



Freedom and culture in Maphalla's translation of Kipling's 'If' into Sesotho

Author:Johannes Seema¹**Affiliation:**¹School of Languages, North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus, South Africa**Correspondence to:**

Johannes Seema

Email:

johannes.seema@nwu.ac.za

Postal address:

PO Box 1174, Vanderbijlpark 1900, South Africa

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A translation is generally regarded as a transportation of the message from one text into another such that, in prototypical cases, the content of the original or source text is preserved in the target text. Any translation reflects language and cultural contact. It is the effect of a mapping of one language onto another and of one culture onto another. In both cases, it involves a selection of counterparts. Traditionally, translation is thought of as establishing equivalence between the original text and the translated one. This article explores the notion of equivalence and the closely linked but conflicting principles of fidelity and freedom in translation theory and practice. The issues involved in practical translation stem from a critical selective combination of freedom or fidelity on the part of the translator. Manipulation of either may lead to certain problems. Kipling's poem 'If' is a didactic poem meant to give encouragement. It serves as a motivation as manifest in several traits of a good leader. Maphalla took the initiative to translate Kipling's poem 'If' into Sesotho. This article addresses the idea that the translator's task is not only to convey Kipling's ideas but also to render his style in such a way as to make the translation road smooth to a native speaker of the target language, which in this case is Sesotho. This article also advocates greater freedom for the translator, based on Derridean theory that offers the translator more freedom.

Vryheid en kultuur in Maphalla se vertaling van Kipling se 'If' na Sesotho. Daar word algemeen aanvaar dat vertaling die oordrag van 'n boodskap van een teks na 'n ander is sodat die inhoud van die oorspronklike of die bronteks in prototipiese gevalle in die vertaalde teks bewaar word. Enige vertaling weerspieël taal- en kultuurkontak, omdat die een taal en een kultuur oor 'n ander taal en kultuur geskuif word. In beide gevalle behels dit die kies van ekwivalente. Die tradisionele beskouing is dat ekwivalensie tussen die oorspronklike en vertaalde teks daargestel word. Hierdie artikel verken die begrip ekwivalensie en die nabyverwante, maar teengestelde beginsels van getrouheid en vryheid in vertaalteorie en praktyk. Die kwessies verbonde aan praktiese vertaling spruit uit 'n kritiese selektiewe kombinasie van vryheid en getrouheid deur die vertaler. Manipulasie van óf die een óf die ander, kan tot sekere probleme lei. Kipling se gedig 'If' is 'n didaktiese gedig wat dit ten doel het om aanmoediging te gee. Dit dien as motivering ten opsigte van verskeie kenmerke van 'n goeie leier. Maphalla het die inisiatief geneem om Kipling se gedig 'If' in Sesotho te vertaal. Hierdie artikel betoog dat die vertaler se taak nie slegs is om Kipling se idees oor te dra nie, maar ook om sy styl sodanig weer te gee dat die vertaling vir 'n spreker van die teikentaal, Sesotho in hierdie geval, natuurlik sal klink. Hierdie artikel pleit ook vir meer vryheid vir die vertaler, uitgaande van die Derrideaanse teorie wat die vertaler meer vryheid vir vertaling bied.

Introduction

Recently, I attended a court case between an old man and his wife. The outcome of the case was unsatisfactory because the core message from the old man was misinterpreted. The old man took his wife to court because of the conflict between them. The judge, who could not speak the local language, Sesotho, asked the interpreter to ask the accuser what his problem was. The accuser responded in Sesotho: '*Bolella moahlodi hore mosadi wa ka o hana ka dikobo*'. The interpreter translated the Sesotho statement as follows: 'The old man says that his wife is refusing with blankets.' Patiently, the judge asked the interpreter to tell the old man that he (the judge) would buy him enough blankets. The old man was puzzled by what the judge had said because what he complained about had nothing to do with blankets. The judge had not understood the message communicated to him by the interpreter because the interpreter communicated the literal meaning instead of the figurative meaning. The old man simply meant that his wife was refusing to have sex with him. He opted for an idiomatic expression or euphemistic language because

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of the atmosphere in the court room. He used the indirect phrase to refer to something embarrassing or unpleasant to make it seem acceptable.

