

## Challenges of Bible/Liturgical Translations in the Efik Language Group

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### Abstract

One hundred years after the arrival of Christianity in Calabar, translating the bible and the liturgical rites into the Efik language still remains an unfinished and an unsolved task. The early translations that were made appear inadequate especially from the stand point of unavailability of sufficient vocabulary from the local language. Thus one finds within the local language texts, repetition of the English words from where the primary translations were made. Some of these include, 'Spirit,' 'Heaven,' 'Eucharist' and 'Angel.' This work assesses why these English words have not been replaced with local words. It studies some translation theories and the principles guiding Catholic translations of liturgical rites and in the light of these considers the possibilities of finding an Efik word for the term 'spirit.' The conclusion is that it is possible to find Efik words for some of the retained English words. Where equivalent words exist in the Efik language, the connotation associated with the words tends to discourage attempts at using them in Christian settings. The dominance of the familiar and the fear of, or reluctance towards the new are however, acknowledged as challenges. As features of language, 'signification' and 're-signification' can help overcome the fear of giving words new significance.

**Keywords:** Bible translation, Efik language, Liturgical translations,

### Introduction

Efik language group is used in this work to include Efik, Ibibio and Annang languages spoken in the two States of Cross River and Akwa Ibom in Nigeria. Efik is spoken by the Efiks who occupy the Southern part of Cross River State namely Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Calabar, Odukpani, and some parts of Southwest province of Cameroon. It is fairly understood by the inhabitants of Akamkpa. Ibibio is spoken by the Ibibio people who are the largest occupants of Akwa Ibom State, Annang is spoken by the second largest group in Akwa Ibom. The three languages are of the Benue-Congo group of Niger-Congo language. They share the same similarities in vocabulary, morphology and reconstructed forms and are mutually intelligible and form a language cluster. They are spoken by more than five million people and belong to the group of Nigerian minority languages. The religion of their speakers is primarily Christianity and African Traditional or Indigenous Religion.

The Efik language is spoken by about 360,000 people; 350,000 in Nigeria and 10,000 in Cameroon. It has a literary tradition that dates back to the nineteenth century through the effort of the Church of Scotland Mission who first translated the bible and other Christian literature into the Efik language in 1846 (Offiong and Ansa, 2013). The first attempt at recording the Efik vocabulary was however in 1812 (Aye, 1991). The Efik language has from the time of the missionaries served as the Christian religious language of the Annang, Efik and Ibibio people and beyond. Efik bible is used in the whole of Akwa Ibom State and in the entire Southern Senatorial district of Cross River State. The literary development of the language has not been as progressive as was probably intended in the primers (Essien, 1987). There appears to be little interest on the part of the leadership class in enhancing it and it has been dropped from the West African Certificate Examination for lack of registered students.

The arrival of Christianity in Calabar and the desire to convert enhanced the timely translation of the English bible into the Efik language. This translation initiated by the Scottish missionaries is autographed by the presence of some un-translated English words. It marked the transition of the Efik language from oral to written language and has served as one of the pioneer models for written Efik. Indigenous bible translation institutions have since been established in Nigeria and the Efik bible has been republished by these groups with the English words retained. Subsequent Efik translations of the Catholic liturgical rites also retain this phenomenon. Liturgical rites refer to the procedures used for Catholic prayer and worship, and the term liturgical translation is used here to refer to the translations of these rites from English to Efik.

Code switching between English and Efik by contemporary Efik speakers may reflect what is already anticipated in the bible translations. The retained English words in the Efik bible underscore principally the probable inadequacy of a developing language or of a language in transition from an oral to a written form. Historically the English words also serve as testimonies to the identity of the earliest evangelizers of the Efik people and to the then colonizers of Nigeria. They reflect the tension between a dominant and a less dominant language in an interaction between the familiar and the new. The phenomenon depicts a translation in which the desire to communicate outweighs the quest to understand. Put differently, it represents a translation enhanced primarily by the desire to communicate and secondarily by the quest to understand.

This work will examine some translation theories and study the principles guiding Catholic translation of liturgical rites and in the light of these evaluate existing Efik bible and liturgical translations. In the course of this analysis some of the retained English words in the Efik bible and liturgical books will be highlighted. Possible reasons for their retention will be proposed from the standpoint of both the pioneer missionary-translators and the indigenous translators. Using the English word 'Spirit' as an example, the position of this work is that Efik replacements for some, if not all of the retained English words can be found.

### **Translation and Translation Theory**

Translation is an attempt to make knowledge expressed in a foreign language accessible to a people of another language. It is the process of understanding and communication, it consequently implies an interpretation. It is a melting pot for different disciplines like philology, linguistics, communication and sociosemiotics. Given that language is the vehicle of the culture and values of a people, translation involves an encounter between the culture and values of the

translated language and the receptor language. It is a path to inculturation which has awakened the sense of local identity.

