CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. *LITERATURE REVIEW*

Translation has always been understood to refer to a written transfer of a message or meaning from one language to another. For a formal definition, Dubois says "translation is the expression in another language (or target language) of what has been expressed in another, source language, preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences" (in Bell, 1991: 5).

But it has already been suggested by many translation scholars such as Mona Baker (1992) and Peter Newmark (1988) that the notion of equivalence is problematic in the study of translation, and to overcome this problem, various translation strategies have been suggested by various authors within the field of translation. Although it is not easy to achieve exact textual equivalence, one may hint that equivalence could be achieved when a translation contains the meaning that is similar, or as close as possible to that of the Source text. For this to happen, it is important for translators to have a thorough grasp of semantics, which is "the study of the meanings of words" (Walpole, 1941 : 20).

The zeal to produce appropriate and satisfactory translations is shown in the ideological and theoretical changes that have taken place throughout the history of translation. In the beginning, translation theories were prescriptive and source text-oriented. As a result, translators were expected to "translate equivalently according to the source text" (Sprott, 2002: 3). First priority was given to the source text as translators were required to preserve the meaning of the source text as *far* as possible. Consequently, some elements from the target language were either undermined or ignored. Those might have included some important cultural aspects of the target language.

During the 1970s, so argues Gideon Toury (1995), a new perspective on translation, which gave rise to what we now know as "Descriptive Translation Studies" (DTS), developed. As the name suggests, DTS aims to describe rather than prescribe how translations should be done. Unlike prescriptive translation studies, DTS is target text-

oriented. In Toury's (1980) own words, DTS is "target-(rather than source-), solution-(rather than problem-) oriented", and its main aim is to "describe and explain empirical phenomena about translation, and come up with a pure theory of translation" (Toury, 1980: 6). In addition, he argues that DTS is goal-oriented and that the translation is judged from the point of view of the target text, and not from the source text. According to Toury, the prospective position or function of a translation within a recipient culture, or a particular section thereof, should be regarded as an important factor governing the very make-up of the product, in terms of underlying models, linguistic representation or both. In addition, he argues "that translations always come into being within a certain cultural environment and are designed to meet certain needs of, and/or occupy certain 'slots' in it" (Toury, 1995: 12). Following this, Toury argues that translators may be said to operate first and foremost in the interest of the culture into which they are translating. This means that during the 1970s, there was a shift towards understanding that the target system always has an effect on translation decisions.

Christiane Nord (1997) provides a functionalist approach to translation. Her argument focuses on the function or functions of texts and translations. In her book "Translation Theories Explained" (1997), she points out that the functionalist approaches to translation evaluate translations "with regard to their functionality in a given situation-in-culture" (Nord, 1997: 2). She also provides a historical overview which includes the development of modern functionalism in translation studies, and describes early functionalist views which led to the modern ones. Her view is that throughout history, translators, mainly literary or Bible translators, have been arguing that different situations require different renderings of translations. For example, in one situation a source text-orientation, which often includes a word-for-word fidelity to the source text, may be required, whereas in another situation, a target text-orientation may be more appropriate. The decision to choose a translation strategy is not an easy one as Cicero (106-43 B.C.) once remarked "If I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth, and if compelled by necessity I alter anything in the order or wording, I shall seem to have departed from the function of a translator" (Cicero 106-43 B.C., De optimo genere oratorum V. 14 in Nord, 1997: 4).

Following this, many Bible translators, as Nord argues, felt that the process of translating should involve both procedures, that is, a faithful reproduction of formal source text qualities at one level and an adjustment to the target audience at another. Within the same frame of argument, Eugene A. Nida (1964) distinguishes between formal and dynamic equivalence in translation. He says "formal equivalence" refers to a faithful reproduction of source-text form elements whereas a "dynamic equivalence" refers to equivalence of extralinguistic communicative effect (Nida 1964 in Nord 1997: 5). Moreover, in "A Framework for the Analysis and Evaluation of Theories of Translation" (1976) Nida emphasizes the purpose of translation, the roles of both the translator and the receivers or recipients of translation, and also the cultural implications of the translation process. This is manifested when he argues that:

> When the question of the superiority of one translation over another is raised, the answer should be looked for in the answer to another question, 'Best for whom?'. The relative adequacy of different translations of the same text can only be determined in terms of the extent to which each translation successfully fulfills the purpose for which it was intended. In other words, the relative validity of each translation is seen in the degree to which the receptors are able to respond to its message (in terms of both form and content) in comparison with (1) what the original author evidently intended would be the response of the original audience and (2) how that audience did, in fact, respond. The responses can, of course, never be identical, for interlingual communication always implies some differences in cultural setting, with accompanying diversities in value systems, conceptual presuppositions, and historical antecedents (Nida 1976, in Nord, 1997: 5).

Nida's 1976 approach, in Nord's opinion, had more influence on the development of translation theory in Europe during the 1960s and 1970s than did the idea of dynamic equivalence. In Edwin Gentzler's view, Nida's work became "the basis upon which a new field of investigation in the twentieth century – the 'science' of translation - was founded" (Gentzler, 1993: 46). As a result, Nord argues, some translation scholars working in training institutions started to give functionalist approaches priority over equivalence-based approaches. Among other things, functionalist approaches to translation were developed as a result of the impact the source text and target text cultures have on translations. Culture, as defined by Mary Snell-Hornby, is "the totality of knowledge, proficiency and perception" (Snell-Hornby, 1988: 40). For a

more elaborate definition, an American ethnologist Ward H. Goodenough defines culture as follows:

> Culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative, sense of the term. By this definition, we should note that culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behaviour, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them (Goodenough 1964 in Nord, 1997: 23-24).

According to Nord, this definition by Goodenough has served as a general starting point for functionalist approaches to translation. Within the functionalist approaches to translation, there is a "Skopostheorie" which was introduced by Hans J. Vermeer (1978) in an endeavour to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The word "skopos", so says Nord, is a Greek word which means "purpose", and the "Skopostheorie" is the theory that applies the notion of Skopos to translation (1997: 27). This theory holds the view that the prime principle of determining any translation process is the purpose (Skopos) of the overall translational action. Furthermore, it argues that there are three possible kinds of purpose in the field of translation, and those are: "the general purpose aimed at by the translator in the translation process (perhaps to earn a living), the communicative purpose aimed at by the target text in the target situation (perhaps to instruct the reader) and the purpose aimed at by a particular translation strategy or procedure (for example, 'to translate literally in order to show the structural particularities of the source language') (cf. Vermeer 1989a: 100, in Nord, 1997:27-28).

As Nord argues, the word "skopos" is usually applied to refer to the purpose of the target text, and some of the related words used by Vermeer together with this word (skopos) are "aim", "intention" and "function". According to Katharina Reiss and Hans J. Vermeer (1984), the top ranking rule for any translation is the "skopos rule", which says that a translational action is determined by its *skopos,* that is, 'the end justifies the means' (Reiss and Vermeer 1984 in Nord, 1997: 29). The Skopos rule is explained by Vermeer in this way:

> Each text is produced for a given purpose and should serve this purpose. The Skopos rule thus reads as follows: translate/interpret/speak/write in a way that enables your text/translation to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function (Vermeer 1989 in Nord 1997: 29).

With the aim of producing translations appropriate for the target system, Mona Baker (1992) provides certain strategies that can be applied during the process of translation. These strategies are designed to deal with instances where there is a lack of direct conceptual and other types of equivalence between the two languages at word, sentence and textual levels.

The first strategy that Baker refers to is that a translator may translate using a more general word, or what we also refer to as a superordinate. This, she says, is "one of the commonest strategies for dealing with many types of non-equivalents, particularly in the area of propositional meaning" (Baker, 1992: 26). Secondly, she argues that a translator may use "a more neutral\less expressive word" (Baker, 1992: 26). Thirdly, a translator may resort to translation by cultural substitution, and fourthly, a translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation could be used. The fifth strategy that Baker (1992) notes is to translate by paraphrasing using a related word, and the sixth one is to translate by paraphrasing using unrelated words. The seventh strategy is to translate by omission. With this strategy, the translator omits either a word or an expression from the source text in his or her translation. There are various reasons for this to happen, for instance, when the omission of such a word or expression does not hamper the meaning of the source text. The eighth and last strategy is to translate by illustration. According to Baker, this 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).