Translation has been a very contentious field in the science of language. It has been argued that, when translating any text, one would actually be creating an original in the recipient language. Some scholars believe that it is possible to make the translated work even 'better' than the original. Although these arguments are relevant to the current article, they remain peripheral to the main issue under discussion. According to Kasparek (1983:83), the word translation derives from the Latin *translatio* which itself comes from *trans* and *fero*, together meaning 'to carry across' or to 'bring across'. The modern Romance languages use words for translation derived from that source and from the alternative Latin *traduco* 'to lead across'. Taking into consideration the definition of translation, I would like to begin by drawing upon the court-room incident and put up for discussion some challenging Sesotho proverbs and idiomatic expressions. Some Sesotho idioms are based on historical incidents. The names of the people concerned are commemorated in such idioms. Let us consider the following Sesotho idiomatic expression: *Ho kalla ya Mohlomi*.

If a foreigner, say an English speaker, were given a Sesotho-English dictionary and asked to translate the foregoing expression, such a person would find it difficult to do so accurately. The verbal root *kalla* denotes two meanings. It can mean to 'beat with a stick' or 'to ride on horseback'. Mohlomi was a great medicine-man and chief. He travelled widely in Africa, healing the sick. He undertook all of his journeys on foot. The idiomatic expression, *ho kalla ya Mohlomi*, means 'to go on foot'.

The Sesotho proverb, *tshwene ha e ipone lekopo*, means that one is blind to one's own faults. In Sesotho myths, *tshwene*, a baboon is depicted as a stupid animal or character. If a person is associated with a baboon, it means that the person is stupid. The noun *tshwene* can also refer to a man killed in battle. In the proverb, *Mosadi ke tshwene o jewa matsoho*, the noun *tshwene* refers to a fruit tree. In this case a woman is associated with a fruit tree. The proverb means that the woman is an alleviator of poverty because she can provide people with food, as a fruit tree does. There are two ways of using words. There is the meaning that a word has in the dictionary, and there are the associations that the word has gained through constant use. For example, the Sesotho words *kalla* and *tshwene* carry many associations, meaning that they are rich in connotations.

The above-mentioned idioms and proverbs bring to mind the concepts of equivalence, fidelity and freedom which are much debated by scholars of translation studies. My argument is that translation is like a ruling political party because both as an activity and product, it contains a certain degree of negotiation amongst different agents such as writers, critics, translators, editors, reviewers and readers and also between

the original text and its target-language interpretation. Translation may be manipulated in the hands of translators because, as target-text producers, they may use language in a certain way to give the text a certain angle so that it can better fit into the readers' language, discourses and thought. They can do this because they are licensed to add, omit and change the original, and they do not need to transport the communicative thought of the author of the source text.

Problems of evaluating translation

It is very difficult for scholars of translation to come up with universal conclusions on literary translation. The translator might come across many difficulties when translating from one text to another. This may be caused by the fact that translation is not about replacing words with the same meaning but, more importantly, finding the appropriate words for the audience of the target text. Toury, in Venuti (2000) remarks on this as follows:

Translators are also socially and historically constituted subjects. The translator's knowledge, resulting from his ideological framework, allows them to interpret the text and at the same time to limit the range of their interpretation. (p. 119)

Sapir (1956) expresses this problem, stating that:

No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached. (p. 690)

Toury's and Sapir's statements above are further corroborated by Lefevere (1981) when addressing this problem in the following manner:

... knowledge of translation process is, in fact, personal knowledge, the kind of knowledge that can be transmitted only by actually working with somebody who has given proof that he or she possesses it ... (p. 54)

It is quite common to find Western critics referring to translation as writing lacking harmony. Their views ignore the fact that, in translation, it is impossible to judge, for instance, Sesotho according to the rules of English. Translators cannot ignore what is considered appropriate, such as form or style, for instance, in English, which cannot be considered appropriate in another language such as Sesotho. Two different languages may express the same thing differently. For instance, a child whose parents are dead is an orphan in English. In Sesotho, a child who has lost one of his or her parents is *kgutsana* [orphan]. A child who has lost both parents is *kgutsana kgudu*. In English, we do not have a word or noun for a child who has lost one parent, but in Sesotho, we do have such a noun. Another appropriate example is *amadlosi*. The word *amadlosi* means ancestors in isiZulu, and the very same word means sperm in isiXhosa. The word *sela* means to collect in Sesotho, but in isiXhosa, it means to drink. *Kwedini, sela amanzi* in isiXhosa means: 'Boy, drink water.' In Sesotho, *mshemane o sela dijo* means: 'The boy collects food.' This indicates that there is often no exact equivalence in the



same or similar words between two languages in translation. The translation of any text is a means of rewriting the message of the original text using the target language.