The first stage of inculturation consists in translating the inspired Scripture into another language... A translation, of course, is always more than a simple transcription of the original text. The passage from one language to another necessarily involves a change of cultural context: concepts are not identical and symbols have a different meaning, for they come up against other traditions of thought and other ways of life. Written in Greek, the New Testament is characterized in its entirety by a dynamic of inculturation. In its transposition of the Palestinian message of Jesus into Judeo-Hellenistic culture it displays its intention to transcend the limits of a single cultural world (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1993).

Translation is therefore an interdisciplinary and intercultural project which sometimes serves ideological purposes. In the religious circle this may be understood as missionary.

The involvement of this assemblage of disciplines has revealed that an integral biblical translation must take into consideration not only the context of the author but the context or understanding of the recipients. The interest is on both the setting of the message and on the setting in which the translation is to be used; the manner in which it is to be employed, those to use it, the circumstances and purpose in which and for which it is to be used (Nida, 1992). The primary objective of every translation is in principle the interest of the recipients. It takes into consideration therefore the style, format and syntax of the receptor language as well as the inadequacy of the dictionaries and grammars of the receptor language. It also takes into consideration the human emotions, familiarity and even doctrinal issues (Wcela, 2009).

### **Formal and Dynamic Equivalence**

The classical theory of translation is the formal and dynamic equivalence. The dynamic or functional equivalence influenced bible translation projects from the late 1950s onwards. At the dawn of a new century however, it has almost been relegated to its own time. The two theories revolve around the relationship between the receptor language and the syntax or form of the original language. Every translation seeks to faithfully reproduce the message contained in the original language but there is however, the point of divergence. Some theorists sustain that the effective reproduction of the original message hinges on faithfulness of the receptor language to the grammatical forms of the original language. Others on the other hand sustain that such adherence will do violence to the receptor language and end up distorting the message that was to be communicated and made accessible and intelligible.

The first option is understood as ‘formal or literal equivalence;’ it calls for a “rigid adherence to the form of the original language” (Gordon, 1985). It pays particular attention to the language being translated, seeks to reproduce the grammar, style, and feel of the original language as closely as possible while still sounding like good and comprehensible in the receptor language (Wcela, 2009). The second option is ‘dynamic or functional equivalence’ and proposes an adherence to the form of the receptor language for an intelligible communication of the message so translated. It seeks to convey the meaning communicated in the original language in

expressions proper to the receptor language. In translation the receptor language is not meant to be a vehicle of the linguistic structure or the formal syntax of the original language.

Translators' knowledge of the language structure of the receptor language is implied but their familiarity with the formal syntax of the original language is of course a necessity for an effective translation to take place. Thus Pope John Paul II in his address to the United Bible Societies and the Bible Society of Italy sustains that:

A good translation is based on three pillars that must simultaneously support the entire work. First, there must be a deep knowledge of the original language and cultural world. Next, there must be a similar good familiarity with the language and cultural context in and for which the text is translated. Lastly, to succeed in the whole work, there must be an adequate mastery of the contents and meaning of what is being translated (2001).

In the context of the Efik translation of the bible the missionaries who were Scottish had knowledge of the English language and cultural world while their Efik collaborators had knowledge of the Efik language and cultural world. But it must be acknowledged that neither of the two groups had sufficient knowledge of the other's language. This collaboration therefore presupposed only in part the three pillars proposed by Pope John Paul II.

Both theories have their shortcomings; formal equivalence may distort the message communicated in the receptor language. Dynamic equivalence on the other hand may in some cases be wrong in terms of precision. That which in dynamic equivalence is presented as the natural and precise translation may at the end mean something different from what the original language intended. An example proposed by Gordon helps explain these difficulties: The phrase *dia tes sarkos* of Romans 8:3 has a formal equivalence translation in Revised Standard Version as "by the flesh." This is faithful to the original but ambiguous in English. The dynamic equivalence translation in NIV reads "by the sinful nature." This is more precise and natural but in relation to the message of Romans, it is un-Pauline; Paul does not refer to a sinful nature which would mean a lower nature; he speaks redemptive-historically and not anthropologically (Gordon, 1985).

The better option therefore would be a translation that is the result of the interaction between the two principles. There may be instances where dynamic equivalence may be the better option and other times when formal equivalence may be the better. The challenge consists in determining consequently, when one or the other is to be preferred. In relation to biblical and liturgical translations this however is to be conditioned especially by theological factors or considerations; because the bible is the soul of theology. Dynamic and formal equivalence is rather a very optimistic theory which tends to believe in the possibility of producing the original meaning and effect of source text (Crisp, 2000).

