MEANING LOSS IN THE TRANSLATED KIMERU PROVERBS AND IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

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2015
DECLARATION
This dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted for academic award in any other university.

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SUPERVISORS’ DECLARATION
We confirm that the work reported in this dissertation has been done by the candidate and submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

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DR. FRIDAH KANANA ERASTUS
DEDICATION
I dedicate this work to my parents for showing me the world and to my husband and children for making so many things possible that would otherwise not have been possible.
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I could not have written this project without the support of others, whom I cannot thank enough.

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to investigate meaning loss in the use of figurative language as a result of translation of Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions into English. This study had three objectives: the first one being to identify and explain any instances of meaning loss in translation of a literary text from Kiimenti to English. Secondly, to explain the possible factors that contribute to meaning loss. Thirdly, to suggest possible ways of improving translation. The general assumption was that in translation of materials from one language into another, some meaning gets lost. The loss arises because of the differences that exist between two languages. The main data was drawn from a text book written by Mwiti (2004) entitled “Kimeru 1200 proverbs.” This book contains proverbs and idiomatic expressions in Kiimenti and their respective translations into English. Using the researcher’s native language intuition and linguistic knowledge background, samples of sixty texts which exhibit meaning loss were drawn. Data was collected through a questionnaire from twenty native Kiimenti speakers who are primary school teachers and are competent in both Kiimenti and English. The questionnaire required them to translate the texts in Kiimenti into English and those in English into Kiimenti. They were also required to choose whether the translations were difficult or not and to give reasons explaining if the translations were difficult. The study was guided by Cultural Theory of Translation, The Interpretive Theory and Relevance Theory. The data obtained was categorized into four linguistic themes; lexical, structural, cultural errors and the figurative use of language. Each category was then described, analyzed and discussed qualitatively. It was found out that meaning was lost after translation of Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions into English. A summary of the study is discussed briefly in chapter five. The recommendations for the study and suggested areas for further research are given. A conclusion for the whole study is given at the end of this chapter.
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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Author: This word will be used to refer to the translator of Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic Expressions; Edward Stephen Mwiti

Literal translation: It is a translation that reproduces the linguistic features of the original source language to the target language word for word.

Source language (SL): This is the language in which the original text is Written, thus Kiimenti

Source text (ST): This is the text from which the translation is made.

Target language (TL): This is the language in which the translation is Made, thus English

Target text (TT): This is the text that eventually comes out as a result of the translation.

Text: This will be used to refer to proverbs and idiomatic expressions.
ABBREVIATIONS

A.T: Author’s translation
E.P: English Proverb
K.I: Kiimenti Idiomatic Expression
K.P: Kiimenti Proverb
R.T: Respondents’ Translation
S.L: Source Language
S.T: Source Text
T.L: Target Language
T.T: Target Text
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CHAPTER 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background to the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions and hypotheses. It highlights the rationale as well as the scope and limitations of the study.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

There is a wide but universal agreement that the main aim of the translator is to produce as nearly as possible the same effect on his readers as was produced on the readers of the original text (Newmark 1981). The principle is variously referred to as the principle of similar or equivalent response or effect. It bypasses the nineteenth Century controversy whether a translation should incline towards the source or the target language, and the consequent faithful versus beautiful translation, literal versus free translation, forms versus content translation disputes.

The emphasis of this principle is mainly on communication. The translators should first ask themselves the question, “who is the reader?” Therefore, the translator should produce a different type of translation of the same text for a different type of audience.

The principle demands a considerable imaginative or intuitive effect from the translator, since the translator must not identify himself with the readers of the original text but must empathize with the readers, recognizing that the readers may have reactions and sympathies alien to his own. The principle emphasizes the vitality of the psychological factor, which is mentalist. The translator would want to know how each reader reacts, how he thinks, feels and behaves. The principle of equivalent response allows for a variety of translation styles. If the
writer of the original text has deviated from the language norms of the type of the text he has written, whether it is an advertisement, a report of a literary work, one would expect the translator to do likewise.

Reis (1971) and Savory (1968) have noted that the technical translator is concerned with content while literary translator is concerned with form. Other writers have stated that a technical translation must be literal, and a literary translation must be free.

Figurative language is language that does not mean what it says. Language which means or intends to mean what it says and which uses words in the standard sense derived from the common practice of ordinary speakers is said to be literal. Figurative language deliberately interferes with literal usage by its assumption that term literary connected with one object can be transferred to other object (Hawker 1977).

The interference takes the form of transference or “carry over” with the aim of achieving new, wider, special or more precise meaning. One of the most challenging tasks for all translators is how to render culture – bound elements into foreign languages. Indeed, not much attention has been paid to this problem by translation theory. According to Newmark (1981), translation entails replacing one message in one language with a similar message in another language without altering the initial meaning. However, with culturally – bound words this is often impossible. Indeed, the meaning which lies behind this kind of expressions is always strongly linked to the specific cultural context where the text originates or with the cultural context it aims to re-create.
Different communities have different ways in which they use figurative language. Figurative language is drawn from the ways of life of a given community. The various objects and ideas that they deem fit to be used in figurative language may only be peculiar to them. A translator, therefore, needs to be very careful while translating figures of speech to define both the sameness and the differences of different communities.