This article discusses the tradition in which the translator's dilemma is the question: Does equivalence, as the standard by which a translation is judged, remains intact?

Equivalence and fidelity in translation

Interpreting the meaning of texts and the subsequent production of equivalent texts that communicate the original message in another language for the Sesotho audience is gaining momentum. The challenge that translators should take into account is that, in translation studies, there are many debates about the concepts of equivalence, fidelity and freedom. Kasparek (1983:87) defines equivalence as '[t]he replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language'. The underlying premise from the above statement is that the source text constitutes the model after which the translation is to be shaped. According to Nida (1964:138), there are two types of equivalence, namely formal and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence focuses on the message itself, namely meaning in both form and content. Formal equivalence is concerned with 'metaphrase' because the translator's concern is with correspondences such as poetry to poetry, sentences to sentences and concepts to concepts, and it allows the reader to understand as much of the SL context as possible. Dynamic equivalence is based on 'paraphrase', meaning that the relationship between receiver and message should aim at being the same as that between the original receiver and the SL message.

If we move away from close linguistic equivalence, the following problem emerges: How does one determine the exact nature of the level of equivalence which is aimed for? For example, Nida's example of substituting the Greek idea of 'greeting with a holy kiss' for 'give a hearty handshake all around' in Sesotho does not make any sense. What really makes sense for Basotho is what Mohlomi taught them. He taught them to greet a person with an open palm of the hand. Newmark (1988:103) describes gestures as 'non-cultural language'. In this view, similar gestures are interpreted differently by people from different cultures. Gestures can imply a certain way of life of the Basotho that might lead other people to develop negative attitudes towards Basotho culture. In the words of Kasparek (1983):

When words appear ... literary graceful, it were an injury to the author that they should be changed. But since what is beautiful in one language is often barbarous, nay sometimes nonsense, in another, it would be unreasonable to limit a translator to the narrow compass of his author's words: 'tis enough if he choose out some expression which does not vitiate the sense. (p. 83)

In the translation of idioms, proverbs and metaphors, for instance, from English to Sesotho, translation involves a lot more than just the replacement of lexical and grammatical items between the two languages. For instance, how does

one translate phrases such as 'there's safety in numbers' or 'uneasy lies the head that wears a crown' into Sesotho? Or how do you translate concepts such as *potele* (porridge cooked with vegetables and maize meal), *setjetsa* (*pap* [porridge] cooked with pumpkins and maize meal), *seshabo* (a mixture of two kinds of food eaten at the same time), *dikge* (food left by the son-in-law), *semeremere* (long and wide baggy trousers – which are culturally specific to Sesotho, but which have no equivalence to English)? Do you translate them as *porridge*, *porridge*, *food*, *leftovers* or *trousers*, respectively? Words also change complexion over time. Let us take for instance the words *cool* and *hot*, which are used colloquially to convey the same meaning. She is one of this year's 'hot' celebrities or 'that girl is quite cool'. One may agree that 'hot' can be 'cool' and 'cool' can be 'hot'. The above examples show that there is a relationship between language and culture. What is relevant in Sesotho culture might be irrelevant in English culture.

