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## Contextual meaning loss and gain in the translation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* from English to Kiswahili

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#### Abstract

This paper establishes the extent of contextual meaning loss or gain in the translation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* from English to Kiswahili. In particular, it analyzes critical concepts in contextualizing the English-Kiswahili translation of the novel. Does meaning loss or gain in the translation of *Animal Farm* facilitate or impede the appropriate contextualizing of the target language version? What strategies have been used by the translator to deal with contextual meaning loss or gain in the translated text? To do so, content analysis which falls under the qualitative research paradigm is used to examine non-equivalent words and phrases in the source text using the systematic sampling technique. The relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986), is utilized to interpret data. The study highlights how non-equivalence may be viewed as an impediment in literary translation and offers insights on how loss and gain have been employed to contextualize the target text in Kiswahili. Specific word and phrase meanings are deduced from sentences as well as words and phrases. The findings reveal that the following translation strategies resulted in loss: translation by omission, translation using a more general word, translation using a more neutral or less expressive word, translation by cultural substitution, and translation by paraphrasing using unrelated words. However, only one strategy that resulted in gain was translation by paraphrasing using a related word.

**Keywords:** avertable, cognitive, context, equivalence, gain, inevitable, loss

## Introduction

George Orwell's book *Animal Farm* was originally released in England on August 17, 1945. According to Gordon (2013), *Animal Farm* was the first novel that consciously attempted to combine political and artistic goals into a single work. Between 1943 and February 1944, when the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom were at war with Nazi Germany, the book was written. The experiences of democratic socialist Orwell during the May Day battle against Stalinist forces during the Spanish civil war profoundly influenced his opposition to Joseph Stalinism and his hostility toward Moscow-directed Stalinism. This was the European context in which the source text, *Animal Farm*, was set, in order to reveal the dictatorship that existed at the time the book was written. Fortunatus Kawagere's *Shamba La Wanyama*, a translated text, was chosen by the Kenyan government as a set book in 1994; as a result, it was tested in Kenya's Certificate of Secondary School examination.

According to Mazrui (2017), the Swahili committee members used Kenya's early 1990s political reform movement as an opportunity to express their oppositional viewpoint through the publication of *Animal Farm*, which suggested that a political order needed to be fundamentally changed rather than just a few guards changed. This is the Kenyan context, where the target text is now intended. The paper determines whether or not the original text's meaning is lost in the contextualization of literary translation. The investigation focuses on word and phrase level nonequivalence in the source text (ST) and target text (TT). According to Schaffner (2003), a work of translation can function as a relationship between ideas and politics in the contemporary world, thus showing the awareness of the producers in the cultures of the two worlds. No matter how skilled the translator is however, the translation may lose some of the original text's meaning (Mudogo, 2018). The possibility of translation non-equivalence is therefore created by the linguistic and cultural differences among languages.

The paper applies Sperber & Wilson's (1986) theory of relevance and the systematic sampling technique when collecting and analyzing the data. Out of the 100 nonequivalent items selected for study, only 10% were analyzed systematically using Baker's taxonomy of equivalence. According to Memon et al. (2020), independent trials do exist as long as the 10% sample size is not exceeded.

## Contextual meaning loss or gain in literary translation

The differences between languages, especially if they are from different families, make literary texts vulnerable to both gains and losses through translation. Opinions on gain and loss range from the optimistic view that no translation is possible without loss due to the inherent changes of the original text while being rendered to another language to the more pessimistic view that no translation is possible without gain resulting from the target culture and readers who the text would not have otherwise existed. This can be seen in the translation of *Animal Farm* to *Shamba La Wanyama* where the translator aimed at getting rid of or preserving some content which are relevant to the target readers, by using certain translation strategies which lead to meaning gain or loss.

From the principle of equivalent effect, which states that the target receiver's relationship with the message they receive relationship should aim to be the same as that between the original receivers and the source language of the message, Nida (1964) claims that loss is connected to a lack of dynamic equivalence. In this connection the translation is lost if the target text does not support such a connection. In order to determine if there is a meaning gain or loss, this paper investigates whether the ST message and the TT message are aligned. From a functionalist perspective, gain is defined by Punga (2012) as occurring anytime it is possible to expect that the target text will be read equally or more effectively by its readers than the original text by its receivers. Thus, he defines gain as an instance in which the target text performs better in its context than the original text. Instead, he characterizes loss as an instance

where the source text performs better than the target text.