### **New and Familiar in Translation Production and Reception**

Reader response is equally an important element to be taken seriously in designing translations and translation strategies. Translation always takes place in a specific cultural environment; Sijbolt Noorda's consciousness of these facts lead to his proposal of the model of the 'new and the familiar in translation production and reception. He sustains that translation must not be all

about something new, there is always something valuable about the old. Translation therefore requires a mixture of the old and the new; “enough of the old to guarantee continuation, enough of the new to enable change” (2000), because socio-cultural change would hardly happen without acceptance. The traditional model of author-text-reader reveals that authorship and authorial power are limited; this is equally a reality in translation which on its part doubles the author. Though texts exist in a formal manner without readers, but they come into real existence through the readers. And the readers decide actually how the texts are read; consequently, translation in this context doubles the texts phenomenon by bringing in additional information. Translation always carries with it the risk of interference between the original text and the translated text. In the context of the semiotic model (the syntax and semantics dimensions of texts) there is the pragmatic dimension which is activated by readers who structure texts, attribute meaning to textual signs and evoke pragmatic effects. Reader’s interaction with a given text always produces meaning but in the context of the dynamics of convention and innovation in text and with readers (Noorda, 2000). Readers are the products and members of their cultural settings, these cultural conventions therefore provide checks and balances in the interaction between text and readers.

If readers’ role is therefore salient in deciding meaning within or outside certain cultural convention about that which is considered valid interpretation, it is necessary therefore in bible translations to pay attention to socio-cultural setting, the codes that govern the process of reader response, of reception by individual readers or by group of readers (Noorda, 2000). The reception given to a bible translation at the congregational level is to a greater extent influenced by the Church authority that sanctions the translation and authorizes that it be used by its members. In an environment where the speakers of the vernacular who cut across congregational boundaries are in the process of development, their vernacular sensitivity to their project cannot equally be ignored even within the boundaries of Church authorized translations. This sensitivity forms part of the influence of the socio-cultural setting within which a bible translation takes place.

### **Ratio Translationis and Liturgiam Authenticam**

*Ratio Translationis* (subsequently RT) is a document from the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. It is founded on the 2001 instructions *Liturgiam Authenticam* (subsequently LA) on the use of vernacular in the publication of the books of the Roman Liturgy. RT for the English language is an illustrative document published in 2007 to serve as guide on the translation of liturgical texts into English. The document sustains that every liturgical translation must take into consideration the biblical bases of the texts translated and be sure to preserve their specialized biblical vocabulary (RT, n. 6). Re-emphasizing the message of LA the document insists on intelligibility and accessibility of expression as the mark of every vernacular translation of liturgical texts. It imposes therefore on every translator the obligation of retaining the dignity, beauty and doctrinal precision and intent of the original Latin text (RT, nn. 73 and 74). Biblical texts are a primary source for liturgical prayer, consequently, translation of liturgical texts related to biblical events and accounts must be conscious of this relationship. There is need for correspondence between liturgical texts translated and the biblical version approved for use in the territory for which the liturgical translation is intended (RT, n. 39; LA, n. 49). This implies equally the preservation of venerable terms of ancient languages contained in the bible; terms like *Alleluia*, *Amen*, *Maranatha* (RT, n. 40; LA, n. 23).

The text calls for the preservation of every word and concept of the Latin original liturgical text *editiones typicae* in every translation even at the cost of pushing the receptor language beyond its normal limit of expression (RT, n. 44). This position is an elaboration by RT on the content of LA, n. 20; RT appears stricter than LA on flexibility with the receptor language. The principle appears more formal than dynamic. LA supports a sober and discreet arrangement of wordings, syntax and style in a manner that permits a flowing vernacular text. It appears more dynamic than formal in the translation principles.

#### **Coining of New Words, One Word with more than One Signification, Adaption, Transcription or Transliteration**

Translation is understood as implying an interaction between languages. This contact especially between an influential language and a language with limited literary tradition is meant to enhance the development and sustainability of the less influential language. The encounter is expected thus to provide opportunities for the development of orthography, enrichment of vocabulary, lexicons and concepts.

Especially in the translations intended for peoples recently brought to the Christian Faith, fidelity and exactness with respect to the original texts may themselves sometimes require that words already in current usage be employed in new ways, that new words or expressions be coined, that terms in the original text be transliterated or adapted to the pronunciation of the vernacular language, or that figures of speech be used which convey in an integral manner the content of the Latin expression even while being verbally or syntactically different from it.... In particular, caution should be exercised in introducing words drawn from non-Christian religions (LA, n. 21).

This section of the instruction appears quite tolerant and accommodating; it calls for association of new sense to existing words and coining of new words. It favours transliteration of terms in the original text or their adaptation to the pronunciation of the vernacular language in the absence of satisfactory vernacular equivalent terms. It also proposes the use of figures of speech in the receptor language which may capture integrally the contents of the Latin expression in spite of being verbally or syntactically different from the Latin. The encouragement to transliterate, adapt or transcribe original terms into the alphabet and pronunciation pattern of the receptor language is pertinent in the resolution of difficulties that arise from lack of vocabulary or limited senses of words. This implies at least, the use of Efik alphabet to write and pronounce the retained English words in the Efik bible and liturgical books. The same spirit is expressed in the following directive by the document:

Whenever a particular Latin term has a rich meaning that is difficult to render into a modern language (such as the words *munus*, *famulus*, *consubstantialis*, *propitius*, etc.) various solutions may be employed in the translations, whether the term be translated by a single vernacular word or by several, or by the coining of a new word, or perhaps by the adaptation or transcription of the same term into a language or alphabet that is different from the original text (cf. above, n. 21), or the use of an already existing word which may bear various meanings (LA, n. 53).