Such problems notwithstanding, if equivalence is the goal of translation, the conflict manifests itself in a form of the notions of fidelity and freedom. Fidelity is weighed in terms of accuracy in rendering the meaning of the text, and freedom is understood as independence from the source text (Kasparek 1983:87). The translator is expected to select one or the other, or walk a narrow path between the two. Traditionally, it was believed that an ideal translation thrives on the paradox between these two choices; it does not obliterate the original but makes allowances for a new transparency and creativity. For instance, distinct meanings in one language often turn up as a single merged meaning in another. Examples:

Ho ja masapo a hlooho = to meditate
Ho ja jwang = to be mad
Ho ja maeba le bale = to be a fool
Ho ja fatshe = to run away

There is something important about freedom since, as Woodburn (2000) maintains:

literature is language that presents itself as art, and so by its nature it is so bold and ambitious, experimental, elusive and coy than language in its more straightforward manifestations. (p. 110)

Jakobson (1959:358) observes that 'the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination'. This poetic function of language is defined as '[t]he set toward the message as such, the focus on the message for its own sake, is the poetic function of language' (Jakobson 1959:356). What should be brought to light here is that literature relies on the power of words. In literature, translators are more concerned with the connotations than with the denotations.

The translation of 'If' into Sesotho

Poetry translation is considered a literary skill in its own right. For example, the importance of a text's formal aspects and its content represent huge challenges to poetry translators. Jakobson (1959:358) in his paper entitled 'On linguistic



aspects of translation', declares that: 'poetry by definition is untranslatable'. In support of Roman Jakobson's notion that poetry is not translatable, an American poet, James Merrill, composed a poem entitled, 'Lost in translation'. Jakobson and Merrill are both of the opinion that no translation can be equivalent to the original. This means that there will always, to a certain degree, be a loss in translation as a result of linguistic or cultural factors.

Here is the first stanza of Kipling's (1996) poem, followed by Maphalla's translation:

'If' by Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise

Ha o ka kgaba ka kelello by K.D.P. Maphalla

*Ha o ka kgaba ka kelello le ha ho le thata,
Le ha batho ba lahla tsa bona, ba o maneha dipha;
Ha o ka itshepa le ha bohle ba o kgella fatshe,
O ntse o hopola hore o motho wa nama le madi;
Ha o ka kgaba ka tiisetso le mamello,
Wa kwekwetla bohata le ha o senngwa lebitso;
Wa kgesa lehloyo le ho ba o hloileng,
O sa iketse tlhalentlhajwana, o sa ipitse kgabane (Maphalla
1984:30-31)*

Maphalla's (1984) translation of 'If' appears in his collection *Fuba sa ka*, as poem number 11. Let us look at how Maphalla attempts to reconcile form and content in the opening line of Rudyard's 'If'. The title of the poem, 'If' can be loosely translated as 'in the event that', which in Sesotho is equivalent to 'ha'. Concerning the repetition in the first, third and fifth lines, 'If you can ...', the translator managed to come up with the equivalence of that original repetition, namely 'Ha o ka ...' The original also has end repetition in the first three lines, namely 'you'. The translator could not follow that repetition because that would have led to the loss of the message.

Rhyme in a poem is a feature that occurs widely. Rhyme serves different purposes, but a problem can arise when a translator attempts to translate the repeated words or rhyme from the source text. For instance, these are the rhyming words from 'If':

.....waiting
.....lies
.....hating
.....wise

They were replaced by the following translated words:

.....mamello
.....lebitso
.....hloileng
.....kgabane

The ear, as well as the eye, tells readers that 'waiting' and 'hating' rhyme. The ear informs readers that 'lies' and 'wise' have a similarity of sound. A rhyme may be an ear-rhyme or an eye-rhyme, or both. Kipling established a steady rhyme pattern, but Maphalla found it difficult to maintain rhyme. Kipling managed to employ alliteration. Readers are aware of a pleasing melody produced by a repetition of the initial consonant /y/ to illustrate the practice of self-confidence. It also advises readers that the practice of self-confidence must consider opposing ideas. Even though Maphalla employed the /k/ sound to encourage readers to be confident and be prepared to face unpopularity, his lines do not match that of Kipling in terms of melody and purpose.

Maphalla's translation shows that when one deals with rhyme in translation, it proves to be problematic. The different ways of using language in poetry proves that rhyme that fits in English may prove meaningless in Sesotho. Each end-repeated word and rhyme from 'If' serves a particular purpose, but if those end-repeated words and rhyme are directly translated into Sesotho, the whole message will be distorted, and it will serve no purpose.

In Kipling's first line, there is no pause at the end because the sentence overflows into the line that follows. Maphalla opted for an end-stopped line because his sentence does not flow over into the line that follows.