As a frequent reader of oral literature, the researcher established that there are problems that are associated with translation of oral literature materials. A large number of these problems are linguistic and cultural in nature. Meaning loss occurs in some of the translated proverbs and idiomatic expressions.

The short forms of oral literature are characterized by their brevity and compactness as opposed to the longer forms like folktale and the myth. The most easily recognized of these forms in Meru traditions are proverbs, tongue twisters, riddles and idiomatic expressions. They play a vital role in the society. They are a powerful insight into the social, cultural and sometimes political life of the Meru people of yester years. They also set the moral code of the society. They are transmitted from one person to another specifically from old people to young through word of mouth. They were previously not in written form. Once they are written and translated to English they may lose figurative meaning.

Our study therefore concentrates on meaning loss in the use of figurative language in translated Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions into English. Mwiti 2004 translated Kiimenti proverbs into English. The problems are in a book titled “Kimeru 1200 proverbs.”
The question as to whether those translations are a true reflection of the meaning intended in the source text was the basis of this study.

The figurative language used in the proverbs and idiomatic expressions present a major challenge, because if the translator does not come up with similar figurative expressions that capture what was originally intended in the source language, the translation will lose figurative beauty.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Mwiti (2004) translated Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions into English. The proverbs and idiomatic expressions describe a situation which has elements peculiar to the natural environment, institutions and culture of its language community. In their particular speech community, proverbs and idiomatic expressions do not present a problem in comprehension because the speakers of the language are aware of the circumstances under which they were formulated. Once the proverbs and idiomatic expressions are translated they may lose some meaning because Kimeru and English languages are culturally and linguistically different.

On account of the literature reviewed, no research has been done on meaning loss in the use of figurative language in translated proverbs and idiomatic expressions in Kimeru language. This study examined these proverbs and idiomatic expressions in light of his translation with a view to establish the level of meaning loss that was prevalent in the target text.
1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives that guided the research were:

1. To identify and explain instances of meaning loss in selected translated Kimeru – English proverbs and idiomatic expressions in Mwiti (2004).

2. To explain the possible factors that contribute to meaning loss in translation of Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions by Mwiti (2004).

3. To suggest possible ways of improving translation of Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expression.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the instances of meaning loss in translated Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions?

2. What are the possible factors that contribute to meaning loss in translation of Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions?

3. How can translation of Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions be improved to avoid meaning loss?

1.5 RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS
This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. Meaning loss results from translation of proverbs and idiomatic expressions from Kimeru to English.

2. Various factors lead to meaning loss in translation of Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions.

3. The translation of Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions can be done in a way that avoids meaning loss.

1.6 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Some of the studies in translation in Kenya are directed towards translation of English into Kiswahili. The researcher noted that there are translations being carried out from African languages to the English language. These includes texts like Chesaina’s (1991) “Oral Literature of the Kalenjin”, Mukabi’s (1988) “Gikuyu Oral Literature”, Rintari’s (1995) “Inventory of Kimeru Proverbs” and Mwiti’s (2004) “Kimeru 1200 Proverbs”. Very few studies have been carried out concerning meaning loss in the various oral literature texts translated into English and none has been done particularly in Kimeru.

Analysis of the linguistic factors that lead to meaning loss in translation and a description of how they could be handled would add to knowledge and contribute to linguistic research on translation. Translators will find the study helpful because it will give an insight of the factors that constrain translation.
Our study could also be of theoretical significance. The application of the tenets of Cultural Theory of Translation, Relevance Theory, and the Interpretive Theory in the analysis, presentation and interpretation of data in this study will further add input to the theories, hence contributing to the development of translation studies.

The findings of this study could also offer insights to other researchers to conduct similar studies on other texts translated from other Kenyan languages into English. This study will also add to the literature on the studies that have been done on Kimeru language.

1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATION

This study focused on the use of figurative language in the translated Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions of oral literature. Oral literature comprises narratives, songs, and short forms (proverbs, riddles, puns, tongue twisters and idiomatic expressions). However, this study was narrowed down to the translation of figurative language in proverbs and idiomatic expressions of the oral literature by Mwiti (2004). This is because when Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions are translated into English they are bound to lose their figurative meaning, because they are derived from a close observation of natural and social realities of the Ameru people. They function in speech to give aesthetic beauty to our communication.

Kimeru is the language spoken by the Meru people who live on the Eastern and Northern slopes of Mount Kenya and on the Nyambene ranges. The Meru people are a fairly homogeneous community. They speak the same language, Kimeru which comprises many
dialects namely: Kiigembe, Gitigania, Kiimenti, Kitharaka, Kiigoji, Kimwimbi, Kimuthambi, Kichuka and Kimiutine (Kanana2011). This study was narrowed down to Kiimenti dialect because the proverbs and idiomatic expression are written in it and it can be understood easily by Meru speakers. It is also described as the standard variety by the Meru speakers.

1.8 Conclusion

Having considered the statement of the problem, background of the study and objectives among other areas that inform this study in chapter one, the next chapter deals with literature review and theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Literature on literary translation
This section reviews literature related to the study. It provides vital information regarding what various scholars have said concerning translation.