According to Tiwiyani & Retnomurti (2016), culturally distinctive objects are challenging to translate since they are based on a particular culture's knowledge and history. In their study, they determined the gains and losses in the translation of culturally distinctive elements in the book, *Lintang Kemusuh* by Ahmad Tohari (1985) and its English translation, *A Shooting Star at Dawn*. They aimed to pinpoint the translation practices employed when translating culturally particular materials that resulted in loss and gain throughout the translation process as well as how the translator made up for the loss and gain while translating culturally distinctive materials.

The researchers discovered through qualitative descriptive methodologies that loss is more common than gain, with the two types of loss being avoidable and unavoidable losses. They continued by identifying the methods of translation that caused loss, including translation by a generic subordinate term, translation by a more neutral or less emotive word, and translation by cultural substitutes. According to Tiwiyani & Retnomurti (2016), gain in translation is obtained by the translator's ingenuity when he was able to convey the culturally particular items for efficient communication. The translator employed several translation techniques, such as loan words with explanations, translation by paraphrase using similar terms, and translation by paraphrase using unrelated words, to make up for the loss that occurred. They hold the opinion that improving communication through translation is difficult, particularly when translating culturally unique material.

Nozizwe & Ncube (2014) examined translation's gains and losses in light of particular judicial rulings. The study was conducted with the premise that there would always be gains and losses in translation. According to them, Gain is mostly obtained through the justifications offered in court. The cultural and linguistic differences between the language of the court and the Ndebele language are considered to be the cause of loss. The investigation came to the conclusion that in some court translations, loss predominates over gain. The major causes of these losses were the use of slang and the linguistic and cultural differences between Ndebele and English. The translation procedure gets more challenging and results in more loss the more language and cultural differences there are between English and Ndebele. In most situations, when faced with the challenge of untranslatability, translators would give up on the translation or only scrape the surface, leaving out the original notion.

Gain was mostly attained thanks to the translators' inventiveness in explaining Latin phrases and proverbs in order to communicate effectively. The interpreters' ingenuity allowed them to impose crises during sessions. Then they provided translations for words that did not make sense. Gain allowed the interpreters to accomplish the goal of translation, which is improved communication. The study found that the court used a large amount of specialist legal jargon with roots in English, Latin, Roman, and Dutch, further complicating judicial interpretations. In addition to pointing out these sources of gain and loss, the study also describes the court interpreter as a crucial link between the two. This paper examines loss and gain in literary translation, ranging from *Animal Farm* to *Shamba La Wanyama*, in contrast to Nozizwe and Ncube's (2014) analysis of loss and gain with reference to chosen court translations.

With relation to the translation of the beautiful Qur'an, As-Safi (2006) investigated translation methodologies and loss and gain. He claims that because English and Arabic are languages from distinct families, there are differences between the two that make translation losses prevalent, variable, and sometimes unavoidable. Losses happen at every level of language: syntactic, morphological, textual and stylistic. As with the holy Qur'an translation, greater losses are believed to be unavoidable the more painstakingly and thoroughly the text texture is crafted. On the other hand, that gain is quite uncommon. It can be concluded that the linguistic stylistic differences on textual, syntactic, phonological,

morphological, semantic, stylistic, and cultural levels are caused by the asymmetry between these two languages. According to AL-Safi (2006), cultural variations result in lexical gaps that are manifested in cognition when using phrases related to extremely sensitive topics like religion and politics or those linked to institutions. Given that the Qur'an is a profoundly revered literature, it is sometimes difficult to translate from Arabic into English due to language, rhetorical, and cultural limitations. These losses have extremely significant repercussions. This study examined cognitive meaning loss and gain at the word and phrase levels, in contrast to As-Safi's (2006) analysis of loss and gain at the morphological, syntactic, semantic, textual, and stylistic levels.

The loss and gain in the translation of *Big Nate* comic strip books into Indonesian were examined by Utamayasa et al. (2017). The authors' goal was to conduct a thorough analysis of the many structural gains and losses present in comic books. The research was qualitative and used note-taking techniques to identify any gains or losses that may have occurred during translation. Their study concluded that the translator occasionally added or subtracted phrases, words, or sentences to make an acceptable, accessible, and natural-sounding translation for the intended audience. The current study examined the cognitive meaning loss and gain in the translation of *Animal Farm* to *Shamba La Wanyama*, whereas Utamayasa et al. (2017) examined structural loss and gain in comic books.