Maphalla clearly did not follow Hofstadter's (1997) book *Le Ton Beau de Marot: In practice of the music of language* wherein the argument is that a poetry translator should not only strive to reproduce the literal meaning of a text but should also strive to reproduce its form and structure such as metre, rhyme, alliteration and so forth. To maintain the flow of the poem, Maphalla minimised the form of the original in the translation. The message is preserved and, more importantly, the reader is satisfied with the structure of the translated version. Kasperek (1983) maintains that there is no concrete boundary between dynamic and formal equivalence. Both dynamic and formal equivalence represent a spectrum of translation approaches. Maphalla (1984) used each at various times, in various contexts and at various points within the same text. Kasperek (1983:83) describes translation as the judicious blending of two modes of phrasing when selecting an equivalent in the target language for the expression used in the source language and encourages translators not to translate too freely. He cautioned against translating word for word because translation is not just the transfer of information through words between two languages, but it is also the transfer of one culture into another:

Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
*Wa kwekwetla bohata le ha o senngwa lebitso;
Wa kgesa lehloyo le ho ba o hloileng,*

In the above lines, Kipling employed 'or' to indicate an alternative or to modify what he has just said. Maphalla started with the latter part of the original text to maintain the rhythm of the original text. In Maphalla's version, if the



word 'or', which is equivalent to *kapa* in Sesotho, is used, the whole line will turn out to be nothing but prose. If we look at the following lines, we find that Maphalla deviated from Kipling's repetition of words:

And so hold on when there is nothing in you
 Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'
Wa tshwara ka meno le ha o se o fedile,
Ho se ho setse tlhase e reng 'tsiwela pele!'

Kipling employed the repetition of the phrase 'hold on' to emphasise the importance of perseverance if one wants to succeed in life. Maphalla (1984) did not follow the route of Kipling's repetition because the translation of poetry involves choices of words, word order and rhythms that allow better comprehension of the nature of the translated poem.

Maphalla has generally shown a prudent flexibility in seeking equivalents as the original meaning encourages a person to persevere in order to succeed in life. One should wait for one's turn despite hardships; one should persist in one's efforts to get what one wants. The translator opted for the concept *kwekwetla*, meaning 'to avoid'. In order for a person to succeed, one should not be discouraged by untrue stories from other people. Maphalla has applied a literal translation where possible, paraphrasing where necessary the original meaning and other crucial values such as culture, style and verse form.

We see the blending of formal and dynamic equivalents in Maphalla's translating of 'If' into Sesotho. Maphalla mainly strives to preserve the literal meaning as well as the rhythm of the poem. However, readers in the traditional Western literary world would view Maphalla's translated 'If' as occupying a peripheral and marginal position in the literary system. In contrast, purists would perceive the translated poem as a cultural heretic with an insidious subversive intent. Western thinkers, including De Man (1986), hold the following notion:

The Translator, per definition fails. The translator can never do what the original text did. Any translation is always second in relation to the original, and the translator as such is lost from the beginning. (p. 80)

Similar arguments will continually be reiterated in translation studies, but they cannot stop or discourage translators from translating.

In the case of Maphalla (1984), there are also flaws in his translation. Kipling's stanzas are regular in the sense that each stanza consists of eight lines. Maphalla tried to adhere to that, but his second stanza consists of nine lines. The line, *Ha o ka lebella mofufutso wa phatla ya hao*, is not translated from Kipling's poem text. The translator created this line for no apparent reason.

In the following line, the translator introduced a different idea than that in the original line:

If all men count with you, but none too much;
Ha batho bohle ho wena e le kobo tsa Maseru;

'Count with you' means to be considered in a particular way. Maphalla's translation in this case changes the meaning because the meaning is 'if all the people to you are ragamuffins'. Even though there are a few questionable choices in Maphalla's translation, he nevertheless played an important role as a bridge for carrying across values between cultures.

