
The Use of Loan Translation as a Term-Creation Strategy in *Duramazwi reMimhanzi*

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Abstract: The article presents loan translation as one of the key strategies that lexicographers at the African Languages Research Institute (ALRI) employed in the creation of new terminology during the compilation of the music dictionary *Duramazwi reMimhanzi*. Inspired by the authors' keen interest in lexicography and active involvement in the compilation of *Duramazwi reMimhanzi*, it discusses the advantages and disadvantages of loan translation. Analysis of this term-creation strategy is done using Chimhundu's (1996) translation and terminology development theory known as the scan and balance theory.

Keywords: COINAGE, CULTURE, DECODING, ENCODING, STRATEGY, TERM-CREATION, TRANSLATION, LOAN TRANSLATION

Opsomming: Die gebruik van leenvertaling as 'n termskeppingstrategie in *Duramazwi reMimhanzi*. Die artikel bied leenvertaling aan as een van die sleutelstrategieë wat leksikograwe by die African Languages Research Institute (ALRI) gebruik het vir die skepping van nuwe terminologie gedurende die samestelling van die musiekwoordeboek *Duramazwi reMimhanzi*. Geïnspireer deur die skrywers se sterk belangstelling in die leksikografie en aktiewe betrokkenheid by die samestelling van *Duramazwi reMimhanzi*, bespreek dit die voordele en nadele van leenvertaling. Ontleding van hierdie termskeppingstrategie word gedoen deur gebruik van Chimhundu (1996) se vertalings- en terminologieontwikkelingsteorie bekend as die skandeer- en balanseerteorie.

Sleutelwoorde: VINDING, KULTUUR, DEKODERING, ENKODERING, STRATEGIE, TERMSKEPPING, VERTALING, LEENVERTALING

Introduction

One strategy employed in the creation of musical terms in *Duramazwi reMimhanzi* is loan translation, calquing, paraphrasing or circumlocution and the resultant terms are called loan translations, calques, paraphrases or circumlocutions. In loan translation, according to Crystal (1997), the morphemes in the borrowed word are translated literally or item by item. Similarly, music con-

cepts in English were translated into Shona and the resultant loan translations denote the same musical concepts. Examples of such loan translations are:

- (1) lyrics > *mazwi erwiyo* (literally: *words of a song*);
- (2) genre > *mhando yemumhanzi* (literally: *type of music*);
- (3) ensemble > *mubatanidzwa wevaimbi nezviridzwa* (literally: *combination of musicians and their instruments*);
- (4) composer > *munyori werwiyo* (literally: *writer of a song*);
- (5) piano body > *mutumbi wepiyano* (literally: *body of a piano*);
- (6) minor scale > *neramhanzi diki* (literally: *small music ladder*);
- (7) major scale > *neramhanzi guru* (literally: *big music ladder*);
- (8) maestro > *nyanzvi yemimhanzi* (literally: *expert in music*);
- (9) instrumental music > *nziyo dzemagitare* (literally: *songs with guitars*);
- (10) staff notation > *runyoro rwezvitsvimbo* (literally: *writing of knobkerries*);
- (11) national anthem > *rwiyo rwenyika* (literally: *song for the country*);
- (12) music appreciation > *yemuro yemumhanzi* (literally: *appreciation of music*).

Creation of the given loan translations is not a random but rather a systematic process which involves understanding both the English and Shona languages and cultures. The process of creating the above loan translations can be represented by the rule notations that follow.

The basic rule is that the term-creator should understand his role as that of constantly moving in and out of the source language (SL) and target language (TL) to find or create equivalent terms and then match or balance these in terms of meaning and form.

To arrive at each of the loan translations from (1) to (12) given above, the following procedure should be followed. The term-creator is faced with the lexical item *lyrics*, which does not have an equivalent term in Shona. The term-creator constantly scans, for example, the English language and culture as he searches or attempts to create the Shona equivalent for *lyrics*. The term-creator also tries to strike a balance between meaning and form throughout the term-creating process. The two major processes, scanning and balancing, are done in six main stages of terminology creation. How the output *mazwi erwiyo*, for instance, is finally reached, can now be considered. The decoding process can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

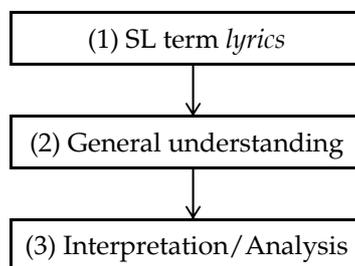


Figure 1: An Example of the Decoding Process

In this case, the term-creator is presented with the SL text *lyrics* at stage (1). At stage (2), he searches for the general meaning of the term *lyrics* which he decodes as the text of a song. However, as the term-creator continues searching for the meaning of the SL text, he begins to register more information about the SL text at stage (3). At this stage the term-creator decodes different forms of lyrics, the importance of lyrics in English music culture and how the lyrics are transcribed and performed. In essence, he searches and decodes everything related to the term *lyrics*. It should be noted that the most crucial analysis of the term *lyrics* is done at stage (3), in the context of English culture.

