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3 Postcolonial Literature Retranslated into Spanish: The Case of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

ABSTRACT

Although the translation of African postcolonial literature into Spanish is not a very widespread phenomenon, there are some examples of literary works that have been translated several times. This is the case of *Things Fall Apart* (1958), the first novel by the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe. The first translation dates from 1966, followed by three retranslations published in 1986, 1997 and 2010. In this chapter, we will analyse on the one hand how the different translations represent the image of Nigerian reality, which Achebe shows in *Things Fall Apart*. Therefore, we will focus especially on the translation of fictive orality and elements of Nigerian culture. On the other hand, we will analyse how African literature is addressed in Spain and how through the study of the translations of this book we can reach some conclusions about the reception of African postcolonial literature in Spain.

Introduction

Addressing Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as the main representative of African literature translated into Spanish summarizes the contemporary panorama of the translation of African literature in Spain. Only a few African authors are translated into Spanish, mostly because of specific commercial agendas and decisions related to the publishing market. Therefore, Spanish readers have few choices to access African literature, with the exception of well-known African authors (mainly those who have received international literary awards). Thus, encountering four different

values, and so forth, [...] for which there are no close counterparts in the receptor culture' (Tymoczko, 1999a: 165) are crucial elements used as a means of identity expression. Those kinds of culture elements 'are not only important, they are central, emblematic of the culture's independent and autonomous views of the world, particularly views of the world promoted by the cultural framework in the precolonial period' (ibid.).

In this chapter, we analyse Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) according to both contextual and textual aspects. As an example of postcolonial translation, we will first offer a brief overview of African authors who write in English and have been translated into Spanish, which shows the importance of Achebe's retranlations of *Things Fall Apart* in the current Spanish translation panorama of African postcolonial literature written in English. Then, we will focus specifically on the analysis of *Things Fall Apart*.

Things Fall Apart in context: The current situation of African postcolonial literature in English translated in Spain

The following list is the result of research into the database of the National Library of Spain, where all books published in Spanish and Spanish co-official languages are supposed to be registered.¹ As the study was conducted from January until June 2015, our first intention was to find out how many relevant African English-writing authors were translated into Spanish in the last decade 2004–2014. Then, in the second stage, we extended the period searching for authors translated before 2004 because of the importance of some novels within the field of African postcolonial literature in English. These results could enable us to understand choices regarding the translation of African English-writing into Spanish and the choices made by publishing houses in this country.

¹ In our research project we found out that not all books in Spanish and co-official languages are registered in the National Library of Spain. This is not the case of the postcolonial authors studied in this chapter.

Table 3.1: Published translations of African English-writing into Spanish

Authors	Published translations until 2004 ²	Published translations 2004–2014 ³
Abdulrazak Gurnah	3	0
Ama Ata Aidoo	0	1 SPA
Amos Tutuola	3	2 (1 SPA)
Athol Fugard	2	3 (0 SPA)
Ben Okri	2	4 SPA
Bessie Head	1	0
Buchi Emecheta	2	2 SPA
César Mba	0	1 SPA
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie	0	7 SPA
Chinua Achebe	6	11 (5 SPA)
Christopher Okigbo	0	0
Emma Mashinini	0	0
J. M. Coetzee	30	69 (56 SPA)
Jamal Mahjoub	1	2 SPA
John Kani	0	0
Lauretta Ngcobo	0	0
M. G. Vassanji	0	3 (2 SPA)
Mbudelo Mzamane	0	0
Nadine Gordimer	45	23 (13 SPA)
Ngugi wa Thiong'o	2	7 (2 SPA)
Niyi Osundare	0	0
Okot p'Bitek	0	1 SPA
Sefi Atta	0	1 SPA
Tsitsi Dangarembga	1	1 SPA
Winston Ntshona	0	0
Wole Soyinka	7	8 (5 SPA)
Zoe Wicombe	0	0

- 2 The results in this column show the results of the number of literary works translated into Spanish languages (including co-official languages).
- 3 The results in this column show the number of literary works newly translated into Spanish and co-official languages (Catalan, Galician and Basque) in the last decade (2004–2014), specifying the number of books translated into Spanish (SPA) in brackets.

If we focus on the results until 2004, we can see that only four authors are frequently translated: Gordimer (45), Coetzee (30), Soyinka (7) and Achebe (6). Gordimer, Coetzee and Soyinka have been awarded the Nobel Prize, as well as the Booker Prize. Thus, it can be inferred that Spanish publishing policies mainly seem to favour authors that have received literary recognition and are therefore relevant to the international community. However, it is significant that Ben Okri had only had two of his books translated into Spanish by 2004, although he received the Booker Prize in 1991.

If we focus on the books translated in the 2004–2014 decade, we can see that the trend for publishing authors that have received literary prizes continues, as the most translated authors are still Coetzee, Gordimer and Soyinka. Achebe appears with five new published books in Spanish, of which four are new translations and one (*Todo se derrumba*) is a republished version of a former translation. We can also see that Ben Okri has been translated into Spanish four times and that many authors who had never been translated before 2004 are now beginning to gain attention from publishers (e.g. Ama Ata Aidoo or Okot p'Bitek). One highly representative case is that of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who has received international recognition with seven translations into different Spanish co-official languages within this last decade. However, the only author who has the same book retranslated four times into Spanish language is Chinua Achebe.