A related study by Hanada (2004) looks on linguistic and cultural distortions that occur when literary pieces are translated from Arabic to English. He claims that failure to achieve balanced semantic and cultural equivalency between the original text and target text results in losses. That cultural losses occur from lack of meaning equivalence at the deep level and the surface level of the original text, while semantic losses are caused by instances of poor translation, superficial understanding of the semantic equivalents, and one on one translation. In his conclusion, he says that these losses may be reduced by providing the context, giving target readers the background information that makes it easier for them to decode the original language, and taking into account the cultural implications that are built into the original text. However, this study concentrated on contextual losses and gain at the pragmatic level, whereas Hanada's study focused on losses on semantic levels. Both researchers considered that the culture of the original text and the target text might impact whether there is a loss or gain in a literary work translation, Hanada's (2004) study concurs with the findings by Tiwiyani & Retnomurti's (2016).

These results were used in this study to expand on my earlier work by identifying culturally unique terms and expressions that were translated from the ST to the TT and analyzing the translator's approach to the problem of meaning gain and loss. Al-Masri (2004) asserts that the absence of pragmatic equivalency in the source text, whether on the deeper level or the surface level, leads to cultural losses. In my research, I looked at how nonequivalence impacts a text's pragmatic meaning after translation. It examined whether the translation of *Animal Farm* into Kiswahili results in any contextual meaning loss or gain, how the loss or gain was accomplished, and how the translator attempted to mitigate the losses.

### **Contextual Meaning loss and meaning gain in the translation of *Animal Farm* to Kiswahili**

The goal of the study was to assess the degree of contextual meaning gain or loss in the Kiswahili translation of *Animal Farm* from its original English. Depending on the translation techniques the translator employed while translating non-equivalent words and phrases, the meaning of *Animal Farm* into *Shamba La Wanyama* may have been lost or gained. This is due to the translation process leaving some SL things without TT counterparts.

Meaning loss may be classified into two categories: avertable meaning loss and inevitable meaning loss. According to Tiwiyani & Retnomurti (2016), avertable meaning loss results from the translator's inability to identify the proper equivalence, whereas inevitable meaning loss happens as a result of the

different systems of the two languages, independent of the translator's expertise and competence.

Steiner (2006) asserts that a translator must encroach on the text, take its essence, and convey it. This is what causes translation to either loss or gain meaning. Loss, according to Dizdar (2014), is the result of the ST's inadequate replication in the TT. It is the loss of certain elements in the TT that are included in the ST. Loss may result from the translator's inability to adequately translate a component of meaning, such as expressiveness.

By selecting terms and phrases that have been translated from the ST to the TT that are culturally distinctive, the current study aimed to determine the contextual meaning loss and gain in the translation of *Animal Farm* to *Shamba La Wanyama*. It will list the items in the ST and TT, indicate whether they fall under the heading of contextual meaning loss or gain, highlight them, and then specify whether the identified loss is preventable or unavoidable. Finally, it will use Baker's (2011) taxonomy to identify the translation strategy that the translator employed. The data collected is presented in the excerpts analyzed below;

1. SL: Teaching and organizing the others fell **naturally** upon the pigs (pg10)

TL Translation: *Kazi ya usimamizi na kuwafunza wengine iliwaangukia nguruwe* (loss)-Translation by omission (pg12)

In the ST, the pigs were considered to be the cleverest of all animals on the farm. It was without any thought or hesitation that they had to be the leaders of the other animals on the farm, who were tasked with the work of teaching and organizing other animals on the farm. In the TT however, the word naturally has been omitted leading to an avertable loss. By using the word *iliwaangukia* alone, it means it was by luck that the pigs got the job of educating and organizing the other animals, hence decreasing the meaning of the sentence. According to Dickens et al (2017), omission causes a loss in translation since ST segments are left out in the TT. The avertable meaning loss in the extract above occurs because of the insufficient skill of the translator to find the proper and accurate equivalence of the word naturally in the TL.