Stages (4) and (5) which constitute the encoding process taking place in the TL culture can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

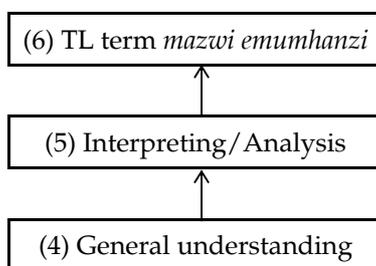


Figure 2: An Example of the Encoding Process

At stage (4), the term-creator may have a general idea of the options existing in the Shona language for the English term *lyrics*. The options include both Shona equivalent terms that might exist for the term *lyrics* and the strategies that can be used in the recreation of the SL text in the TL text. In this case, the term-creator searches for the Shona lexical equivalent for the term *lyrics* but does not find it because it does not exist in the Shona lexicon. There being no equivalent term, the term-creator proceeds to stage (5) where he recreates the concept of *lyrics* through a loan translation, *mazwi emumhanzi*, which is the output that appears at stage (6). The meaning intended by the lexical item *lyrics* at stage (1) is the same meaning signified by the output *mazwi emumhanzi* at stage (6). In other words, there is matching at the semantic level. However, the form is changed in order to achieve the intended SL meaning. What is presented as a one-word form at stage (1), becomes a two-word form at stage (6). The compromising of form is a balancing act intended to achieve the SL meaning in the TL. The same process takes place when the English term *maestro* yields through loan translation the output *nyanzvi yemimhanzi*. What is a single noun in the SL (specifically English) becomes a noun phrase consisting of *nyanzvi*, which is qualified by another noun made up of the possessive inflection *ye-* prefixed to the noun *mimhanzi*.

From the preceding discussion, it becomes clear that the encoding process involves literal translation of the sense of the SL text into the TL. The term *lyr-*

ics, for instance, is rendered into Shona by describing what it is, hence the resultant loan translation *mazwi emumhanzi*. Similarly, the English term *maestro* is translated into Shona on the basis of function, that is, through decoding and encoding what a *maestro* does and how he does it. As stated earlier, the resultant loan translation for *maestro* is *nyanzvi yemimhanzi*, which, when back-translated into English, means "one who is very good at music". The back translation proves that the Shona loan translation fully represents the original meaning of the SL text *maestro*. The Shona loan translation perfectly captures the trade of a *maestro*, which is music. It also brings out the qualities of a *maestro*, namely a person who is really good at music.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the term-creator should ensure that the sense carried by the SL term is retained as much as possible in the TL. There might be slight adjustments at the level of form to ensure effective rendition of the SL meaning in the TL. The inevitability of such adjustments is also noted by Gentzler (1993: 87) who states:

Every conception of translation of any real significance and consistency finds its principal manifestation in the shifts of expression, the choice of aesthetic means, and the semantic aspects of the work. Thus in a translation we can, as a rule, expect certain changes because the question of identity and difference in relation to the original can never be solved without some residue.

Slight changes at the level of form are only permissible if they ensure the effective rendition of the intended SL meaning in the TL. The discussed examples have demonstrated that if a balance is struck between form and meaning, the resultant loan translation is usually an acceptable one. What is important is that the loan translation should carry "the invariant core" (Bassnett-McGuire 1980: 26-27) or "the relevant substance for the two texts" (Catford 1965: 25). In other words, the loan translation should carry what Nida (1982) calls the functional or dynamic equivalence. Form is, therefore, sacrificed for expressive expediency.

However, the discussed examples should not create the misleading impression that all loan translations are effective. There are cases of ineffective loan translations involving Shona musical terms which fail to capture the original meaning of the SL terms. A well-known Shona musical term that other cultures have tried to translate using the loan translation strategy is *mbira*. Attempts were made to translate *mbira* into English. The resultant loan translation *hand piano* failed to gain currency, which could be attributed to the loss of too much information during the translation process. The operational efficiency or expressive power of the English loan *hand piano* falls short of the SL term *mbira*. If the scan and balance theory had been applied in the creation of this English loan translation, the term-creator who was presented with the Shona musical term *mbira* at stage (1) should have decoded its meaning from stage (2) to (3) in the SL (specifically Shona) culture. This decoding process can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