External aspects: The case of Chinua Achebe in the Spanish translation panorama

As can be observed in the aforementioned list of publishing frequency Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is representative of the reception of African postcolonial literature because this novel has been translated several times into Spanish. Whereas before 2004, his only translated novel in Spain wa

Things Fall Apart, in the last decade, it has been published again, together with four other novels at the same publishing house DeBolsillo. These titles are *Me alegraría de otra muerte* (2010), *La flecha del dios* (2010), *Termiteros de la Sabana* (2010), and *Un hombre del pueblo* (2010). In order to analyse the specific context of the translations of Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* into Spanish in the following section, the focus of analysis is based on the socio-historical context of the first translation and the commercial factors of its retranslations.

Socio-historical context of Things Fall Apart in Spain

The first translation into Spanish from *Things Fall Apart* dates from 1966, which was still a period of publishing censorship in Spain. The period of censorship during the regime of Franco began with a special order dated 29 April 1938, which affected not only original texts but also translations. Publishing houses were forced to present complete texts to the administrative organism created especially for censorship. All texts were examined to determine whether they attacked morality, the Spanish church or Francisco Franco's regime and its members. In addition to these aspects, the censor used to inform about the content of the book by summarizing it in a few lines. Curiously, in this same year of 1966, the publishing date of the first translation of *Things Fall Apart*, a new print and press law appeared which conferred a more flexible attitude regarding publishing rules. From this period onwards, the examination of the texts that were going to be published was voluntary. However, such flexibility caused a contradictory reaction among authors and publishers as it was the Ministry of Information and Tourism who ultimately decided to publish or to forbid the circulation of all types of written texts. In order to avoid subsequent prohibitions, publishers, authors (and probably translators on some occasions) manipulated parts of the texts in order to guarantee the diffusion of a literary work (Pajares Infante, 2007).

The Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture still holds the censorship record of *Things Fall Apart* (*Un mundo se aleja*) at the *Archivo*

General de la Administración under the file number 4804-66.⁴ This document, which we translate below, specifies among other questions the publishing house (Círculo de Lectores) and a print run of 3,000 copies, as well as the final decision to publish the book without any changes or restrictions:

Does it attack dogma? NO
 Does it attack morality? NO
 Does it attack the Church or its Ministers? NO
 Does it attack the Regime and its Institutions? NO
 Does it attack those who work with have worked with the Regime or its Institutions?
 NO
 Do the censored passages represent the total content of the work?

Report and other observations:

This is a novel that describes the tribal habits of a black village, apparently in Nigeria, just before the beginning of the period of English [sic] colonization: the conflict that occurs is due to the total clash between indigenous beliefs and those which are introduced little by little by the first Christian missionaries, and the novel ends with the suicide of the main character who hangs himself convinced that his tribe will not fight to free itself of those who want to change it and thus destroy the prestige of the clan.

Publication of the novel can be authorized without any problem.

Nevertheless, when comparing the source text (ST) and the first published translation (TT1) searching for possible omissions or changes, we find that there are only a few instances of missing or softened information, most of which are in the second part of the book after white missionaries had arrived at the village. In the following table, we indicate the relevant fragments that have been omitted or softened in the TT1 (1966) translation (underlined in the original).

4 The *Archivo General de la Administración* [The General Administration Archive], which is located near Madrid in Alcalá de Henares, includes all written, graphic, radio and cinema documentation from the censorship period in Spain.

Table 3.2: Omissions in TT1 (1966)

ST: <i>Things Fall Apart</i>	TT1 (1966): <i>Un mundo se aleja</i>	TT2 (2010): <i>Todo se desmorona</i>
[Talking about God as only one god] 'I did not say He had a wife,' said the interpreter, somewhat lamely. 'Your buttocks said he had a son,' said the joker. 'So he must have a wife and all of them must have buttocks.' The missionary ignored him and went on to talk about the Holy Trinity. (107-108)	-Yo no dije que Él tuviese una esposa -repuso el intérprete, un poco turbado. El misionero se puso a hablarles de la Santísima Trinidad. (150)	-Yo no dije que Él tuviera esposa -dijo el intérprete un poco vacilante. -Tu trasero ha dicho que tenía un hijo -dijo el bromista-. Así que tiene que tener una esposa y tienen que tener todos ellos trasero. El misionero no le hizo caso y pasó a hablar de la Santísima Trinidad. (148)
[...] and his children the while praying to the white man's god. If such a thing were ever to happen, he, Okonkwo, would wipe them off the face of the earth. Okonko was popularly called 'Roaring Flame'. (112)	[...] mientras sus hijos oraban ante el Dios del hombre blanco. Los del poblado daban a Okonkwo el apodo de «Llama rugiente». (157)	[...] mientras sus hijos rezaban al dios del hombre blanco. Si ocurría tal cosa alguna vez, él, Okonkwo, los barrería de la faz de la tierra. A Okonkwo se le conocía popularmente como «Llama Crepitante». (154)
'Go and burn your mothers' genitals,' said one of the priests. (114)	-Id y quemad a vuestras madres -replicó uno de los sacerdotes. (158)	-Id a quemar los genitales de vuestra madre -les dijo uno de los sacerdotes. (156)
He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart. (129)	Ha interpuesto un cuchillo entre los lazos que nos unían y nosotros hemos sido puestos al margen. (177)	Ha cortado las cosas que nos mantenían unidos y nos hemos desmoronado. (176)