Therefore, instead of retaining directly or employing foreign words, the same words may be written in the alphabet of the receptor language to suit the pronunciation pattern of the language.

The document almost prohibits the importation of words from non-Christian religions. This is seen in some aspect as necessary but in another respect as an obstacle to the use of equivalent vernacular terms in translation. It implies for example that in territories where a term for a special cup used in the context of worship in a non-Christian religion for drinking exists, such a term cannot be used as an equivalent word for chalice used for Eucharistic celebration. The prohibition tends to ignore a similar modification noted by RT n. 46 about the early Roman rite in which efforts were successfully made to modify existing pagan religious terms to express the mysteries of redemption through Christ. It is possible that when encouraged, the local languages can provide some adequately equivalent words from their own indigenous religion for the Christian biblical and liturgical terms. The document encourages this and rather calls for caution, but in practice it appears the local churches are overcautious. They prefer and feel more comfortable retaining the English terms rather than risk lack of caution in coining or employing vernacular terms.

### **Development and Preservation of Local languages**

The introduction of local languages into liturgical use by the Church is considered to enhance the development and preservation of the language especially in the area of languages lacking in long literary tradition (LA, n. 14). The same exercise makes room for the emergence of sacred terms and style peculiar to the receptor language as its liturgical language (LA, n. 27).

While the translation must transmit the perennial treasury of orations by means of language understandable in the cultural context for which it is intended, it should also be guided by the conviction that liturgical prayer not only is formed by the genius of a culture, but itself contributes to the development of that culture.... Liturgical translation that takes due account of the authority and integral content of the original texts will facilitate the development of a sacral vernacular, characterized by a vocabulary, syntax and grammar that are proper to divine worship, even though it is not to be excluded that it may exercise an influence even on everyday speech, as has occurred in the languages of peoples evangelized long ago (LA, n. 47).

The promotion of a vivid translation rather than a translation or interpretation of only an image of metaphors, similes or anthropomorphisms is to be adopted as opportunity for provoking inquisitiveness and consequently, for enhancing renewed catechesis (RT, n. 62; LA, n. 43).

Attention is drawn to the terms translated in the Vulgate as *anima* and *spiritus* and care is to be taken in translating them lest it leads to confusion (LA, n. 43). The principles sustain that “great caution is to be taken to avoid a wording or style that ... would confuse with the manner of speech of ... other religions, so that such a factor will not cause ... confusion or discomfort” (LA, n. 40). This fear of confusion and offending the sensitivity of the people encourages the lack of will to translate some of the English terms still evident in the Efik translations. A handy example will be the term “Spirit.” Translations should be made only from the Latin *editio typica*, lest the resulting text be at a remove as regards the meaning of the original (RT, n. 41). This implies the need for a competent translator to be familiar with the context of the Latin

composition. The knowledge of Latin grammatical and theological syntaxes and history of vocabulary and composition will make the meaning of the original Latin text become evident to the qualified translator. Because of the recent trend of generational distance from the Latin language, translations into the Efik language tend to rely more on the English translations of the *editio typica*.

### Existing Efik Bible Translation

The first complete Efik translation of the bible was undertaken in 1868 by the National bible society of Scotland, Edinburgh. It was based primarily on the Efik alphabet or orthography for use by the speakers of Annang, Efik and Ibibio languages. The commonly used Efik bible is the one published in 1985 by the Bible Society of Nigeria, Lagos titled “Edisana Nwed Abasi Ibom.” The Bible Society of Nigeria bases its translations on the King James Version of the bible. This bible translation though written in Efik contains many English words which will easily strike any critical reader. Below is an illustration of the phenomenon in the Gospel of Mark 1:1-8, words in bold letters are English words or transcriptions. It is identified as “Translation A”

Mark 1:1-8

<sup>1</sup> Eritəŋə **gospel Jesus Christ**, Eyen Abasi. <sup>2</sup> Kpa nte ewetde ke ɲwed **prophet Isaiah**, ete:

Sese, mmədəŋ isunutom Mi ebem Fi iso,

<sup>3</sup> Emi edinamde usun Fo; Uyo andifiori ke **desert**, ete;  
mbufo edion usun **Jehovah**, eneɲere əkɔusəŋ Esie;

<sup>4</sup> John oto edi edinim owo **baptism** ke **desert**, edinyun əkɔwəɔ **baptism** eritkabare esit, man efen mme idiək-ɲkpə. <sup>5</sup> Ndien mbio ofuri edem **Judæa**, ye kpukpru mme andidun **Jerusalem** ewəŋə etiene enye, enyun ena **baptism** ke ubək esie ke akpa **Jordan**, ke eyararede mme idiək-ɲkpə mmə. <sup>6</sup> **John** esine edisine-ɲkpə idet **camel**, onyun əkəkək mbəkək ikpa-unam ke isin, onyun adia ɲkukunɲkpəyəriyə ye aran əkɔwək-ikət. <sup>7</sup> Ndien enye əkɔwəɔ ete, Enye emi enyenede odudu akan mi etiene mi ke edem edi, emi mmendotke ndinuhə ntat uruk ikpa-ukot Esie. <sup>8</sup> Ami nda mməŋ nnim mbufo **baptism**; edi Enye eyenim mbufo **baptism** ke Edisana **Spirit**.