Cross-cultural communication

One should bear in mind that, in translating poetry, we are not just dealing with words written in a certain period of time, but what is most important is taking into account the cultural aspect of the text. This is further supported by Lefevere (1981:4) who regards culture as the unit of translation, not the word or even the text, even though there is a school of thought which holds that poetic language is generally undergirded by the specificities of the source language. Maphalla (1984) managed to overcome the problem of cultural gaps in the translation of 'If' into Sesotho. He took into account the reconciliation of the issue of literary accuracy with poetic fidelity or equivalency. He duly considered the issue of cross-cultural communication.

The importance of cross-cultural communication in translation is underlined by Gentzler's (1998:11) provocative statement: 'The study of translation is the study of cultural interaction.' In discussing the problem of both linguistic and cultural differences between the source text and the target text, Nida (1964:130) concludes that 'differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure'. Bassnett (1991:14) states that language is 'the heart within the body of culture'. Bassnett (1991:23) further maintains that: 'to attempt to impose the value system of the SL culture onto the TL culture is dangerous ground'. Language and culture are two important aspects that must be considered in translation.

Maphalla's title can be considered as having cultural implications for translation. Newmark (1988:56) maintains that, in literary translation 'the title should sound attractive ... and should usually bear some relation to the original'. To translate Rudyard Kipling's 'If' into a Sesotho poem as accurately as possible was of course Maphalla's aim, but this endeavour had dimensions wider than the scope of the purely linguistic and that made him move into the broader cultural domain. The evidence is in his choice of the title for his translated text. Let us look at how Maphalla attempts to reconcile form and content in the title.

The title of Kipling's poem 'If' can loosely be translated as 'in the event that', which in Sesotho is an equivalent to 'ha'. Maphalla opted for *Ha o ka kgaba ka kellelo* as the equivalent to 'If'. The most direct translation for 'If' would be 'Ha'. However, in the poet's culture 'ha' is meaningless if it stands alone. Let us consider the following example: *Ha* can refer to location: *ha ntate* [at my father's place]. *Ha* can refer to negation: *ha ke batle* [I do not want]. 'Ha' usually conveys the negative, but in this instance, it means 'if':



If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
Ha o ka itshepa le ha bohle ba o kgella fatshe,

Maphalla (1984) translated this line without ignoring his culture. The poet opted for *bohle* meaning 'all', not 'when all men' because in his culture men do not doubt another person but give support. When translating the word 'men', keeping the original term may however carry a semantic incompatibility with *banna*. There is a Sesotho proverb that says *Banna ba tentshana ditshea*. The proverb means that men advise and encourage one another.

Derrida (quoted in Bassnett 1991:xv) maintains that the translation process creates a new original text. Derrida argues that translation is 'a moment in the growth of the original, which will complete itself in enlarging itself' (cited in Venuti 1992:7). Derrida's notion is linked to the post-modernist notion that texts assimilate, borrow, imitate and rewrite the existing material. This happens not only in translation but also in original writing, which are acts of 're-writing' (Bassnett 1993:150). In the words of Kasperek (1983:85), 'translators always risk the inappropriate spill-over of source-language idiom and usage into the target language translation'.

In discussing cross-cultural communication in the art of literary translation, Kasperek (1983:85) sees three processes as taking place. The first process is a change in the system of signs (signs can refer to the language). The second process is that of transformation, involving reduction and supplementation. This refers to the exchange of some elements as well as the use of equivalents. The third process is interpretation. Kasperek (1983) corroborates Barthes's (1977) pointing out that all translation can be reduced to a process of a deconstruction of the original and a reconstruction that produces a new poem. In other words, culture being a system of signs and language being another, movement across these two systems should pose no problem.

It was of course Maphalla's aim to render the poem as naturally into Sesotho as he possibly could. His aim in this endeavour triumphed as he has striven for more than purely linguistic equivalence but has tried to achieve a broader cultural translation. The evidence of this event, for example, is in his choice of a title for the Sesotho translation.

The final example of cross-cultural communication within Maphalla's translation within the new cultural context to which I would like to refer is:

If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;
Ha o ka lora, o sa etse ditoto marena,

The poet is not referring to dreams as visions of images and feelings that happen in one's mind while one is asleep. The poet is portraying dreams as a goal that one wants to achieve in life.