Due to the fact that the parts referring to sexuality could be understood as 'attacking morality' the omissions lead us to conclude that they are a product of self-censorship linked to the specific socio-historical circumstances of

the period. It was a common practice during Franco's regime that authors, publishers or even translators omitted or changed parts of the source text, not only in the more restrictive period but also in the later more flexible period of censorship, as mentioned above. The censor's report does not mention any need for change or omission in this first version of *Things Fall Apart*. Omissions may therefore be due to the so-called self-censorship by translators, editors or publishers or all of them. As we can see in the table above, these fragments appear in the last published version (2010).

Commercial aspects in the retranslation of Things Fall Apart

After the first translation we can find two new translations published before 2004: *Todo se derrumba* (1986) and *Todo se desmorona* (1997), both from different publishers and different translators. The last version of the novel appears in the last decade (2010), together with a greater number of Achebe's books translated into Spanish. It is important to remember that in 2007 Achebe was awarded the Man Booker International Prize,⁵ which apparently supports the original idea that internationally awarded African authors are translated into Spanish. In the following table, we summarize the dates, titles and translators of the novel:

Table 3.3: *Things Fall Apart* retranslations into Spanish

Year	Title	Translator
1966	<i>Un mundo se aleja</i>	Jorge Sarrió
1986	<i>Todo se derrumba</i>	Fernando Santos
1997	<i>Todo se desmorona</i>	J. M. Álvarez Flórez
2010	<i>Todo se desmorona</i>	J. M. Álvarez Flórez

⁵ The *Man Booker International Prize* is a biennial prize awarded to a living author who has published fiction either originally in English or whose work is generally available in translation in the English language.

In order to receive more information about publishing policies and the motivation for the retranslation or the republishing of certain African literary works, on 18 May 2015 we conducted an email interview with the publisher, María Casas, the current literary director of DeBolsillo (part of the publishing group Penguin Random House Spain) and the editor of the last republished translation.

The translated text chosen to be republished was the one by J. M. Álvarez Flórez, the person responsible for the 1997 retranslation. When we asked Casas about the decision to use a former version instead of a new translation, she answered that the main reason had been its quality, but it was also chosen because using a previous translation meant a reduction of final costs. Answering our question about the motives that led them to decide to republish *Things Fall Apart*, she answered that it was an editorial decision, as they consider Achebe to be the father of African literature and one of the great African authors. According to her opinion, Achebe is not difficult to understand for Spanish readers, and this was the reason that they decided to translate four more books by Achebe.

From now on, we will focus on the last published version, and we will not take into account the first version from 1997.⁶ In addition to being the last published version, it has undergone a revision process that has improved the final product. Thus, we find minor changes mainly in typography regarding Igbo words. While in the version published in 1997 Igbo words appear without any typographic marking and are adapted to Spanish (the pluralization of words, for example), in the last version Igbo words appear in italics, as they appear in the original and without adapting them to plural forms. Moreover, in the 1997 version there are some paragraphs missing that appear in the later version.

María Sofía López, an academic expert on Achebe and the translator of the rest of his books, states in her interview with Rodríguez Murphy (2014) that many Spanish scholars claim that Spanish readers have no interest in African literature. Sofía López also argues that the literature that attracts the interest of Spanish publishing houses is that which has

6 See Martín Matas (2006) for a more in-depth analysis of the 1997 translation.

its prestige consolidated by the Anglo-American market through prizes, and thus becomes part of what can be called 'World African Literature' (e.g. Achebe or Adichie).

Internal aspects of *Things Fall Apart* and its translations into Spanish

As mentioned before, through a comparative analysis of different translation strategies we can identify changes in the different versions that can affect the reception of the work or author during the time the translation is published. An analysis of the first and last translations with a time gap of forty-four years between them as well as the consideration of their specific socio-historical backgrounds can provide us with some clues about differences in the perception of this novel.