### Existing Liturgical Translations

The existing liturgical translations chosen for this work are the last two translations of the Roman Missal for the Catholic celebration of the Eucharist (The Order of Mass). The first Efik translation USUD NDIBUANA KE MASS was published in 1978 by the Bishops of Calabar and Ikot Ekpene Catholic Dioceses. It was approved for use by the Episcopal Conference of Nigeria in 1979. Below is the translation of the Preface of Holy Trinity identified as “Translation B.”

#### Akam Itoro Edisana **Trinity**

Eneneɲede odot onyun enen, əfən oyun anwam k’ubəkək nnyin ndikom Abasi kpukpru ini ye ke kpukpru ebiet, O Ɔbək, afo Edisana Ete, nsinsi Abasi andikeme-ndinam-kpukpru- ɲkpə, oto **Jesus Christ** Ɔbək nnyin.

Afo, ye nkukre eyen fo ye Edisana **Spirit** edi Abasi kiet, edi əkək kiet, idihe kiet ke **Person** emi edide nsio nsio: edi, edi kiet k’uduot Abasi emi edide kiet. Nnyin imenim k’akpanikə kpukpru se afo ayarade əkək nnyin abaŋa itoro fə. Ukem oro ke nnyin inim ibaŋa Edisana **Spirit**, man otodo k’ikwəɔde utibe



ḡkpɔ uduot Abasi akpanikɔ nnyin ituak ibuot inɔ **Person** emi edide nsio nsio, uduot emi edide kiet, ye ubɔḡ edide ukem-ukem.  
Ke ntre, nnyin ibuana ye mme **Angel** ye mme Ikpɔ **Angel**, mme ebekpo, mme andikara kpa ye kpukpru udim ekɔḡ **Heaven** ifiori itoro fo.

The new translation has the same title: USUD NDIBUANA KE MASS. It was produced in 2012 for internal use *ad experimentum* within the three Dioceses of Calabar, Uyo and Ikot Ekpene. It is based on the English translation of the Roman Missal by the International Committee on English in the Liturgy of 2010. The translation was the consequence of the directives from the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments *Ratio Translationalis* for the English Language published in 2007. The directives call for the use of formal equivalence principle in translating from the Latin original *editio typica* of the *ordo missae*. This new Efik translation apparently retains almost all the English words that were retained in the translation of 1978. The notable novelties however, include especially the following: the former used the English word “Eucharist,” the new translation adopts an Efik phraseology by transcribing *YUKARIST*. Other changes based on this innovation include *Krɔs* for Cross, *Katolic* for Catholic (this should however be *Katɔlik*). The translation does not have the Preface of Holy Trinity used above as illustration from the translation of 1978. Its translation of the Apostolic Creed is therefore chosen and identified as “Translation C.”

#### Mmenim

Mmenim Abasi ke akpanikɔ, Ete andikpon nkan, Andibot enyɔḡ y’isɔḡ, ye **Jesus Christ**, nkukure Eyen Esie, ɔbɔḡ nnyin, emi ekeyomode ke odudu Edisana **Spirit**, akamanade oto **Virgin Mary**; okonyuḡ okutde ndutuhɔ ke idak ukara **Pontius Pilate**, ema ekɔḡ Enye ke krɔs, akpa, enyuḡ ebuk; Enye ama ɔsuhɔde aka ke **Hell**, ɔyɔhɔ usen ita Enye eset ke mkpa, ɔɔk ke **Heaven**, eketie ke ubɔk nnesia Abasi Ete Andikpon nkan. Enye oyoto do edi ndibieme ikpe nnɔ mme odu-uwem ye mme akpa-mkpa.

Mmenim Edisana **Spirit** ke akpanikɔ; Edisana Ufɔk-Abasi **Katɔlik**; ebuana ye mme ndisana owo; edidahado ke mme idiɔk-ḡkpɔ; ediset ikpɔkidem ke mkpa, ye uwem nsi-nsi. **Amen**

#### Evaluation of the Illustrated Translations

Translation A (the Gospel Mark 1:1-8) which is made up of hundred and thirty four (134) words contains fourteen English words/transcriptions: This is approximately eleven percent of the Efik words. The Preface of the Trinity (translation B) is made up of one hundred and thirty four (134) words; nine of these words are English. The figure is approximately 7 percent of the words in the text. The text of the apostolic creed *mmenim* (Translation C) contains one hundred and six words (106), twelve (12) of these words are English. This implies that approximately 11 percent of the words are English words or transcriptions. Since in liturgical celebrations the bible is being read and liturgical texts are predominantly adapted from the bible, words translated for use in liturgical texts have the same translation in the biblical version used in the territory (RT, n. 39; LA, nn. 36 and 49). Consequently the same English terms found in the Efik bible are found in the liturgical texts. This explains why this work assesses both the biblical and liturgical translations.