Nida and Taber (1969) describe translation process as taking place in three stages: Analysis, transfer and restructuring. This process is illustrated below:

A Source language  B target language

Analysis  restructuring
X Transfer Y

Source: Nida and Taber 1969: 33

In the analysis stage, the surface structure of the source language is analyzed in terms of grammatical relationships and meaning of words. In the transfer stage, the analyzed material is transferred in the mind of the translator from the source language to the target language. In the restructuring stage, the transferred material is restructured in order to make the final message fully acceptable in the target language. For the process to be satisfactorily complete the target language must have the capacity to receive the source text. Their views informed this study on meaning loss at a close look at the cultural and contextual aspects of Kimeru transferred into English translations. Where equivalents are achieved, then the aesthetic values
are transferred from Kimeru into English. This study used this translation process to analyze how target language texts have been restructured to maintain the flavor of the source language texts and not to adopt the structure of target language.

Frawley (1984) maintains that the confrontation between source language and target language during the translation process results in creating a “third code”, something of an intermediate between the two languages. Mutahi (1994) states that in translating materials from one language into another, something gets lost. The loss arises because of these differences that exist between two languages. These differences are both structural and cultural. He likens translation to chewing food that is to be fed to others. If one cannot chew the food oneself, one has to be given food that is already chewed. Such food however, is bound to be poorer in taste and flavor than the original. He argues further that the view that African ideas are easy to translate into European languages cannot hold water given the structural, environmental and cultural differences that exist between people of the two continents. Our study is based on an African language (Kimeru) as the source language. The texts in the source language have been translated into English. The translation has been done by an author who has a command in both English and Kimeru languages. Naturally he is bound to face many challenges since the two languages are not related.

Oeltinger (1960) defines translation as the process of transforming signs or representatives into other signs or representatives. If the originals have some significance, we generally require that their images also have the same significance, or more realistically, as nearly the
same significance, as we can get. This definition indicates that it is sometimes impossible to translate without some loss of meaning.

Okombo (1994) in his studies of oral literature and translation perceives translation as a process of developing a target text from a source text. The translation process starts with a text in a certain language called source language which has its linguistic and non-linguistic properties. The message carried by the source language text has to be identified and reconstructed so as to get expressions in the text of another language called the receptor language. The receptor language has its linguistic and non-linguistic properties which must be considered in the translation process. Translation therefore consists of studying the lexicon, grammatical structures, communication situation and cultural context of source language text, analyzing it in order to determine its meaning and then reconstructing this same meaning using the lexicon and grammatical structures which are appropriate in the receptor language and its culture context.

It is noted that a target text does not become diminished in value because of its deviations from the standards of the source text. This is because there is no way in which a translation could share the same systematic space, stature, or completely perform the function of the source text. He argues that “the arguments about attaining the standards of the original are therefore misplaced.” However, we note that in Mwiti’s book, Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions that contain figurative language translated into English, there is meaning loss.
According to Newmark (1981), translation is a craft consisting of the attempt to replace a written message or statement into one language by the same message or statement in another language. He asserts that if the text describes a situation which has elements peculiar to the natural environment, institutions and culture of its language area, there is an inevitable loss of meaning. The transference or replacement of a source text by another text in translator’s language can only be approximate. Unless there is already a recognized translation equivalent, the translator has to choose from transcribing the foreign word, translating it, substituting a similar word in his own culture, naturalizing the word with a loan translation, sometimes adding or substituting a suffix from his own language, defining it, or the last resort, paraphrasing which is sometimes added in parenthesis or as a foot note to a transliteration. Newmark (1981) sees the need for translation as being reinforced by the proliferation of terms of art, in particular of technological terms and the need to standardize the terminology.

Different languages have different ways of describing the world around them; hence it is possible to translate from one language to the other. This is eased by the codability of the linguistic items involved, where codability is defined as the ease with which the language tag can be used to distinguish one item from another. Something is said to be codable if it falls within the scope of readily available terms used in a particular language. Degree of codability vary in that while one language may express a concept within just one word, in another it may be necessary to use a whole phrase to get across the same notion. The higher the codability of a concept in the target language, the higher the translatability.
Despite the fact that there are a lot of similarities among languages, nobody can ignore the role of main and significant differences across languages. Hence, there are always some parts of elements that exist in one language. However, they cannot be seen in other languages. Majority of cases of untranslatability are either linguistic or cultural. Linguistic untranslatability is the failure in finding an equivalent for target language item in view of differences between two language systems whereas cultural untranslatability is kind of failure which comes from the lack of situational and functional absence in the target.

Mukabi (1983) notes that the written word cannot convey the vivid and varied scenes and atmospheres which are often evoked by the spoken word enactments, especially when the performing artist is a skilled one. Writing eliminates a great deal from an oral performance, and when the material is translated, it is removed from the original performance even further. It is difficult to transfer meaning from one language to another.

Translation is an intercultural activity as well as an intralingual one as it deals with (at least) two linguistic systems embedded in two different cultures. However, the difficulties inherent in the translation process vary proportionately with the degree of distance between the languages and the cultures involved. Translation of African works into European languages is an example of a translation between non-related languages and cultures. It is a translation of an oral “text” into written form, on one hand, and a translation from one language culture into an alien language culture, on the other. It has been pointed out by Snell-Hornby (1988) that the extent to which a text is translatable varies with the degree to which it is embedded in its
own specific culture, and also with the distance that separates the cultural background of source text and target audience in terms of time and place.