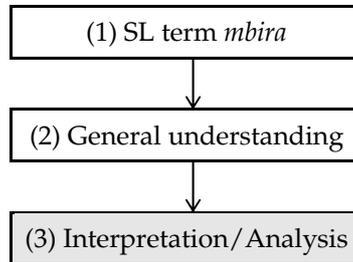


Figure 3: An Example of the Decoding Process

The first two stages are represented by two clear rectangles because they are free of errors in the decoding process. At stage (1) no error of judgement occurs when the term-creator is presented with the term *mbira*. Like the first, the second rectangle is also clear because the general decoding of the SL text, specifically *mbira*, is done correctly. At stage (2) the term-creator correctly registers the general knowledge that a *mbira* is a musical instrument. However, the last rectangle representing stage (3) is shaded to show that this is where the term-creator's errors might have occurred. The interpretation and analysis of the musical term *mbira* is ineffectively carried out in the SL because of the term-creator's initial failure to do a thorough decoding process. However, at stages (4) and (5), the term-creator encoded, producing the loan translation *hand piano* based on drawing parallels between the SL (Shona) and TL (English) cultures. The encoding process can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

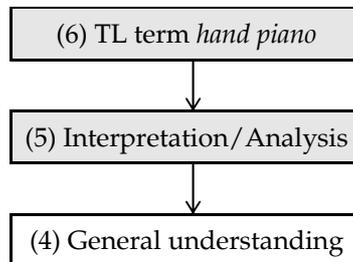


Figure 4: An Example of the Encoding Process

The English loan creation was probably produced after searching a musical instrument which looks like a *mbira*. At the general level, that is, at stage (2), it is true that the *mbira* is a musical instrument. However, the problem seems to have occurred at stage (3) when the term-creator failed successfully to complete the decoding process at the analysis or interpretation stage, by coming to the conclusion that a *mbira* functions like a piano. While there are in fact a few similarities especially in the way the keys for these two musical instruments are arranged, it should be emphasised that the differences between the two are many and as such far outweigh the presumed similarities. For instance, in con-

trast with piano keys, mbira keys are made of metal and even differ in terms of size, the manner in which they are played and, above all, the quality of the sound they produce. Another difference is that the body of a piano contains many parts not found on a mbira (the musical instrument), which consists of a "gwariva" (wooden plank), the "mbira" (metal keys), a "mutanda" (bridge), the "majeke" (rattles) and a "deze" (resonator) constituting the optional part of the instrument. Except for these differences between a piano and a mbira, the major difference is not that of appearance but of the diverse social functions these instruments have in the respective cultures from which they originate. On the one hand, the mbira is a revered musical instrument that holds a special position in traditional Shona culture. In some instances, it is even used as a "gokoro" (a musical instrument or anything used to evoke the spirit of the deceased). It plays a crucial role in facilitating ancestral spirit possession. The mbira is a musical instrument that is of great significance in Shona culture, used in most Shona traditional ceremonies such as the "kurova guva" (a family ritual for bringing back the spirit of the deceased). It is central to traditional ceremonies. The mbira is therefore seen in most circles as a symbol of traditional Shona culture. In terms of meaning *mbira* is not just an ordinary, but a culturally bound musical term that can only be translated into another language if the translator has full knowledge about its cultural significance. On the other hand, the piano does not have a similar symbolic value in English and other Western cultures.

The cultural differences between the two musical instruments, the mbira and the piano, are too great to be reconciled. Because of this, it is inappropriate to create a loan word based on a comparison of the one instrument with the other. The English word *hand piano* partially compares the physical structure of the mbira with a piano but fails to capture the cultural significance of the instrument for the Shona people. The two musical instruments are therefore incomparable at the level of culture. For the same reason, an attempt to translate *mbira* with *lamellaphone* also failed. The translations *hand piano* and *lamellaphone* never gained currency. It is the borrowed term *mbira* that is more popular than either of the coined English terms.

During the compilation of *Duramazwi reMimhanzi*, the lexicographers at ALRI rendered *mbira* as *mbira* in English. This decision was reached after noting that any attempt to translate it in any way would not be very effective because the mbira is quite unique in both structure and social significance. The lexicographers were quite aware that repeating the term in the TL would not make much sense to speaker-hearers of English who have not seen the mbira before. This was overruled, however, by the fact that the mbira is now very popular world-wide owing to Zimbabwean musicians who have been playing it for decades. The mbira has become such a popular instrument that it is even taught at some American universities, including the University of California. With such popularity, the retention of the term in the TL became justified. For the same reason, some Western musical terms were rendered through bor-

rowing. An example of such terms is *piano* itself, which is rendered in Shona as *piyano*. An attempt to create a Shona loan translation for *piano* was considered unnecessary because it was almost certain that such a translation would not gain currency against *piyano*, which is already an integrated loan word.

Conclusion

The article has identified loan translation as a productive term-creation strategy. It has shown that there is always need for term-creation in Shona lexicography. The task of creating new terminology is thus inescapable. It is mandatory that the lexicographer acquaints him-/herself with term-creation strategies such as loan translation. In addition, the article has demonstrated that the scan and balance theory, consisting of six stages, could assist the translator to find direct and accurate translation equivalents. The theory has been suggested as a better method of dealing with the lack of equivalents. However, it can only assist the translator if he/she has full information about the referent.

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