2. SL: A stirring and a fluttering (pg1)

TL Translation: *ghasia za ghafla* (loss)-Translation using a general word (pg1)

The translator uses a general word in translating the source language (SL) into the target language (TL). In the TL, the translator does not give an equivalent term for the words stirring and fluttering but uses a superordinate for the two terms hence leading to a meaning loss. In the English oxford dictionary, a stirring is an initial sign of activity, movement or emotion while a fluttering is moving restlessly or uncertainly. In Kiswahili however, *ghafla* means suddenly and *ghasia* means riot, hence translating to **sudden riots**. This is a meaning loss since in the SL, there was no riot but just some movements of restlessness which occurred in the farm buildings after getting news about the meeting that was to be held in the barn that night. A TL reader may think that after getting this news, the animals started rioting which is not the case. According to Wijayanti et al (2014), translation by a more general word occurs due to the lack of a similar term in the target language, but the translated item is likely to have the same meaning on the target readers. The avertable meaning loss in the above extract implies that the translator can use another proper translation procedure in the text.

3. SL: He was still a majestic looking pig (pg1)

TL Translation: *alikua bado nguruwe mwenye maungo yasiyochakaa* (loss)-Translation using a more neutral or less expressive word. (pg1)



In the SL, old major was an old white boar who was highly regarded on the farm. Despite being old, he still looked majestic. Majestic in the sense that he still looked young and radiant, and full of energy. This could literally have been translated as *alikuwa nguruwe aliyeng'aa*. However, the TL translator translated the word majestic as *mwenye maungo yasiyochakaa*, to mean that his physic did not fade. Avertable meaning gets lost when the whole word majestic, whose meaning is prominent, gets reduced to physic not fading, and not stating how good the boar still looked at that old age.

4. SL: All through that summer the **work on the farm went like clockwork** (pg20)

TL Translation: *kazi iliendelea bila kusimama* (gain)-Translation by paraphrase using related words. (pg23)

The SL simile work on the farm went like clockwork, does not have an equivalent in the TL. The literal translation would have been *kazi shambani iliendelea kama saa*, but this does not make any sense in the target language. The translator constructs a more understandable meaning by giving more additional words rather than translating it literally. The translation process above belongs to meaning gain meaning in translation process because the translator provides detailed explanations for the simile in order to make it more understandable to the TR.

5. SL: **She took to her heels and galloped away** (pg33)

TL Translation: *alikimbia kuelekea kondeni* (loss)-Translation by cultural substitution. (pg37)

According to Pedersen (2007), cultural substitution involves removing a reference from the source language and replacing it with one from the target language. Taking to your heels in English means running away quickly. In the SL, the idiom has been used to show how fast Mollie ran just to avoid being questioned. The idiom however does not have an equivalent in the TL. Galloping also doesn't have an equivalent in the TL. The TT only mentioned that Mollie ran towards the farm, without mentioning how fast she ran, thus leading to a meaning loss.

6. SL: This work was **strictly voluntary**, but any animal who absented himself from it would have his rations reduced by half (pg. 44)

TL Translation: *kazi hizi zilikua za hiari, lakini vile vile zilikuwa za lazima. Mnyama yeyote aliyekosa kuzitimiza, posho yake ingepunguzwa Kwa nusu.* (Loss)-Translation by using paraphrase with unrelated words. (pg. 48)

There was a lot of work to be done on the farm. In the SL, this work was strictly voluntary. Animals did not have to work. There is however a condition, that any animal who did not participate in working would not eat the same rations of food as the rest, his would be reduced by a half. The ST emphasizes on the word voluntary, to show the rights that the animals had on the farm. In the TL however, the translator gives two meanings to the word voluntary, one of which is not in the SL. That the work was voluntary but also compulsory. Due to the fact that the animals who did not work would have their rations reduced by half, the work is thought to be more of compulsory than voluntary, which deviates from the meaning in the ST. The avertable meaning loss of the translation process indicates that the translator added more information than was actually needed in the translation.

7. SL: Always ate from the **crown Derby dinner service** which had been in the glass cupboard in the drawing room. (pg. 67)

TL Translation: *alilia katika sahani zenye tunu zilizotunzwa kabatini katika sebule.* (Loss)-translation by using, cultural substitution (pg. 72)

Crown Derby dinner service are expensive plates often made from ceramic, porcelain and gold. They belonged to the human being who was chased from the farm during the animal rebellion. The plates were so precious and were therefore stored in a glass cupboard. This item is however not familiar in the TL. The TT translates the word as *sahani zenye tunu*, a concept more familiar to the reader. It only explains that the plates are precious without stating just how precious they are. This inevitable meaning loss is due to the fact that the SL culture word lacks an equivalent TL word.