Wangia (2003) notes that some of the causes of problems in translation are the great contrasts between the historical, social, ecological and cultural differences between the source language and the target language. She further says that literal transfer of linguistic structure or forms representing those source language orientations in Lulogooli target language more often than not result into meaning loss. Her views were very vital in our study because there is a contrast between Kimeru and English in all aspects she mentions above. This has led to meaning loss in the translated Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions.

Joseph (2005) while analyzing translation strategies in Oyono Mbia’s plays asserts that Oyono, a Cameroonian writer drawing from his background but writing in a European language (French), was faced with a difficult of choice of words. He had to decide either to express the local proverbs literally in the European language so that stylistically it should at least read and sound as a proverb to the reader in the European language or had to decide to look for a semantic equivalent in the European language to express it. A semantic equivalent which fully satisfies the author’s intention is rarely attainable given the cultural gap between the traditional Cameroonian and European sociolinguistic Communities. Joseph’s views acted to inform our study. At a close look at the translation of Kimeru to English revealed that the cultural and the contextual aspects that are exhibited in the source text were transferred into target text. This made the target text to retain the quality of the source text and not that of the
target text. Perhaps, where the equivalents are achieved, then the aesthetic values can be transferred.

2.1 The notion of translatability

Hatim and Munday (2004) describe the term translatability as “a relative notion” and it has to do with the extent to which, despite obvious differences in linguistic structure, meaning can still be adequately expressed across languages. For this to be possible, meaning has to be understood not only in terms of what the source text contains, but equally significantly, in terms of such factors as communicative purpose, target audience and purpose of translation.

This notion came about as a critique to Sapir – Whorf hypothesis which consists of two associated principles; the principle of linguistic determinism and the principle of linguistic relativity. The former states that our thinking is determined by language. That we cannot think about a concept without a language to think about it. The latter states that people who speak different languages perceive and think about the world quite differently. On this basis, translation between one language and another is at the very least problematic and sometimes impossible (Wanjohi 2005). It is impossible to mean the same thing in two ways therefore making it impossible to translate.

The neo-classicalists criticized Whorfian hypothesis. They felt that it was possible to express the same thought in different ways. They argue that we can say whatever we want to say in any language and that whatever we say in one language can always be translated into another. Translatability can be possible because of the codability of the linguistic items involved.
These studies relate to our study in that they are concerned with expressing issues in translation. Most of the literature reviewed highlights common factors that make translation process difficult. Factors that lead to meaning loss have also been touched on in these reviewed literatures. The researcher attempted to establish whether they applied to the translation of Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions into English.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since translation is interdisciplinary by nature, there is not one theory that can suffice by itself to adequately support a translation study. The researcher employed the following theories: Cultural theory of translation, Interpretive theory and Relevance theory. These theories were used to complement each other.

2.2.1 The Cultural Theory of Translation

This theory was fronted by three scholars in translation studies, namely; Bassnet and Lefevere(1990)and Venuti (1995).

Cultural Theory of translation is a theoretical and methodological shift in translation studies that gained recognition in the early nineties. The theory focuses on the interaction between translation and cultures; on the way culture impacts and constrains translation and on the larger issues of context, history and convention. Therefore, these scholars moved from viewing translation as a text to translation as a culture. The theory asserts that a text should be translated in its cultural context.
Under the culture theory, language and culture are seen to be closely related and both aspects must be considered for translation. It is necessary for a translator to have knowledge about semantics and lexical sets and the value of the words in source language. By doing so, the translator would appreciate the value of the word in a given system of knowledge. The translator will also appreciate the differences of structures in source language and target language. This allows the translator to assess the value of a given item in a lexical set.

Cultural knowledge is indispensable for translation, as is knowledge of the appreciation which linguistic units have in particular situation and social – cultural contexts which makes translation possible. Linguistic units can never be fully understood in isolation from the particular cultural phenomenon for which they are symbols. In translation, when the two cultures are unrelated, there are bound to be instances where there are foreign concepts in the target culture posing comprehension problems.

It is worth noting in our study that some of the proverbs and idiomatic expressions translated indeed use figurative symbols drawn from the way of life of Meru speech community. These figurative symbols are only peculiar to the Meru culture. This theory was used to explain how culture affects translation because the two languages that were being investigated are not culturally related. This theory also helped present the sub-mappings of figurative language used between the sources and the target domains respectively. These sub-mappings of figurative language enable receptors of the target text not only to comprehend the text but also to appreciate the culture of the source text.
2.2.2 The Interpretive Theory

This theory is also known as the theory of sense which was developed by Danica and Marianne (Choi 2003). The theory has to do with resemblance between utterances and their meaning. In translation it involves understanding speech and re-wording that understanding in a different language, that is, using an utterance to represent another.

The theory is built upon four pillars:

- Command of the native language (translators must be able to use their mother tongue in all its nuances).

- Command of the target language (the closed system: phonological and grammatical, have to be mastered).