The above strategies, if used properly, can produce appropriate meaning in the target language. Some of these strategies are also suggested by Peter Newmark (1981). Those include ***paraphrasing, omission,*** which he refers to as ***deletion,*** and ***the use of loan word plus explanation,*** which he refers to as ***translation couplet.*** However, the application of all the translation strategies has to comply with certain factors that may

prove indispensable as far as meaning is concerned. For example, Geoffrey Finch (1998) argues that "in working out the meaning of what is said to us we have to take into account not only the words themselves as individual items, but also the circumstances in which they are uttered, the medium used, and the person who is addressing us" (Finch, 1998: 134). Furthermore, he argues that the relationship between the addressor and addressee is also very important as it has an effect on the meaning associated with certain words. The example that he gives for this argument is the declaration "I love you". This sentence has a different meaning when spoken by someone to his or her lover compared to when spoken by a child to his or her parent. For this reason, Finch believes that "it is not enough to know what words mean in isolation. We have to be able to interpret them in concrete situations" (Finch, 1998:135). In his view, words don't always have the same meaning for everyone, and it is very rare for people to understand an idea in exactly the same way as the speakers intend them to. With regard to television news, this, in other words, means that even during the broadcasting of the news, it is possible for people or viewers to understand some ideas differently. However, unlike in any other ordinary conversation, television news viewers may sometimes be guided by signs or pictures to understand what is said thoroughly. In the following section the vitality of signs during the news broadcast is highlighted.

2.2. *NEWS AND MEDIA*

According to Andrew Tolson (1996), when T.V. news is broadcast, the use of signs is so important as it helps in making the meanings clearer. In his view, television news is a combination of signs which are chosen to convey particular meanings, and such signs are mainly visual and verbal. Other signs are, however, auditory, and those include signs emanating from locations of the news, and those that are chosen to accompany the opening and closing graphics during news broadcastings. The importance of signs is also emphasized when John P. Robinson and Mark R. Levy (1986) state that "news producers appear to subscribe to the adage that 'a picture is worth a thousand words', and that film and videotaped material are needed to provide the most complete and comprehensive story" (Robinson & Levy 1986: 137). According to Francois Nel (1999) news can be defined as "whatever newspapers print and radio and television stations broadcast" (Nel, 1999: 35). However, Nel points out

that his definition is incomplete as it ignores a crucial party, which is the audience. The audiences are important because the news, to use Nel's terms, must be new to them, and must have both conversational and commercial value (1999: 20). This, in Nel's view, means that news must be something that can be talked about and which can also be bought and sold.

In my own view, news may be defined as any information that is given to somebody either through a word of mouth, radio, television or through a newspaper. This may either be about a recent or an old event. For Doris Graber (1996), "news is not just any information, or even the most important information about the world; rather, the news tends to contain information that is *timely*, often *sensational* (scandals, violence, and human drama frequently dominate the news), and *familiar* (stories often drawing on familiar people or life experiences that give even distant events a close-to-home feeling)" (Graber in Bennett, 1996: 26). But for a clearer news definition, one may rely on John Hartley's (1982) application of the Oxford English Dictionary's version which says, news is "tidings, the report or account of recent events or occurrences, brought to or coming to one as new information, new occurrences as a subject of report or talk" (Hartley 1982: 11). However, as Denis McQuail (1994) has pointed out, the question 'What is news?' is so difficult to answer and for comprehension's sake, the word "news" will be applied in this research specifically referring to what the SABC broadcasts as "news" on channel 2 (for Sotho news), and on channel 3 (for English news).