The noun 'master' has an appropriate meaning for the English poet but not for the Sesotho one. In Basotho culture, 'master' is not as respected as the 'King'. In the Basotho

culture, a master is regarded as a man who has authority over a servant. The linguistic equivalent for king is *morena*. Maphalla (1984) opted for the plural form *marena* because all kings are respected. A king is a man who is the head of his nation. Maphalla is encouraging readers to respect their ambitions as if they were their king. In the last stanza of the original poem, Maphalla used *marena* as equivalent to 'kings' without any problems.

Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch,
Wa hahlaula le marena empa wa hopola bahloki;

In the Basotho culture, the respect for a king is so strong that the Basotho created a proverb that says: *Morena ha a tene moduopo*. The proverb means that the king can do no wrong.

As stated above, Newmark (1988:93) maintains that translation is 'not just a transfer of information between languages, but a transfer from one culture to another'. In our case, Maphalla is the translator of the target text (poem) *Ha o ka kgaba ka kelello*. He translated this poem not for a foreign reader but for his own people. In other words, the translator is translating into his language and his culture which are different from Kipling's. This should present a new perspective on the assumption of 'equality' as expounded by some scholars such as Nida (1964), who wrote the following:

dynamic translation is based on the principle of equivalent effect namely that the relationship between the receiver and message should aim at being the same as that between the original receivers and Source Language message. (p. 138)

English and Sesotho differ greatly in terms of linguistic, literary and cultural conventions. Kipling was writing from an English cultural perspective, and Maphalla was writing from a Basotho cultural perspective. Therefore, it is difficult to render a source language text flawlessly in the target language.

Freedom in translation

Literary scholarship has adopted different approaches to analysing and translating texts. Amongst these are movements like Marxism which is characterised by an emphasis on political struggles perceived in plots and in characters' motivations. Feminism, the female-dominant literary canon and view of literature, and reader response criticism, are characterised by the agenda of different communities of readers and how those agendas influence interpretation. Some scholars maintain that the best way to critique a work of art is to study it separate from the author's biographical and historical details because the author's background has nothing to do with the text. Others maintain that to do this is to dehumanise the humanities because the text does not come in a vacuum. For instance, Beck (1991:68) maintains that the text is an expression of an author's life and worldview and to study a creative work apart from the author is to deny the value of the author.

There can be arguments about Maphalla's translating Rudyard Kipling's 'If' into Sesotho. Some would argue



that Maphalla should have considered Kipling's historical background. On the other hand, others would maintain that the best way for Maphalla to translate 'If' was to separate it from Kipling because Kipling's historical background has got nothing to do with the poem 'If'.

Such arguments are answered by post-structuralism that dispels the notion of translation as an ancillary activity by discarding the idea of flawless translation. Barthes (1977:146) in 'The Death of the Author' rejects the traditional view that the author is the origin of the text, meaning the source of its meaning and the sole authority of interpretation. Barthes (1977:320) further maintains that 'literature...by refusing to assign an ultimate meaning to the text, liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity'. In 1970, in his text *S/Z*, Barthes upholds a view that a text has no determinate meaning but is plural and diffuse, dynamic and open-ended. There is a pronounced absence of beginnings, ends, irreversible sequences or levels of meanings.

Barthes foreshadows Derrida whose deconstructionist translation theory enables translation to reach a level of freedom. Derrida is opposed to identity, centre and presence, and he advocates the heterogeneity and limitlessness of language. Derrida knows that readers cannot break free from the conceptual universe which forms their legacy, but he insists that they should break free of the bondage of 'logocentrism' which imposes a binary system on them – a hierarchical system in which one concept is accorded privileged status such as nature/culture, speech/writing, good/evil, identity/difference, original/imitation, source text/target text, original text/ translation and so forth (Derrida 1985).

In the binaries mentioned above, we must be aware that the first term is conceived as anterior and central, and it is privileged over the second which is seen as a complication, derivation or semblance of the first and thus marginalised. The second term is seen as a deviant and gross-grained version of the first. In other words, evil appears as the lack of good, difference as the obstruction of identity and translation as a deviation from the original text, meaning that it is a second-hand product. Derrida does not only reverse this 'violent hierarchy' but also with his deconstructive reading goes on to displace any new hierarchy that may be created, leaving us with a sense of the inevitable indeterminacy of all signifying process.