The above illustrations reveal that the Efik translations of the bible and liturgical literature are a combination of Efik and English words. Some of the words from the original language were retained in place of possible equivalent words from the receptor language. This may imply, apart from the lack of vocabulary, the fear of losing the essential meaning of the original word. Possible equivalent words may have insufficient or superfluous significations that may impoverish or overshoot the meaning contained in the original word. The likely theory that guided this translation principle would be formal equivalence, though a review of the entire translation would equally reveal dynamic equivalence. Therefore where necessary there was formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence translations; but specifically, one of the theories that informed the preservation of the English words was formal equivalence due especially to the probable unsatisfactory signification of available equivalent Efik words. For fear of losing the signification captured by the English words, some of them were retained. Some of the corresponding Efik equivalent may have been avoided for fear of the unchristian connotation it had among the speakers. In this case sensitivity to the socio-cultural setting may have been at work.

### **Efik Translations and the Pioneer Translators**

The term 'pioneer translators' is used to refer to the Scottish missionaries and their indigenous collaborators who translated the English bible into the Efik language. The English words were therefore retained by these earlier translators. Their possible reason may primarily have been the absence of sufficient vocabulary to accommodate the concepts expressed by those English words. It may also have been their lack of conviction regarding the ability of existing vocabulary to exhaust the concepts contained in each of the foreign words. Most importantly also, the initial missionary scepticism regarding the existence of certain biblical and theological concepts in the world view expressed by the Efik language may have contributed to the lack of conviction on their part. The possibility of the non-Christian connotation of existing corresponding Efik words may also have been a factor. The first proposed reason is due especially to the limited literary tradition of the Efik language and is prolonged by the absence of a language academy. The second is a decision based on theological considerations which in turn have slowed the conscious effort at identifying Efik terms as replacement for the English words. Such theological considerations may include the fear of choosing words with non-Christian religious roots and words whose usage may confuse and offend the sensitivity of the indigenous Christians.

Language itself is a vehicle of values; political, sociological and cultural. An influential language tends to transmit to its speakers a certain sense of superiority in values and encourages its speakers to sustain this sense of superiority and influence in their interaction with other languages. The inner convictions of superiority which even unconsciously were felt by the missionaries who saw themselves as the exporters of civilization would equally have made it possible for the translators to underrate the capacity of existing Efik terms to accommodate the concepts expressed by the retained English words, or underestimate the possibility of finding suitable new words.

The Efik language itself was during the translation period at its preliminary stage of becoming a written language. It was therefore, equally possible that finding corresponding terms in the absence of sufficiently learned speakers of the language was difficult and time consuming especially in the context of the urgency of the missionary zeal for the conversion of souls. Thus it was necessary to make an indigenous bible available as soon as possible, rather than spend

endless time searching for corresponding words. As at the time of the first translation, translation studies and theory were not as standardized as they are presently.

This phenomenon of interspersing Efik translations with English words is currently reflected even in spoken Efik; hardly does an Efik speaker make a complete sentence in Efik without its being interspaced with English words. This implies the phenomenon of code switching, code missing and code shifting (Offiong and Ugot, 2012). Comparatively this constitutes a slightly different reality; that of language shift which indicates a more complex problem of language extinction. As a problem however, it underscores the probability that foreign words in the Efik Christian literature may not likely be replaced. The Efik Christian literature was the first written and widely read Efik language texts interspersed with English words. These texts have in this form laid the foundation for adaptation to an Efik language pronounced along with English words.

### **Efik Translations and Indigenous Translators**

The original owners and speakers of the Efik language who subsequently undertook to function as translators of the bible and liturgical books into the Efik language are referred to in this work as 'indigenous translators.' Their presence in institutions like the Bible Society Nigeria and Nigerian Translation Trust would ordinarily improve upon the legacy of the foreign missionaries. This is however, not the case; the foreign words have remained a part of the Efik translations. As evident in the 1985 edition of the Efik bible by the Bible Society of Nigeria and the second liturgical translation illustrated above, subsequent revisions have made little attempts to find replacements for some of these words. The possible reasons for this can be identifiable. First these foreign words appear to have almost become parts of the vernacular and appear to have been tacitly adopted as part of the Efik vocabulary. There are no conscious attempts at further developing the language especially in the context of the challenges of its minority status in a competitively multilingual environment like Nigeria.

There is among the speakers a gradual shift to the use of English, and the sense of pride associated with understanding and speaking Efik has shifted consequently to the use of English which is adopted as the first language in Nigeria. There is lack of conviction on the part of the speakers to invent new words, adopt and associate new meanings with existing words for fear especially of the bizarre connotation that some of the adopted words would transmit to the speakers in general. In other words, the sensitivity of the general speakers is a factor in the translation of these words. There are implicit disagreements among the three language areas adopting Efik as biblical and liturgical language. The Annang and Ibibio speakers may ordinarily want in the current dispensation to translate the bible and the liturgical books into their own proper vernacular. This is already a possible motive for lack of satisfactory cooperation between speakers of the three vernaculars in the task of standardizing and modernizing the lexicon of the Efik language.