The title(s)

One of the first differences between the two translations lies in the titles. The original title *Things Fall Apart* is derived from Yeats's poem *The Second Coming*. The poem was first written in 1919, but there are numerous versions published and it is categorized as one of the most anthologized poems in English language (Harmon, 1998). According to Sallah and Okonjo-Iweala (2003: 106), 'Yeats adopted the Christian view of the world to his own, using the "Second Coming" to signify the chaotic and cataclysmic changes of the pre- and post-World War II era'. Achebe (2003: 86) states that the line 'just seemed to me a very dramatic way of summarizing what in my conception was the theme of that book'. The poem is included, as in the source text, in both translations (1966 and 2010) but the title differs consistently. In the 1966 translation we can find the original English poem and its translation into Spanish, whereas in the 2010 translation only the Spanish version appears. Nonetheless, the

phrase extracted from the poem and which forms the title of the novel is different in the two translations:

Table 3.4: Translation of Yeats's poem included in *Things Fall Apart*

ST: <i>Things Fall Apart</i>	
Turning and turning in the widening gyre The falcon cannot hear the falconer; Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. W. B. Yeats, 'The Second Coming'	
TT1 (1966): <i>Un mundo se aleja</i>	TT2 (2010): <i>Todo se desmorona</i>
Turning and turning in the widening gyre The falcon cannot hear the falconer; Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.	
<i>Girando y girando en círculos más amplios, El halcón no oye al halconero; Un mundo se aleja; el núcleo no puede resistir; La anarquía se esparce por el orbe.</i> W. B. Yeats 'The Second Coming'	<i>Dando vueltas y vueltas en su giro creciente El halcón no puede oír al halconero; Todo se desmorona; el centro no resiste; Se desata en el mundo la absoluta anarquía.</i> W. B. Yeats, 'La segunda venida'

The translation of 'things fall apart' into *todo se desmorona* [everything crumbles away] in the 2010 edition is the translation we can find in different published translations of the poem, mostly included in anthologies or bilingual editions dated from the 1980s onwards. The translation into *un mundo se aleja* [a world moves away] has not been located. It can therefore be supposed that the translator of this first version translated the poem by himself. Nevertheless, the differences in the title are relevant with regard to the first impression of the novel, as *un mundo se aleja* does not have the strong apocalyptic implications that *todo se desmorona* conveys. The first translation, through the choice of its title and other elements that we will see in the next section 'softens' the chaotic message that the book portrays.

Identity through text and language

As mentioned before, translation has been defined as powerful in the sense that it has to represent and recreate not only textual or aesthetic literary styles but also cultural practices and elements including values, ideas, ideals and aspects of identity that can be different from the target culture. In particular, studying retranslations of the same literary work enables us 'to realize that translating can't be viewed as a simple act of communication because it creates values in social formations at specific historical moments, and these values redefine the foreign text and culture moment to moment' (Venuti, 2004: 36).

Looking at postcolonial literature, the representation of cultural elements is generally used to expose the problem of identity (loss of identity on the personal and collective level, self-discovery through memory and narration of traditional myths, legends, tribal wisdom and beliefs, etc., conflict between personal and collective identity and imposition through colonization, etc.). This is also the case of *Things Fall Apart*. The loss of the tribe's identity is personalized in the thinking, experiences and crisis of its main figure Okonkwo. Achebe (1965: 3) uses the novel in order 'to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement'. He feels responsible for educating and regenerating his own native community because he wants to show them that 'their past – with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them' (ibid.: 4). Aiming originally at an African public, Achebe transposes his cultural past in *Things Fall Apart* through the invention of his own personal literary style. Using different linguistic and discursive devices, he transfers concepts and the mentality of a past culture at the same time as he evokes the diction of a past discourse in the Igbo language. Tymoczko (1999a: 164) mentions Chinua Achebe as a writer who encodes and represents 'variant cultural practices and perspectives in literary domains' and emphasizes the difficulties for a translator who 'unlike a writer, is additionally constrained in the process of transposing cultural structures by the givens of a particular source text' (ibid.: 165).

PRIMARY ORALITY AND IDENTITY

The following table includes the beginning of *Things Fall Apart* and its TT1 and TT2 translations into Spanish.

Table 3.5: Beginning of *Things Fall Apart* in ST, TT1 (1966) and TT2 (2010)

ST	
<p>Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights. (3)</p>	
TT1 (1966)	TT2 (2010)
<p>Okonkwo era bien conocido en los nueve poblados y aun fuera de ellos. Su fama descansaba en sólidos méritos personales. Siendo un muchacho de dieciocho años, había dado gloria a su pueblo derribando a Amalinze el Gato. Amalinze era un gran luchador imbatido durante siete años, desde Umuofia a Mbaino. Le llamaban el Gato porque su espalda nunca había tocado el suelo. Tal era el hombre que Okonkwo había derribado en un combate que los viejos coincidían en considerar como el más feroz, después del librado por el fundador de su ciudad con un espíritu de la selva durante siete días y siete noches. (9)</p>	<p>Okonkwo era muy conocido en las nueve aldeas e incluso más allá. Su fama se apoyaba en sólidos triunfos personales. Cuando tenía dieciocho años había honrado a su aldea derribando a Amalinze el Gato. Amalinze fue un gran luchador que se mantuvo siete años invicto, desde Umuofia hasta Mbaino. Le llamaban «el Gato» porque nunca tocaba el suelo con la espalda. Okonkwo había derribado precisamente a aquel hombre en un combate que todos los ancianos decían que había sido uno de los más encarnizados desde que el fundador de su poblado había luchado con un espíritu del bosque durante siete días y siete noches. (21)</p>