- Command of the relevant world and background knowledge. This has to be mastered by the translator.

- Command of interpreting methodology (translation requires an understanding of sense; language meaning).

The main tenet of the interpretive theory is the re-expression of the meaning of the source text into another language. The notion of resemblance brings out sameness in meaning. This theory enables the translator to use equivalent expressions which capture the message as it is intended in the original text. This can be achieved if the translator understands the source text.
Oral literature of the Meru people deals with figurative and symbolic languages. The translations of oral materials need to capture the intended meaning and have a similar effect on the receptors just as the original text does. The theory therefore, guided the researcher in analyzing the resemblance between the original and the translated text and to distinguish between the basic and the interpretive meanings of events and the objects mentioned in the discourse. The theory was also used to determine whether equivalent expressions have been used appropriately in the translations.

The mere word-for-word translation of the Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions only gives the common usage of the lexical items used in the translation; therefore, the intended meaning cannot be fully captured. As a result, the translator should strive to find an expression that interpretively resembles the original for the intended meaning to be achieved by the readers of the translation. This is because proverbs and idiomatic expressions have a special meaning as opposed to the words used in it.

### 2.2.3 Relevance Theory

Relevance theory was developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986) and Gutt (1991). The core matters of relevance theory are the processes that take place in human minds and contexts. In the framework of this theory utterance comprehension is not just a mechanical decoding process, but an intelligence activity involving reasoning and imagination.
The concept of relevance theory therefore, relies on two aspects; “effect” and “effort” that are highly context dependent. The greater the positive cognitive effects achieved by processing an input, the greater the relevance of the input to the individual at that time. The greater the processing effort expected, the lower the relevance of the input to the individual at that time.

It is given that the hearer will interpret the most easily accessible assumption in a given situation. The translators, therefore, obey optimal relevance when they omit certain needless elements in text translation, causing end text modification and preventing eventual untranslatability. The viewer must arrive at the “intended interpretation” by comprehending “stimulus”, for example, a generated statement and contextual information, which is already available to the audience either from memory or perception of the action seen or heard. The receiver uses context so the semantic representation can get to the propositional form that is the completely developed thought.

Translation is a special form of communication which involves three parts; the original author, the translator and the target language text reader, thus, it should follow the general rule of communication; communicate through inference. The translator must make inference according to the behavior of the original author and get the efficient contextual effect on one hand, and on the other he has to show his understanding of the original author’s intention to the target text reader so that the reader can make inference and get contextual effect. In order to get correct and efficient contextual effect, the translator should choose the code according to the intention of the original author and the cognitive environment of target language text reader. Only in this way can he find out optimal relevance between the translation and
context. This means that successful communication occurs when the receiver puts the least effort into selecting the appropriate speaker’s intended assumption from the context given.

The theory had been chosen in this study, because particular attention is paid to choice of words and meaning. In our study, we were investigating meaning loss. In communication various words and expressions may only make sense to the Meru people. While translating, therefore, the translator must make great effort to get the equivalence of these words in the target culture. This is important in the study because it will determine the appropriate meanings in the translated proverbs and idiomatic expressions. The theory was relied upon in the analysis, presentation and interpretation of data in this study.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has examined literature review and theoretical framework. Literature has been reviewed from general to specific. The next chapter will focus on research methodology.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Research design

There are two types of research designs, namely, quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research design consists of measuring numerical values from which descriptions such as mean and standard deviations are made whereas qualitative research design involves intensive data collection of several variables in a natural setting. The findings are not always computable by arithmetic relations (Kombo et. al 2006).

This study therefore adopted a qualitative research design. This is mainly because data analysis, presentation and interpretation took a descriptive approach as opposed to a quantitative design. Relevant data was generated by the researcher through native speaker’s intuition from a written text containing Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions. The data was then subjected to verification at the field stage, where questionnaires were used to elicit responses from selected respondents.

3.1 Source text

The researcher used secondary data from a book entitled “Kimeru 1200 proverbs” by Mwiti (2004) which is a collection of many proverbs and idiomatic expressions and their respective translations into English. What are referred to as “source texts” are the proverbs and idiomatic expressions in Kiimenti. “Target texts” refers to the translated versions of Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions. This book not only makes the first comprehensive collection of the two forms of Kimeru Oral Literature but also translates them into English.
In some instances Mwiti tries to explain the meaning of the text after the translation. In other instances, some cultural aspects and some terms do not have English equivalents and are directly transferred into the target text. Hence, some meanings of the target text are different from that intended in the source text as illustrated below:

Kiimenti proverb: Ari mutine okiama

Author’s translation: He is under the tree of Kiama.

The Kiimenti proverb means that one is under the protection of council of elders while the translated version means that one is under the tree of a council of elders. A tree refers to a plant and not to a council of elders. This to a considerable degree reflects a meaning different from that of the source text. The proverb is used to warn people that while handling other people they should be careful because some people are under the protection of the “kiama” which is a council of elders in Meru Community.