### **An Experiment with Efik Alternative to the English Word "Spirit"**

The term spirit translates principally the biblical Hebrew word רוח (ruach) and Greek πνεῦμα (pneuma) The two terms are used to refer to what is understood in English as breath (Ezekiel 37:10), wind and spirit. Theologically they refer to that which animates or gives life to the body, breath (life-) spirit (see Matt 27:50; Luke 8:55). They are used to refer to that part of the human personality which in contrast to the flesh does not pass away in death but survives as an

individual entity after death (see 1 Peter 3:18 in relation to Christ; and v. 19 in relation to other humans). In relation to the flesh it is immaterial (Colossians 2:5). They are used to refer to God's being as controlling influence in relation especially to humans; "the Spirit of God or of the Lord" (Genesis 1:2; 1 Peter 4:14). They are also used to refer to an independent and transcendent personality; "the Spirit" (Matthew 28:19; see 1 Chronicles 12:19 Heb). The Spirit in these two senses is often qualified as 'Holy' because of its heavenly origin and nature (Bauer, 2000).

The Efik equivalent for breath is *ibifik* or *ebifik*, while wind is *ofum*. The reality understood theologically as the immaterial part of the human personality is *ekpo* (spirit). In Luke 24:37 the disciples were afraid and thought Jesus was a  $\piνεϋμα$  (pneuma); this concept is precisely what is expressed in Efik as *ekpo* but in the Efik translation the English word 'spirit' is used. The same English term is used in other cases in which  $\piνεϋμα$  (pneuma) or  $רוח$  (ruach) is used to refer to the "controlling influence of God" (Spirit of God) and 'an independent transcendent personality' (Holy Spirit). Luke 24:37 is translated in English as spirit (RSV, KJV, NAS, GNV among others) or ghost (NAB, NIB, NIV, NJB). Worthy of note is the fact that the concept expressed in the  $\piνεϋμα$  (pneuma) of Luke 24:37 is common among Efik people; it is understood as *ekpo*. The translation of this passage with the term spirit betrays two factors; the first is a carryover from the source language of apparently using one English word to translate any one Greek word regardless of the context.

The second follows from the first, the reproduction in a translation that is based on a source language bible format; little attention is given to the priority of the target language. Presently the reluctance among Efik Christians about using the term *ekpo* for  $\piνεϋμα$  (pneuma) as the Spirit of God and as Holy Spirit arises from the fear of transferring the negativity associated with the immaterial part of the human person after death. If God is a spirit in terms of ghost then he is to be feared. The policy surrounding the translation of Spirit in the Efik bible may therefore be expressed as follows: the decision to retain Spirit may have been socio-cultural. The negative connotation associated with the possible equivalent term *ekpo* may have influenced the decision to use Spirit where references were to  $\piνεϋμα$  (pneuma) as the Spirit of God and as Holy Spirit. The decision to also use spirit for the immaterial aspect of the human person after death was due to an influence from the source language bible. This second reveals in a way some lack of attention to the target language on the part of the translating missionaries (and their indigenous collaborators) who were in this case influenced by the reality of their own English bible. This is a factor in the authoritative nature of bible translation identified as 'commercial power' (Rogerson, 2000).

Translations of Spirit in the three major languages in Nigeria may provide some assistance. In Hausa *ruhu* means spirit or ghost while *RuhumaiTsarki* means 'Holy Spirit.' In Igbo *mmuo* means spirit or ghost while *Mmuo Nso* means Holy Spirit. In Yoruba *emi* means spirit or ghost while *Emimimo* means Holy Spirit. Lokaa is a language spoken by the people of Yakurr in the central part of Cross River State. It is spoken by a people who share the same political jurisdiction with the Efik people. In this language *kuden* means spirit or ghost while *Kutumaden* is used to refer to the Holy Spirit. The nuance in these four languages consists in the translation of the  $\piνεϋμα$  (pneuma) or  $רוח$  (ruach) of God and Holy Spirit with the same term for spirit in terms of ghost.

As noted earlier, in the Efik language group ghost is referred to as *ekpo*; it is possible therefore to employ the term *Edisana Ekpo* for the Holy Spirit. Through the adoption of this term the negative connotation associated with the concept as evil may be dispelled given that it is generally part of the human and divine realities. The Efik people believe in the existence of good and evil spirits which are identified as *eti ekpo* and *idiak ekpo* respectively. Holy Spirit can therefore be termed *edisana ekpo*. *Ekpo* is also used as a personal name; so if humans can answer *ekpo* it implies that it is not a negative concept. However, where the sensitivity of the receptors is at stake as in this case, the term ‘ukpɔŋ’ which is used for ‘soul’ may be given an added signification or sense to mean Spirit. The reason for this choice is because against arguments regarding the non existence of the concept of spirit among the Efik people, it is evident that soul expresses a spiritual concept. To have such a term in Efik for soul and as a personal name implies that the concept of spirit is present in the Efik world view. Ukpɔŋ may therefore be chosen to mean both soul and spirit.