Analysing the diction of the discourse, we can find devices that remind us of primary orality, ‘the orality of cultures untouched by literacy’ (Ong, 2002: 5). The syntactic structure of primary oral discourse is defined by

Ong (ibid.: 36–39) as ‘additive rather than subordinative’, ‘aggregative rather than analytic’ and ‘redundant’ or ‘copious’. It is really remarkable that all those structures are used in this (short) opening of the novel. Primary oral discourses have an additive structure because of the succession of short, simple sentences or sentences combined with the connector ‘and’ (parataxis), while subordinating structures (hypotaxis) are less common. By ‘aggregative structures’, Ong (ibid.: 38) means that ‘elements of orally based thought and expression’ tend to be characterized by ‘parallel terms or phrases or clauses, epithets’ as oral discourse prefers ‘not the soldier, but the brave soldier; not the princess, but the beautiful princess’. Phrases like ‘Amalinze the Cat’, ‘the great wrestler’, ‘from Umuofia to Mbaino’ belong to this kind of aggregative structure. ‘Since redundancy characterizes oral thought and speech, it is in a profound sense more natural to thought and speech than sparse linearity. Sparsely linear or analytic thought and speech are artificial creations, structured by the technology of writing’ (ibid.: 39). This kind of redundancy is represented in the following locutions: ‘he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. [...] It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight’. The Nigerian precolonial Igbo culture is thereby not only subject of the novel but it is also represented through its narrative discourse. Ong (ibid.: 35) mentions Achebe’s novel *No Longer at Ease* (1961) as directly drawn from ‘Ibo oral tradition in West Africa’,⁷ which provides:

abundant instances of thought patterns of orally educated characters who move in these oral, mnemonically tooled grooves, as the speakers reflect, with high intelligence and sophistication, on the situations in which they find themselves involved.

The analysis of the 1996 and 2010 translations of *Things Fall Apart* shows that the second translation uses a much more literate diction than the first one. The performative and personalized style, such as the sentence structure commented above is transferred into more literary expressions.

‘As a young man of eighteen’ is translated into *Cuando tenía dieciocho años* [when (he) was eighteen years old] using a subordinate clause and

7 The term ‘ibo’ used by Ong is the archaic name of the Nigerian culture and language.

omitting the animated emphasis on man, whereas the first translation maintains the original structure in Spanish (*Siendo un muchacho de dieciocho años*). According to Havelock (1986: 76), in oral cultures the narration is always structured around action, and there have to be agents acting, persons or personified animals or forces. In writing cultures, even orally pronounced formula like 'Honesty is the best policy' would be expressed in oral cultures as 'An honest man always prospers' (ibid.). In *Things Fall Apart*, not only are single formulaic expressions written in this animated style focusing on action and on actors, but the whole literary discourse of the novel is created in this special manner, evoking primary oral speech.

The same occurs with 'It was this man that Okonkwo threw'. Whereas the first translator tries to maintain the original diction of the sentence that could sound somewhat contrived for more cultivated readers, transposing it into *Tal era el hombre que Okonkwo había derribado* [Such was the man that Okonkwo had knocked down], the last translator uses a sentence structure adapting it to a more literate style. He uses the standard word order subject, verb, object and transforms the structure 'it was this man that' into an adverbial structure *Okonkwo había derribado precisamente a aquel hombre* [Okonkwo had thrown precisely this man].

Another important aspect is the respect for the old men of the tribe. In oral cultures, wisdom and historical memory, religion and ideals are transferred through the older generation and through story-telling; two elements that are present in the novel *Things Fall Apart*: 'the old men' and 'story-telling' appear as two leitmotifs throughout the novel, as a subject within the narration and through the diction itself of the discourse diction. The old men are consulted if there is a conflict. Old men spread wisdom and knowledge in ritual meetings, women tell stories to their children in order to instruct them and children are asked to repeat the stories again and again. The stories belong to their cultural heritage and are considered to be something precious:

Knowledge is hard to come by and precious and society regards highly those wise old men and women who specialize in conserving it, who know and can tell the stories of the days of old. By storing knowledge outside the mind, writing and, even more, print down grade the figures of the wise old man and the wise old woman, repeaters of the past, in favour of younger discoverers of something new. (Ong, 2002: 41)

However, at the very beginning of *Things Fall Apart* the 'old men' are mentioned, as shown in the quotation above. The old men's agreement that Amalinze the Cat has been the strongest fighter during the last time ('which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest') turns the affirmation into truth. Looking at the two translations, both may reflect the respect for older generations. Nevertheless, the translation of 'old men' considering them an essential group in the Igbo culture differs in the two versions. In the first translation 'old men' is translated as *los viejos* [the old (men)] associating them with an institution or authority whereas in the last translation we find *todos los ancianos* [all the old men], is referring to a defined group of old people.