In instances, where Mwiti literally translates texts without giving brief explanations on the meaning of the source text, the meanings of the target text were different from that intended in the source text. This was the main reason that motivated the researcher to choose this book to investigate the phenomenon of meaning loss as a result of translation of a literary text from Kiimenti to English.
3.2 Sampling procedure

3.2.1 Secondary data

Mwiti 2004 contains 719 proverbs and 498 idiomatic expressions. Using the researcher’s intuition and judgement, the researcher identified and recorded the texts whose translations display different meanings from those of the source text or those that contain foreign terms and thus presenting comprehension problems to non Kimeru speakers.

Purposive sampling was used to select translated proverbs and idiomatic expressions with mistranslation. For example, those that contain Kiimenti terms in English translations. The researcher identified a total of 60 texts; 40 of them were proverbs and 20 idiomatic expressions. From the 60 texts, 20 samples, which are approximately 30% of the identified data were analyzed and discussed in this study. This was believed to be a representative data because Sankoff (1980) has argued that one does not need a very large linguistic sample to observe a linguistic phenomenon. This justified the limited selection of the samples to ensure a manageable data. 10 proverbs and 10 idiomatic expressions were thus used.

3.3 Data collection instrument

The questions in the questionnaire were categorized into two sections; section one comprised ten proverbs. The respondents were required to translate five Kiimenti proverbs into English. Next, there were five English proverbs. The respondents were required to translate them into Kiimenti. The next question required them to list the words that were a challenge for them to translate. They were to give reasons to explain why these words were difficult to translate. (see appendix 2).
Section two comprised ten idiomatic expressions. The respondents were required to translate five Kiimenti idiomatic expressions into English. Next, there were five idiomatic expressions in English, and the respondents were required to translate them into Kiimenti. The next question required them to list the words that were a challenge for them to translate. They were also to give reasons why these words were difficult to translate. (see appendix 2)

3.3 Data collection procedure

The 20 respondents were contacted in advance. Discussions were held with each respondent. The researcher explained the purpose and value of the research and the structure of the questionnaire. The respondents were allowed to take the questionnaire home and even to consult with their close friends if they felt the need to do so. The fact that they could consult boosted their desire to answer all the questions. The researcher occasionally visited them to affirm how far they had undertaken the task.

3.4 Ethical consideration

It is important that this being an ethnographic based research, ethical considerations must be borne in mind. The researcher did assure all the respondents of confidentiality prior to carrying out the questions. There was cooperation in all parties involved, a fact for which the researcher is grateful.

3.5 Respondents

The study targeted twenty native Kiimenti speakers (ten males and ten females for purposes of gender parity). The respondents selected were above thirty years of age and must have
grown up in Meru catchment area. These were in a better position to understand and give a clear picture of the oral literature of their times. The social network approach was used in identifying the respondents. For this study, one participant, who was known to the researcher, served as a contact person who helped in selecting other respondents from his social network. The researcher limited the study to 20 respondents because Milroy (1987) observes, “large samples tend not to be necessary for linguistic surveys as for the other surveys because they tend to be redundant, bringing increasing data handling problems with diminishing analytical returns.”

Judgmental sampling was used to get the number of respondents required from extended associations. It allowed the researcher to select cases that are particularly informative and reliable for the study (Kombo et al., 2006)

3.6 Data analysis

The researcher used qualitative method to analyze the data. Texts in Kiimenti were presented first, followed by the meaning. The author’s translation is then given. The nature of mistranslation was categorized into structural, lexical, cultural and figurative use of language. Five examples of each category stated above are stated basing on the researcher’s native language Intuition, the mistranslations were analyzed and ways of improving the translations were suggested.

The data from the questionnaire is then analyzed. The findings from the questionnaire presented and a discussion of the findings are made to validate the findings from the analyzed
Secondary data (Mwiti 2004). Pie charts are then used to present the summary of the data analyzed.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research methodology adopted in the study. This includes research design, source text, sample size and sampling procedure, target population, data elicitation and analysis approaches. The following section will focus on data analysis and discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction
This chapter presents the analysis of data from Mwiti (2004). This study has three objectives. Firstly, to identify and explain instances of meaning loss in selected translated Kiimenti – English proverbs and idiomatic expressions in Mwiti (2004). Secondly, to explain the possible factors that contribute to meaning loss in translation of Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions by Mwiti (2004). Lastly, to suggest possible ways of improving translation of Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expression.

A collection of 20 texts drawn from the proverbs and idiomatic expressions in the book which exhibit meaning loss were identified and explained. The possible factors that contribute to meaning loss were categorized into the following: lexical, cultural, structural and figurative language use. Basing on the researcher’s native language intuition and linguistic background an analysis was carried out in these categories. Data from questionnaire exhibiting meaning loss is also presented and discussed in this chapter.

4.1 Data exhibiting meaning loss from the text.

Below is a table showing data presentation of the proverbs and idiomatic expressions that exhibit meaning loss. The first column shows text in Kiimenti and a gloss of each into English by the researcher. The second column shows Mwiti’s (2004) translation titled “Author’s translation.”

