I will now conclude this research

report by providing some suggestions concerning the SABC's Sotho news translations.

Although translation is not and will never be an easy task for any translator no matter how experienced he or she is, there are some suggestions that one feels obliged to make in order for the SABC's Sotho news translations to improve and look better than the ones that were used for this research report.

Firstly, I believe that before engaging itself in any translation of the news in any language, the SABC should first consider the issue of audiences. For the television Sotho news, there are different types of audiences. For instance, there are urban and rural audiences and among these, there are those who are literate and those who are not. The illiterate audiences are usually found in rural areas while the literate ones are found both in rural and urban areas. As a public broadcaster, the SABC has to ensure that it satisfies all these categories of audiences as far as the provision of the news is concerned.

From data contained in this research, there is a substantial amount of evidence to back up the opinion that the SABC Sotho news is rather, or seems to be more biased towards literate audience than illiterate ones. The reason is that there is some tendency for the Sotho news translators to retain some English words in the translations even if those words have equivalents in the target languages. Such words include words such as *“pornography”*, *“title”*, *“inflation”* and many others that I have discussed above. In addition to these, there are also words such as *“di-edithara”*, *“raporoto”*, *“walete”* and many others that have been coined from their English counterparts and are used in the Sotho news translations to replace their Sotho equivalents.

This, in my opinion, suggests that the SABC translators in this regard, assume that all their audiences can easily understand these words. But this is not the case. There are many Sotho people who do not know the meanings of the words *“editor”*, *“inflation”*, *“pornography”*, just to mention a few, and if a translator uses these words in the Sotho news translations, millions of the news audiences are deprived of their rightful access to information contained in these words. For this reason, I believe that first priority must be given to the illiterate viewers as far as news

translation is concerned. My suggestion is that the SABC should make it a point that it always translates its news in a way that even the most illiterate of the illiterates will understand it.

The reason for this is that if the news is translated in this way, such a strategy will be a perfect one as it will suit everyone especially because the literate people will obviously also understand the news. This means that everybody will be catered for. It has already been highlighted that the SABC is still state-owned nowadays, and for this reason, it is the duty of this public broadcasting institution to ensure that everybody understands its news, especially because even the South African Constitution stresses that “everyone has the right of access to any information held by the state” (South African Constitution, Chapter 2, 1996)

Furthermore, UNISA’s (2001) tutorial letter suggests that “the role of the translator is to prevent linguistic exclusion (where the reader is unable to understand the text)”, and for this reason, it is important for the SABC to review its translation strategies a little bit in order to fulfil this view (UNISA, 2001: 34). According to UNISA’s said letter, all decisions involving the choice, adaptation and explanation of terms should be guided by the above-mentioned view, which is regarded as a basic principle of translation. But if priority is given to the literate people alone, then the majority of the television Sotho news viewers will be left out. This shows that the audiences or the readership, in cases of written texts, should always be the deciding factor as far as translation strategies are concerned. The choice of a translation strategy should always match the audiences or the readership to whom the translation is intended. In Newmark’s (1991) opinion, “the readership is the most persistent contextual factor in writing and in translation, though even more so in speaking” (Newmark, 1991: 99).

In other words, one may also suggest that the SABC should reduce the number of borrowed words in its translations. This applies specifically to those words that have equivalents in the target texts. By so doing, the SABC can be of great help to the development of South Africa’s indigenous languages. The idea of developing indigenous languages is also supported by the South African Language Plan Task Group which states that “the African languages, which have been disadvantaged by

the linguist policies of the past, should be developed and maintained” (Langtag 1996).

Furthermore, there are lots of omissions in the Sotho news translations. Some of those omissions, I believe, should not have been made as they narrow the information contained in the original texts. This means that before omitting any item from the source text, it is vital for translators to ensure that its omission will not adversely affect the source text meaning. If it does, then the item must not be omitted.

Lastly, one may also suggest that much care must be taken when it comes to translating sentences literally. From the three “mistakes”, to use Maphike’s (1992) word, that the Sotho news translators made when translating the sentences literally instead of conceptually, it could be realized that a literal translation has some limitations, whereas a conceptual translation does not. This means that there are situations where a literal translation may be suitable and there are also those in which it cannot be suitable. But this fact seems to have been missed when the SABC translators translated those three sentences that would seem to support Maphike’s (1992) hypothesis. As a result, one may argue that the SABC translators need to take this point into consideration whenever they are translating their news so that accuracy or equivalence between the source texts and their translations may be achieved and maintained. As William Frawley (1984) argues, “the study of translation and the subsequent improvement in its uses will not only bridge the gap between disciplines through better and clearer communication, it will also be of help in making us think about what we are saying and thus halt the deterioration of our use of language in almost every way we sit to employ it” (Frawley, 1984: 31).