One could argue that the 2010 republished translation is more readable for a modern literate reader. Without comparing the translation with the original, this Spanish version is able to convey the story, the precolonial and colonial situation and the dilemma of Okonkwo. The reader is immersed in an unknown world and is able to recognize the problem of colonization on an individual and a collective level. However, by literalizing the diction of the discourse it loses, on the one hand, some parts of Achebe's personal style and, on the other, parts of the author's main intention. That is to say, going back to the past, transmitting precolonial thinking, recalling old traditions in order to find and respect the original culture through a fictionalized oral primary discourse in the Igbo language by means of the English written language.

TRANSLATING PROVERBS

In addition to the particular diction, primary orality is characterized by the use of proverbs and formulae. Proverbs are embedded in prime-order level translation, the level where 'the message is derived from a language event through a combination of formal primitive meanings with the components of the simple situation' (Adejare, 1998: 23). Proverbs become undecoded metaphors that are used in English, 'appropriated from the mother tongue', serving as a translation that represents 'linguistic and cultural differences between the medium and the experience' (ibid.: 27).

The novel *Things Fall Apart* represents in formulaic sayings and proverbs the law inherited in its culture. According to Ong (2002: 35) this is one

of the characteristics in oral cultures. Igbo proverbs transposed into English are used to evoke in the reader this kind of formulaic speech in order to 'preserve the residual glory of Igbo oratory' (Zabus, 1996: 32). Formulaic expressions function as wholes, signalling knowledge that is already shared. In oral tradition, it is not assumed that the expressions contain meaning in themselves, in a way that can be analysed. Rather, words are a convenient tool to signal already shared social meaning (Tannen, 1993: 1–2). As Achebe says in his interview with Ogbaa (1980: 67):

A proverb is both a functional means of communication and also a very elegant and artistic performance itself. I think that proverbs are both utilitarian and little vignettes of art. So when I use these forms in my novels, they both serve a utilitarian purpose, which is to reenact the life of the people that I am describing, and also delight through elegance and aptness of imagery.

In *Things Fall Apart*, proverbs or formulaic expressions appear throughout the novel. In the original text, we identified 29 different proverbs, some of which are repeated several times. The proverbs are related to cultural aspects inherited in the Igbo society. They refer to the respect for the older generation, to personal achievements, to loyalty to the clan and the family or to animal behaviour (Martín Matas, 2006: 75–81).

Analysing the proverbs, we can observe that their characteristics follow the same rules observed in the fictionalized diction of the primary oral discourse. Proverbs appear in *Things Fall Apart* in ritual meetings, in conversations between people of different ages and are generally used to instruct or to transfer traditional wisdom. They are usually repeated because redundancy as a mnemotechnic device is necessary in oral cultures. The formalized style in rituals can be compared with some kind of primary oral 'literature' because it differs from spontaneous oral utterances:

Rituals [...] are performed and listened to over and over again. As a result they contain language that has been formalized and polished, even over many centuries, contrasting with the spontaneity and roughness of conversation. We might then expect to find in ritual language something like the integration of written language, as opposed to the fragmentation of spoken. (Chafe, 1993: 49–50)

The following proverb appears twice, firstly in indirect speech and secondly in direct speech.

Table 3.6: Proverbs (I)

ST	TT ₁ (1966)	TT ₂ (2010)
Eneke the bird says that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching (17)	Eneke, el pájaro, dice que, desde que los hombres aprendieron a disparar sin errar el tiro, él aprendió a volar sin posarse en las ramas (28)	El pájaro Eneke dice que, del mismo modo que los hombres han aprendido a disparar sin errar nunca el tiro, él ha aprendido a volar sin posarse (38)
Men have learnt to shoot out without missing their mark and I have learnt to fly without perching on a twig (148)	Los hombres han aprendido a disparar sin errar el tiro y yo he aprendido a volar sin posarme en las ramas (204)	Los hombres han aprendido a tirar sin fallar nunca y yo he aprendido a volar sin posarme en las ramas (199)

The animated style mentioned above as a characteristic of primary orality is also present in the proverbs. Animals speak and argue. They are attributed with wisdom and their sayings are considered to be the truth. The difference between the two quotations in the original text is merely the change into direct speech. As a proverb with its fixed wording, all other expressions are identical. In the first translation, the translator seems to be aware of the necessity of redundancy and uses the same translation only changing the perspective. The last translation, however, follows a more literate style. The adverb 'since' is transformed into the more formal expression *del mismo modo que* [in the same way as]. In order to avoid any repetition, the second proverb is translated using other expressions normally found in written language. Eneke, the bird, says that *los hombres han aprendido a disparar sin errar nunca el tiro* [men have learnt to shoot without missing], whereas the indirect version states that *los hombres han aprendido a tirar sin fallar nunca* [men have learnt to shoot without ever missing].

In general, the first translator uses a more literal translation method and maintains the peculiar diction of the original, whereas the last translation changes the diction into a written style. These different strategies can also be seen in the next proverb.

Table 3.7: Proverbs (II)

ST	TT1 (1966)	TT2 (2010)
I have learnt that a man who makes trouble for others is also making it for himself (71)	He aprendido que el daño que se hace a los demás se lo hace uno a sí mismo (101)	He aprendido que el que perjudica a los demás se perjudica también a sí mismo (106)

In TT1 (1996), ‘who makes trouble’ is translated more colloquially into *el que hace daño* [he who damages], whereas TT2 (2010) has a more sophisticated verb *el que perjudica* [he who harms]. The same tendency can be appreciated in other proverbs such as in the following.