Table 1: Summary of Kiimenti proverbs that exhibit meaning loss.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kiimenti</th>
<th>Author’s Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Kuurira maagati ta Kiundu</td>
<td>To be a victim of indecision like Kiundu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(To get lost in the middle like Kiundu)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Guti utiatagia – Kinya M’Nkubi naatirie nkunu munoti  
(There is no one who cannot miss. Even Mr. Nkubi missed bush buck)  
 Anybody can miss. Even M’Nkubi missed the nose of the bush buck

3. Arume bati mbara  
(Men do not have scars from the fire)  
 Men do not have “Mbara”

4. Guti mutanirwa kwaitha uri ndi g ndjaja  
(No one circumcised at aliens place has a long thread like foreskin on his private part)  
 Nobody is circumcised away from his relatives has a long “Ndigi”

5. Uringu kwa Reche, nyimbo yaikirithia rugombe  
(Reche’s place at Uringu, pustule hides in abscess)  
 He did not translate the proverb.

6. Ari togi atiagaa mwanki  
(Where there is smoke, there is fire)  
 Where smoke is coming out, there must be fire

7. Ciitanagia uria ikwiganua (ikwendana)  
(They keep company the way they understand each other)  
 Animals or age mates keep company as they Understand each other

8. Mugeni ni ruuji, ka rukurukite  
(A guest is water that is passing)  
 A guest is like a river, he/she passes quickly

9. Gucokeera mwarine jwa irinya  
(To return at the entrance of the grave)  
 He came back from the grave’s mouth

10. Kugwata mara na rwi  
(To hold intestines with the palm)  
 To hold one’s intestines in the palm.

**Continuation of the table on proverbs**

11. Guti nyoni injega mwerene  
(There is no nice bird in the millet)  
 The is no nice bird in the millet

12. Guikira kiama iratu  
 To put the shoes on the feet of the council of elders.
To put the shoes on the feet of the council of elders

Women have no age group

Women have no age group

No woman will have her gray hair cut at her mother’s home.

No woman will have her gray hair cut at her mother’s home.

Close the door, hyenas might run in while chasing one another.

Close the door, hyenas might run in while chasing one another.

Table 2 Idiomatic expressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idiomatic Expression</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. Kugira mwonyo Igombe</td>
<td>To go for salt at “Igombe” salt lick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Ita ugikinyaga muthwa</td>
<td>Go stepping on termites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Njogu itiremagwa ni miguongo-eyo (yayo)</td>
<td>No elephant is unable to carry its own tusks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Kumama toro mbithi</td>
<td>To sleep light sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Kuthwa ja riua</td>
<td>To set like the sun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the tables above it was noted that there are several instances of meaning loss that were exhibited from the translated Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions into English language (Mwiti 2004).

The following is a critical analysis of the instances of meaning loss found out.
4.2 Explanation of instances of meaning loss in the proverbs

After identification of instances of meaning loss from the book, our study further explains the instances of meaning loss in translation of Kiimenti proverbs. The data is first given in Kiimenti, then a gloss in English and finally the author’s translation. Guided by the researcher’s knowledge of the Standard English, an explanation is given after every translated Kiimenti proverb to make clear the claim that meaning is lost after translation.

1. *Kuurira maagati ta Kiundu.*

(To get lost in the middle like “Kiundu”)

Author’s translation: *To be a victim of indecision like “Kiundu”.*

The text is an illustration of where a translator uses a term from the source text in the target text. The term of reference in this text is *Kiundu.* This translation calls for the translator to give a brief explanation of how the proverb was developed. The proverb was developed by the Meru elders in relation to the story of an elder called *Kiundu.* His age mates were slaughtering a bull in his village, so were elders in another village over the hill. After a while he decided to sneak over to the other village to check if by any chance he would find meat ready. He found they were slaughtering the bull. So he decided to hurry back to his own village. He found they were just spreading the meat on the charcoal to roast. Impatient, he decided to go back to the other village, hoping to find the meat ready. He arrived to find the elders had finished the meat. So he got nothing! He turned back to his village. By the time he arrived, they had also shared out all the meat. So he missed both feasts! The translation could have been captured more explicitly by paraphrasing the proverb to bring out the aspect of greed. For example,
using the phrase “to lose everything due to greed”. This would enable the receptors to access the message at the minimum processing cost. The term “kiundu” is a proper noun. In Kiimenti, it has been used symbolically to stand for someone greedy. Therefore, the proverb is used to warn greedy people.


(There is no one who cannot miss. Even Mr. Nkubi missed bush back).

Author’s translation: *Anybody can miss. Even M’Nkubi missed the nose of the bush buck.*

This proverb means that anyone can fail to accomplish an activity he or she is skilled in. The term of interest in this proverb is “M’Nkubi” because it has been used symbolically to mean a skilled person. Its presence as a Kiimenti word in the English text hampers a complete comprehension of the entire text. Paraphrasing the proverb for example “even experts fail” would allow an easier interpretation of the text. This translation calls for the translator to give a brief explanation of how the proverb was developed in reference to the story of “M’Nkubi who was a renowned marksman. He was called to shoot a bush buck with an arrow. Since he was double sure of his skill, he boasted that he does not want to spoil the skin of the buck, so he would aim at the snout. He let fly the arrow. Not only did he miss the bush buck but also the arrow broke a beer pot in an in-law’s house.