Many people, including Francois Nel (1999) himself, believe that the function of the news is to inform and entertain the audiences. However, as Denis MacQuail (1992) puts it, "the audience for whom news is produced and selected (according to 'news values'), not only looks for information, but also needs to make sense of the world in evaluative terms. They (we) want to know if things are getting better or worse, are better here than there, want to see praise or blame apportioned and want to follow the doings of heroes and villains" (MacQuail, 1992: 223). Moreover, Dahlgren (1983) argues that "while the output of television news does convey 'information', some of which is certainly retained by viewers, it is not the discrete units of information per se - the daily variation in content - which are at the core of the broadcasts' role in orienting the audience to the social world. Rather, it is the recurring, stable features of

the programming (that is to say the generic conventions, the structure and thematic content of TV news) as a cultural form which, over time, are the most significant" (Dahlgren 1983 in Robinson and Levy 1986: 160-161).

Furthermore, Nel (1999) argues that there are two types of news, namely, hard news and soft news. The hard news, he says, is the foundation on which all other newswriting is based, and it is more valuable than soft news. To use Arthur Asa Berger's (1990) terms, "hard news involves breaking stories (ones involving immediate events) or important social, political, and economic matters and is about controversial issues" (Berger, 1990: 123). As for Alfred Lorenz and John Vivian (1996) the term "hard news" is applicable to "event-based stories, such as the opening of a parliament or the sinking of a ship, and to depth coverage which involves stories that explore issues" (Lorenz & Vivian 1996 in Nel, 1999: 25). The soft news is the opposite of the hard news, and according to Vivian (1996), "soft news stories are those whose purpose is more to entertain than to inform" (Vivian 1996 in Nel, 1999: 27).

For this reason, it is a common practice for translators to translate soft news differently from the hard news. Soft news is usually translated in an entertaining way and translators often use enticing words or expressions to draw the attention of the audiences. However, Nel also notes that hard news such as the coverage of the first landing on the moon, can be hugely entertaining. Another definition of soft news stories, in Nel's opinion, is that they are those stories that people want to know rather than those that they feel obliged to know. In this study, however, the focus is on both types of news, that is, both the soft news and the hard news.

In addition, Donald Lazere (1987) makes a distinction between the shooting of inanimate and animate objects when a news film is shot. He says "television news film is rarely shot from above when recording animate objects, but towns, forests, escape routes of bank robbers, tornado paths, and battlefields are often filmed from a helicopter…" (Lazere, 1987: 333). The production of news also involves some complexities that include taking into consideration the effect the news will have on the audiences and the consequences thereof. As a result, there are some precautionary measures that the news producers take in order to produce news that is acceptable,

accurate and which is not offensive to the public or to the audiences. Furthermore, Michael Schudson (1991) points out that "news items are not simply selected, but constructed" (Schudson in Curran & Gurevitch 1991: 142). To summarise all this, Dexter (1964) states that "news selection is made in terms of the total life experience of the writer or editor" (Dexter 1964: 142). He believes that in a communication process, effect is found in both the communicator and the audience. For instance, he believes that the audience affects the communicator because the messages sent to the audiences are in part determined by expectations of audience reactions. Consequently, Dexter argues that "the audience, or at least those audiences about whom the communicator thinks, thus play more than a passive role in communication" (Dexter 1964: 143).

More complexities such as who produces the news, why? and many more, can still be found in the process of news production, but as the research's main interest is to find out how the news is translated, rather than how it is produced, there is no need for futher information about the production of the news, but rather, about how the news is translated.

2.3. *THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK*

This study is based on a descriptive model of translation or what is commonly known as DTS. As the name implies, the study describes all the translation strategies applied by the SABC in the translation of news and it also states whether or not the strategies are reliable as far as the achievement of equivalence is concerned. However, although my study is descriptive, it is also evaluative as the analysis of data also includes some evaluation of the Sotho news translations.