### Conclusion

The difficulties that plague Efik translations of biblical and liturgical texts are both linguistic and theological. Linguistically Efik is limited in vocabulary and concepts; theologically it is inadequate in terms of terminologies that capture the Christian ideas, concepts, institutions and practices. This was the case with some if not most languages attempting a translation of the bible. Latin speaking Christians attempting to translate the bible and Greek Christian documents from about AD 180 faced similar translation problems. Even their attempts to be faithful to the structure and form of the original language forced them in some cases to go for a ‘word-for word’ translation and this did violence to the Latin idiom of the time. In some cases they made use of and Latinized established Christian Greek and Hebrew words like *ecclesia*, *baptizare*, *pasche*. This method of translation thus gave rise to a special and enduring Christian language technically referred by some as *Sondersprache* (Witty, 1967). The Greek translators of the Septuagint had to invent Greek words, transliterate certain Hebrew words and even incorporate some by retaining them. By this singular gesture it helped, along with the New Testament and works by theological writers, to create Greek Christian terminology. It remains however, a translation, in spite of its acceptability. The churches in Nigeria and in Calabar area of the Efik language cluster especially will, by making efforts at finding vernacular words for some biblical and liturgical terms help in enriching the local language in which the Gospel is incarnated.

In relation to the translation of the Bible to other languages, the original languages are generally Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek. In relation to the liturgy the original language is Latin, *editiones typicae*. The Efik bible and liturgical books appear generally to have been translated primarily from the English translations. This may in part have had an effect on genuine efforts at identifying equivalent Efik replacements. It is still possible to find equivalent Efik words for some of the English terms by approaching the translation from the original languages. A study of the semantic fields and context of the words in their original rather than in English and the semantic fields of possible Efik terms may open up the possibilities of discovering equivalent and sufficient Efik replacements.

The non absolute status of concepts associated with words and the fact that most concepts can be represented by a variety of forms should encourage Efik biblical and liturgical translators to associate new meanings to existing words. They should coin new words and ascribe to them concepts represented by the English words retained in the bible and liturgical books. By doing



this, the old translations are not replaced but enriched by the acceptance of the new so that the outcome will become a mixture of the old and the new; an interaction between continuity and change. The challenges of biblical and liturgical translations must not be looked at as setbacks. The Christian unprecedented initiative of translating the bible into vernacular has itself revealed and promoted the fact that all languages are equal in their responsibility to mediate the truth of God. The linguistic and theological limitations of these vernaculars on the other hand reveal that by the same token every language is equally inadequate in its attempt to communicate the very same truth of God (Sanneh, 2000). Language remains however, the tool with which humans can best think, imagine, create, aspire, desire, feel and express their soul, enlarge their mental horizon and achieve all that each person is capable of (Essien, 1987). Biblical/liturgical translations in this context continue to remain a vehicle of cultural and ethnic identity in their development and enrichment of the receptor language.

### **Immediate and Long Term Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made for the improvement of existing translations of the bible and liturgical books in the Efik language. In the immediate context it is recommended that Efik words should be invented to cater for some, if not all of the foreign words in the Efik bible and liturgical books. Alternatively in cases where there is difficulty in identifying an adequate term, new meaning or signification may be associated with existing words. Polyvalence is a common characteristic of the Efik language; the word ɔ̀bɔ̀ŋ has more than one signification; it is used with slight difference in pronunciation to refer to 'lord, 'whip' and 'mosquito.' Where these alternatives are not possible with some of the words because of the theological or liturgical traditions associated with the terms, such words may be retained in their original form but transliterated with the alphabet of the receptor language (Efik) and adapted to the pronunciation pattern of same receptor language. Thus the foreign language is spelt and pronounced in the alphabetical format of the receptor language. These processes will make it possible for Efik words and pronunciation patterns so utilized to acquire biblical sense and theological concepts in the mind of the readers. All of these may not be possible without the existence of an academy for the Efik language and other major languages in Nigeria.

There are language development centres like Nigeria Education and Research Development Council (NERDC) and the National Institute of Nigeria Language (NINLAN). The challenge however regarding an academy is the existence in Nigeria of many languages. It becomes difficult therefore to give adequate attention to a particular language. This can however, be overcome through the establishment in the long term of regional centres for the development of regional languages. The churches may at the regional level play an active role; thus the Catholic Church or Christian churches in the region covering the Efik language cluster may contribute towards the development of religious or theological languages and concepts in Efik. This may be done by getting its trained and indigenous theologians to work with linguists and form a Greek/Hebrew-Efik Lexicon of the Old and New Testaments. These efforts will thus become renewed occasions for the development and enhancement of standard orthography, production of primers, compilation and revision of dictionaries, and the writing of more grammar for the Efik language.



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