Table 3.8: Proverbs (III)

ST	TT1 (1966)	TT2 (2010)
When mother-cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth (51)	Cuando la vaca come hierba sus pequeños le observan la boca (75)	Cuando la vaca come hierba los terneros no apartan la vista de su boca (82)

In the first version ‘its young ones watch its mouth’ is translated literally into *sus pequeños le observan la boca* whereas the last translator transforms the sentences into *los terneros no apartan la vista de su boca* [the calves don’t avert their eyes from her mouth] using a more formal style. A much freer translation style can also be seen in the next example. In the last translation, the indirect speech is transformed into direct speech.

Table 3.9: Proverbs (IV)

ST	TT1 (1966)	TT2 (2010)
The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did (17)	El lagarto, al saltar desde el alto iroko al suelo, dijo que se alabaría a sí mismo si nadie lo hacía (27)	Si nadie me alaba ya me alabo yo, dijo el lagarto que saltó del gran árbol iroko (38)

However, the purpose of this chapter is not to discuss the polemic between literal and free translation, or to defend one of these methods. The reconstruction of orality in novels is a complex literary process. 'In consequence, narrative resources to imitate oral speech have to be analysed and recognized before their translation' (Cadera, 2014: 48). Thus, whether a more literal or free translation strategy is convenient has to be decided in each case. In the case of *Things Fall Apart*, the use of proverbs and the special diction of the literary discourse of the novel is due to Achebe's intention to recreate within the English language aspects of primary orality in order to transmit his culture. Reading the original English text, we became aware that the diction differs from Standard English literary style. Translators should be aware of this and try to respect the author's intention. As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, translation is not innocent because it has to 'form images that in turn come to function as reality' (Tymoczko, 1999b: 17). Translation, therefore, provides a tool for cultural interaction that shows certain aspects of that culture at a given time (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990: 5–6). Nevertheless, the 2010 translation transmits a great deal of Igbo culture whereas the 1966 version reproduces more faithfully Achebe's special style in this novel.

Language use elements: Vocabulary and Igbo words

Achebe is one of those African authors who choose to write their novels in English, but introducing Igbo words. While the issue of whether to write in English or in the vernacular language is a widespread one, Achebe (in Fabre, 1973: 51) chooses consciously to write in English but without following Standard English conventions: 'I say I am a conscious artist because I often make conscious attempts at recreating the turns and phrases of the vernacular while using English.'

We cannot forget that Achebe is writing in the language of the colonizer, English, that 'has been viewed as a potent force for the assertion and control in the Empire' (Talib, 2002: 8). As such, forcing the use of English in the colonies was an instrument of domination and 'educating the natives in English not only served the civilizing mission but also – and

more importantly perhaps – the imperial mission of exerting better control over them' (ibid.: 9). Achebe (2003: 85) reflects on the importance of language in *Things Fall Apart* by stating:

I don't remember sitting down and thinking of it, to create it first, it comes out of the story. Now I was going to write this story in English, it was my first decision. But what kind of English? Okay you start? You know, Okonkwo was a fine fellow. That wouldn't do. So what do I say about Okonkwo, how do I begin? So I think another way of talking about him. This man is a strong man, and so on. And the language is created, as far as I am concerned, by the story I was telling.

Things Fall Apart represents the clash between the English missionaries and the Igbo people, including language miscommunication. Achebe represents this including an interpreter and portraying how one of the main aspects of colonization was imposing a new language.

Complementing the use of proverbs and the representation of oral features in written language which we have mentioned previously, *Things Fall Apart* shows particular characteristics regarding the use of English by including Igbo words that are not translated. Achebe used these words in Igbo, often including an explanation before or after the first time they are used, for example: 'The elders, or *ndichie*' (1958, 10). These Igbo words are marked typographically by the use of italics, which makes them stand out in the text. Achebe did not offer a glossary of these words in his original novel, as the reader is able to understand them within the context.

Analysing the 1966 translation, we find that the translator had decided to include the Igbo words as Achebe did in the original, in italics and without offering a glossary at the end of the book. The translator followed the same strategy as Achebe using the explanation of the Igbo word the first time it appears, like *Los mayores o ndichie* (Achebe, 1966: 19).

As we have stated above, the latest published version of *Things Fall Apart* (2010) is a republished version of the 1997 translation that has undergone a revision before being republished. In this latest published version, we find that the reviser has followed the same strategy: leaving Igbo words in italics and offering the explanation the first time they appear. This is a modification with regard to the 1997 translation, where Igbo words appear without any typographic marking and are adapted to Spanish plurals (adding a

final ‘-s’). The following examples show one of the Igbo words pluralized in the 1997 translation, *egwugwu*, compared in the four versions:

- a) Everyone looked in the direction of the *egwugwu* house (1958: 64).
- b) Todos volvieron la vista hacia la casa del *egwugwu* (1966: 92–93).
- c) Todos miraron hacia la casa de los *egwugwus*. (1997: 94).
- d) Todos miraron hacia la casa de los *egwugwu*. (2010: 98).