According to Theo Hermans (1999), "the descriptive and systemic perspective on translation and on studying translation was prepared in the 1960s, developed in the 1970s, propagated in the 1980s, and consolidated, expanded and overhauled in the 1990s. It introduced itself to the wider world in 1985 as 'a new paradigm' in translation studies" (Hermans 1999: 9). Hermans also points out that the descriptive model of translation combines three general functions of language with three levels of narratological analysis. Those three general functions of language have, in his view,

been borrowed from Halliday (1989) and are believed to be present in every linguistic utterance, and therefore also in narrative texts. The first function is termed the "interpersonal function" and is defined as "the way in which the communication between speaker and hearer is established" (Halliday, 1989 in Hermans 1999: 60). The second function is the "ideational function" which is described as "the way in which the information about the fictional world is presented, determining the image which is offered to the reader" (Halliday, 1989 in Hermans, 1999: 60). The third function is called the "textual function" and it is defined as "the way in which the information is structured and organized in language" (Halliday, 1989 in Hermans, 1999: 60).

However, among these three functions, my study focuses more on the first and third functions, which I believe are more relevant to my study than the second function, as my main purpose is to establish the way in which the information is structured and organized in the Sotho news translations. By so doing, I also look at the way in which communication is established between the speaker (news-reader) and the hearer (the viewer). The second function, I believe, is irrelevant because TV news is usually not about fiction, but about real events that happen on a daily basis.

Furthermore, Christiane Nord (1991) argues that a text function is determined by the situation in which the text serves as an instrument of communication, and for this reason, she believes that "translating instructions should contain as much information as possible about the situational factors of the prospective target text reception, such as the addressee(s) or possible recipients, time and place of reception, intended medium etc" (Nord, 1991: 9). Following this view, my study will take into consideration all the above-mentioned factors when trying to establish the functions of the SABC news items. Nord also argues that "the more unequivocal and definite the description of the TT recipient, the easier it is for the translator to make his decisions in the course of the translation process. The translator therefore should insist on being provided with as many details as possible" (Nord, 1991: 9). In addition, Reiss and Vermeer (1984) also point out that "the information about the addressee (his socio-cultural background, his expectations towards the text, the extent to which he may be influenced, etc) is of particular importance" (Reiss and Vermeer, 1984 in Nord, 1991: 9).

2.4. *METHODOLOGY*

The research analyses the Sotho news translations (Sepedi, Setswana & Sesotho) undertaken by the SABC translators with particular relevance to Sepedi. The translations were done from the English version of the news which was gathered over the period of about two weeks, that is, from 22nd September to 5th October 2003. The English news is broadcast on TV 3 at 7:00pm daily, and the Sotho news at 8:30pm on TV 2 daily as well.

In this study the audiences involve both the urban and the rural ones as there are some people from rural areas who have T.V sets. The data for this research was taken from the video tape recordings of the news that was broadcast over the period in question. The recordings of the news on the video cassettes were transcribed and analysed in accordance with the translation strategies suggested by Mona Baker (1992). A further analysis was also made in relation to Christiane Nord's (1991 & 1997) functionalist theory of translation.

From the transcripts, a comparison between the English and the Sotho news bulletins was made. Each English news bulletin was compared with its matching Sotho news bulletin in order to find out how the Sotho news was translated from the English news. The comparison was made in a sentence by sentence form and some individual words were also given a thorough scrutiny. These include some problematic words that did not have equivalents in the target culture or language. Such words were highlighted and the strategy that was used to translate them was also noted. The sentence structure between the English news sentences and the Sotho news sentences was also given a considerable consideration in order to see if there were differences. Where the differences did occur, for example, where there was a use of passive voice instead of an active voice, a possible reason was sought.

However, it should be noted that attempts were made to have access to the SABC so that interviews could be conducted, but due to circumstances beyond one's control, such attempts were in vain. Access to the SABC could not be gained and as a result, interviews with the SABC's Sotho news translators or with any other SABC member could not be conducted. It was also the researcher's intention to use some

questionnaires in this research but without access to the research site, this was also impossible. Consequently, the video cassettes of the news were used as the last resort or option in order for the research to be carried out. The following chapter includes an analysis of the data from those video cassettes.