8. SL: Whymper had bought himself a **dogcart** (pg. 94)

TL Translation: *Msuluhishi alijinunulia gari lililovutwa na mbwa* (gain)translation by paraphrase using a related word (pg. 99)

Whymper was a human being who use to do business with the animals on the *Animal Farm*. He had a dogcart. In the TL, the word dogcart does not have an equivalent. The translator solves this problem by providing a meaning of the SL word in the TL, that a dogcart is a vehicle that is usually pushed by a dog. This TL meaning gain provides an explanation in the translation process in order to convey the message in a more understandable way to the readers. According to Baker (2011), translation by paraphrase is the commonest translation method, especially when an equivalent item cannot be found.

9. SL: **A larger proportion of their young ones** survived infancy (pg. 82)

TL Translation: *vifo vya watoto vilipungua* (loss)-Translation by omission. (pg. 87)

Due to the increase in food and better management of the farm by the animals themselves, the ST states that many children now survived infancy unlike before. However, the phrase a larger proportion is omitted in the TT, which has simply been translated as the death of children. It does not state just how many these children were, unlike before. This avertable meaning loss is due to the translator's inability to use a better translation strategy to bring out the comparison between now and then, and his inability to show the number of children who had survived infancy.

10. SL: On some suitable pretext Whymper was **led through the store shed and allowed to catch a glimpse of the bins** (pg55)

TL Translation: *Bwana Msuluhishi alichezwa shere* (loss)-translation by omission. (pg59)

The speaker in the TL omits a whole sentence, after the words 'suitable pretext' which provides more information about the pretext itself. The translator did not find the related words equivalent to the TL. He therefore only translates the first part of the sentence to show that Whymper was derided, without stating exactly how. The ignorance of translating the whole sentence belongs to avertable meaning loss because one cannot interpret the whole meaning of the sentence.

Complete similarities are not easy to achieve in a translation process. This is because the two languages are very different at the various linguistic levels which include cultural levels, stylistic levels, textual, semantic, syntactic, morphological and phonological levels. The translation of *Animal Farm* to *Shamba La Wanyama* has several linguistic, semantic and cultural levels which engender inevitable and avertable losses with very serious consequences. Inevitable losses occur because of the divergent system of the two languages regardless of the skill and competence of the translators who cannot establish equivalence and therefore resorts to compensatory strategies. Avertable loss is attributed to translator's failure to find the appropriate equivalence. (As-Safi 2006).

Meanwhile, gain meaning aims to provide detailed explanation of the entire meaning from the ST into the TT. McGuire (1980) describes gain as the process where the source language text in the translation process is enriched. Gain therefore has the ability of making a language change for the better

and adapt to meet the speaker's needs.

Contextual Meaning loss and meaning gain is attributed to the different cultures of the ST and the TT. According to Davies (2003) the greater the cultural differences the higher the translation skills that will be applied by the translator in order to construct an acceptable translation work in both sides. The translators are therefore suggested to understand the customs and other cultural aspects which bound up with the distinctions of the two different languages. The Relevance theory by Sperber & Wilson (1986) states that if an intention to communicate exists; it is due to the fact that the speaker intends to modify the hearer's cognitive environment. Translators can therefore modify the TT in order for it to be relevant to the reader using different translation strategies.

A translated text consists of items that have been well translated from the original text. By considering the TR, the translator has to come up with ways in which the TT will be more relevant to the readers. However, the problem of non-equivalence can easily lead to meaning loss and meaning gain. The translator has to choose the best strategy in the translation to ensure that relevance is achieved. Sperber & Wilson (1986) say that the reason the presumption of optimal relevance makes it reasonable for interpretation to follow a least effort path is that relevance varies inversely with effort. Translators therefore need important tools in the process of translation.

### **Conclusion**

According to the study, there were gains and losses in meaning when *Animal Farm* was translated into *Shamba La Wanyama*. According to the statistics and literature study, the translation technique the translator employs while translating the non-equivalent words and phrases might result in meaning being lost or gained. The following translation strategies resulted in loss: translation by omission, translation using a more general word, translation using a more neutral or less expressive word, translation by cultural substitution, and translation by paraphrasing using unrelated words. However, only one strategy resulted in gain: translation by paraphrasing using a related word. In the study, it was discovered that loss predominated over gain, indicating that loss was mostly achieved through translation when paraphrasing using unrelated terms. According to Baker (2011), this technique is utilized when an item's meaning in the source language is complicated in the target language.



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