Both the first translation and the last republication follow Achebe’s typographic marking and respect the original Igbo word *egwugwu*. The 1997 translation shows the general strategy adopted by the translator/publisher: no markings and pluralization following Spanish rules.

Moreover, the 2010 version differs from the source text and the 1997 edition by including a glossary with all the Igbo words that appear in the novel. The reviser of this version, López Rodríguez (in Rodríguez Murphy, 2014: 257, our translation), who also wrote the introduction to this last edition of the novel, states that including a glossary was an editorial decision:

[I]f the author does not translate certain words it is because he doesn’t want to. Or, when he is interested in translating them, he does so inside the text. ‘Strange’ words for Spanish readers are not so complicated to understand without the help of the glossary, but they help the author to inscribe in his works that cultural difference that he tries to portray and that are, actually, an invitation to keep on reading’.

Nevertheless, the original idea of the author to represent Igbo language through the use of a created literary language style is achieved in both translations. Igbo words provide the idea of encountering a different culture that maintains its differences with Spanish culture.

Conclusion

We argued that an approach to the study of the translation of postcolonial literature should be on two levels, considering both external and internal elements. Generally, the decision to retranslate a work may be due to

external interests – commercial interests, changes of interests in a specific source culture, political and international relations, etc. – but also due to changes in the poetic and aesthetic considerations of translation itself or to socio-historical changes in the target culture. In the case of African postcolonial literature, commercial interest seems to be the most important factor when publishing decisions are made.

As we have seen through the analysis of the editorial choices concerning the publication of the different translations and republication of *Things Fall Apart*, the fact that Achebe is considered in Spain to be the father of African literature and that he has international prestige has had a direct impact on the decision to republish this novel and make it available to the general public, as DeBolsillo is aimed at a broader Spanish readership. Interestingly enough, even if a publisher was keen on Achebe's books, judging by sales figures these texts seem not to have reached the general reading public, which in turn opens up further paths for research into the acceptance and the future of postcolonial African literature translated into Spanish. It can be deduced that the general politics of publishing houses is to translate African authors that have received international awards and who write in English and not in their vernacular language. Nevertheless, even in these specific cases Spanish readers seem to represent a complicated market, as sales do not reflect this international prestige except on a very few occasions (e.g. Coetzee).

As we have tried to exemplify with the novel *Things Fall Apart*, one of the few retranslated African postcolonial works, external factors such as publishing decisions have an enormous influence on reception. Apart from this, we maintained that the socio-historical context of each translation should be considered because it could determine why specific novels were translated or whether the context had an influence on the translation. For example, this chapter indicated that *Things Fall Apart* was authorized to be published during the period of Spanish censorship without any amendments, although the original text contained parts that could be understood to be against morality and the church, two subjects that were censored during the Franco regime.

After this stage, in order to complete the study, the analysis of internal or textual elements was necessary to find out what image the translation

offered and how the text was or had been read in the target culture. Studying, for instance, the 1966 translation demonstrated that the text had been manipulated, especially regarding the omission of the parts that 'attack' religion or were against the moral precepts of this period. Taking into account that in those years nothing that went against Catholicism could be published in Spain, we stated that this might have been due to the translator's or publisher's self-censorship, which was clearly related to the socio-historical context in which a translation was produced.

Other internal elements such as the analysis of the transposition of language elements were especially useful in postcolonial literature, where vernacular languages were instruments of identity claims (Venuti, 1998: 136). In the case of Africa, novels were usually characterized by a certain trans-lingualism where the English language could be influenced by both syntactic and semantic forms of the vernacular languages and/or the introduction of indigenous terms into the English text (Martín Matas, 2006: 36). Obviously, this kind of language use implied enormous difficulties for translators. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe creates his own fictive literary language to represent Nigerian identity (ibid.: 24). The challenge for translators, therefore, should be that the reader of the target language is able to receive the same images that are represented in the original in order to understand the peculiarities of the characters, places and culture (Cadera, 2012: 53).

The analysis of the two translations has shown the differences concerning this image. The first translation suffered manipulation and did not include all the cruelty of the colonization and Christianization process. Nevertheless, it reflected more faithfully the style of the literary discourse of the novel transposing the fictionalized primary orality into Spanish. The last and most complete translation offered an acceptably readable text for contemporary readers and represented Nigerian original culture through the use of Igbo vocabulary, although it lost much of the typical diction of the literary discourse.

Finally, we agree with Tymoczko (1999b: 17–18) that 'the investigation of translations is an essential aspect of the investigation of culture, revealing through comparison with the source texts valuable information about both the source culture and the receiving culture'. In the case of African

postcolonial literature, this affirmation is more important than ever, as the Spanish reader is receiving a culture (African) through English and its cultural implications, and only in those cases with international recognition. After this analysis a question arises that remains to be solved: How will the translation of postcolonial African literature evolve in Spain and how will it reach the wider public?

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