Deconstruction explores the peculiar relationships within texts and between texts. In other words, deconstruction goes a step further and looks for breaks, gaps and contradictions within texts. In the words of Eagleton (1990:12), '[i]t promotes the dissolution of meaning in order to bring down the power structure of texts'. Derrida destabilises not only the author but also the reader-translator. If language is always exploding, if meaning is always deferred in an endless sequence, how can there be any determinate or ultimate meaning? How can any particular language have hegemony over others? Hartman (1981:28) provides the answer by stating that 'translation

becomes an open space of liberated intertextuality where language endlessly merge or migrate'. Therefore translation is an unceasing and free play of signification where deferment takes place. It is in translation that languages achieve their meaning. It is in translation that meaning comes into being. Both the translation and the original mutually determine each other.

Let us consider the following stanza:

If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,

*Ha o ka lora, o sa etse ditoro marena,
Wa nahana empa o sa buswe ke menahano;
Ha o ka tobana ke katleho kapa mahlonoko,
Wa amohela ntshunyekgare tseo ntle le leeme;
Ha o ka kgona ho mamela nnete ya molomo wa hao,
E sothilwe ke mahata ho tshwasa dithoto;* (Maphalla 1984:31)

The phrase 'if you can' is used four times in the above five lines of Kipling's stanza. These lines achieve their effect because the poet is speaking directly to the reader. Maphalla exercised his freedom by not following the structure of Kipling's stanza. Maphalla has *ha o ka*, which is equivalent to 'if you can', only three times. In the first line of Kipling's poem, there is no caesura, but Maphalla felt free to introduce a caesura in the first line of his stanza. Kipling's line three and five consist of enjambment because the sentence runs over to the next line. In Maphalla's stanza, there is no line with enjambment because he is free not to follow Kipling's style. Kipling warns against the personified 'Triumph and Disaster'. Kipling capitalised both words and referred to them as 'imposters', which is written in lower case because they are of little importance in the bigger scheme of things. Maphalla also personified both *katleho* and *mahlonoko* by referring to them as *ntshunyekgare tseo* which is equivalent to 'imposters', but he felt free not to capitalise *katleho* [Triumph] and *mahlonoko* [Disaster]. We notice a rhyme scheme in Kipling's stanza, but Maphalla did not attempt any rhyme scheme in his stanza because his aim was to convey the message to his readers without any further confusion.

According to Derrida (1985), translation is neither an image nor a copy, meaning that translation is free from any duty to transmit the prototext's contents, but it must show 'the affinity between languages, as well as its potential'. Derrida contends that translation does not reproduce an original, does not translate translation and goes further to contend that the source text is not an original expansion of a pre-existent idea and is itself a translation (Derrida 1985:167). Derrida's pronouncement, 'the origin is the translation', lays the onus of determining meaning on both the author and the translator and makes for collective authority. This position is in line with Basnett's (1993:151) axiom that translation 'enables a text to continue life in another context, and the translated text becomes an original by virtue of its continued existence in that new context'.



Conclusion

South Africa is a quantum soup of languages and cultures that have cultural and cognitive affinity with one another. The multilingual and multicultural set-up of South Africa has not yet allowed translation from one African literature to another. Few books in Sesotho have been translated into English or from English into Sesotho. If we look for a theory of translation that will serve us best in our interaction with a globally pluralistic world, the deconstructionist approach seems to fit the idea best. It is most appropriate for a translation aimed at the relatively undifferentiated Basotho middle-class who forms the bulk of the English reading public. The need of our times is to realise that every translation contributes to enhancing the potentialities of the original by transcending all boundaries – linguistic, cultural and historical.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that, through the deconstructional approach to translation, I managed to demonstrate the process of translation where Maphalla not only struggled to balance accuracy and poetic fidelity but also promote a process of cross-cultural communication. Maphalla managed to translate Rudyard Kipling's 'If' successfully for a Basotho audience because he took into consideration the cultural identity as well as the cultural presuppositions of the community for whom he was translating the poem. Even though the 'Western literary world' and 'purists' are likely to view Maphalla's translation from a certain perspective, I strongly believe that Kipling would have been proud that his poem has found its way into Sesotho literature through translation.

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