3. *Arume bati mbara*

(Men do not have scars from the fire)

Author’s translation: *Men do not have “mbara”*
This proverb means that culturally men are not expected to be found beside fire place warming themselves instead they should be busy working in the fields. The term that was of interest in this proverb was “mbara”. The translator wrote the Kiimenti word “mbara” in the English text and put it under quotation marks suggesting probably that it was difficult getting an immediate equivalent. The use of the term without explaining to the English receptors what it really means would hamper a complete comprehension of the text. Therefore the translator explained that “mbara” are black marks up the legs and thighs developed from exposure to firewood heat after long periods at the fireside. Replacing the term “mbara” with the English phrase “scars from fire” would allow an easier interpretation of the text. It can then be noted that the phrase “scars from fire” should be used in the translation so that the target text would read “men do not have scars from fire”

4. *Guti Mutanirwa kwaitha uri ndigi ndaja.*

(No one circumcised at an aliens place has a long thread like foreskin on his private part)

Author’s translation: *Nobody is circumcised away from his relatives has a long “ndigi”*

This proverb is generally used to warn initiates who wish to be initiated away from home or anyone who wishes to run away from his relatives for any reasons, whether genuine or not for they are bound to lack good care. The term that was of interest is “ndigi”. The author used the Kiimenti word in the English text and put it under quotation marks suggesting that it was difficult getting an immediate equivalent. Its presence as a Kiimenti term in the English proverb hampers a complete comprehension of the entire text by English receptors that are not familiar
with the Kiimenti term. The translator went ahead to explain the meaning of the word as “from lack of good care”. However “ndigi” is a thread like foreskin formed on the private part of a boy after being circumcised.

The term “ndigi” has a cultural importance attached to it. It denotes good care. If an initiate is circumcised at home, they will receive good care, hence it is said in Kiimenti that their “ndigi” will be longer, but if circumcised at aliens it will shorten because they will lack good care. When the term is translated into English it loses that cultural importance because in English there is no cultural importance attached to names.

5. *Uringu Kwa Reche, nyimba yaikirithia rugombe*

(Reche’s place at “Uringu”, pustule hides in abscess)

Author’s translation: *He did not translate the proverb.*

This is generally used to warn people to be cautious because one could have relatives even among one’s enemies. The author did not translate this proverb suggesting he did not get equivalent terms to replace the words “nyimbo” and “rugombe” instead he only explained the meaning of the proverb as follows: “nyimbo” and “rugombe” were skin disorders like boils. Both needed careful handling if the two skin disorders developed concurrently on a person. The patient would be in a serious dilemma as to which of the two disorders he would squeeze first. The failure to translate the proverb into English prevents comprehension of the text by English receptors.
In the analysis of this proverb a way of making this Kiimenti proverb understandable to English receptor was sought. Substituting the words “nyimba” and “rugombe” with pustule and abscess respectively was suggested. However, the words “Uringu” and “Reche” are proper nouns for place and person respectively, hence are untranslatable. The text may then be translated as: “Reche’s place at Uringu Pustule hides itself in abscess.”

6. Ari togi atiagaa mwaki
(Where there is smoke, there is fire)

Author’s translation: Where smoke is coming out, there must be fire.

In this text the original meaning is presented in simple present tense that expresses a scientific fact that wherever there is smoke there must be fire. However, in the translation the author has omitted the simple present tense and has introduced a progressive aspect in the present “is coming.” Thus, there is a slight change in meaning between the original and the translation. To illustrate this, it can be suggested that the Kiimenti proverb “ari togi atiagaa mwaki” should be translated as “where there is smoke there is definitely fire”. When the translation remains as the author has done it, the original should have read as: “area togi ikuma no mwanka kwathirwe na mwaki.” This proverb will contain a progressive aspect as compared to the original Kiimenti proverb.

7. Ciitanagia urea ikwiganua (ikwendana)
(They keep company the way they understand each other)
Author’s translation: *Animals or age mates keep company as they understand each other.*

The translation of the proverb above does not exhibit a complete interpretive resemblance of the source text. The translation portrays that “animals or age mates” are the ones keeping company. This however is not the case as presented in the source text. The text “ciitanagia urea ikwiganua” should be translated as “They keep company the way they understand each other.” There is also a slight change in meaning as a result of the translation in relation to the structure of the sentence. In the translation the author has begun the sentence with a common noun “animals or age mates” instead of the third personal pronoun “ci” or “they” as used in the source text.


(A guest is water that is passing)

Author’s translation: *A guest is like a river, he/she passes quickly.*

The actual meaning intended in the source text is that “a guest is water that is passing” and this is expressed through a metaphor. It can therefore be argued that the author’s translation has led to complete change of meaning. This can be justified because the author has used a simile “a guest is like a river” in place of a metaphor “a guest is a river”. The translator should therefore evaluate the structure of the text to produce a text that is similar to the original text. The translator in this instance could have gone further to explain what he meant in the translation for receptors of the translation to have picture of what the proverb is all about. As per the proverb, a guest does not stay for long in a home; therefore he/she should be treated well.
9. *Gucokeera mwarine jwa irinya*

(To return at the entrance of the grave)

Author’s translation: *He came back from the grave’s mouth.*

It can be argued that there is a slight change in meaning as a result of the translation due to the structure of the sentence. In the original text an infinitive “gucokeera” that is (to return) has been omitted and the translator has replaced it with a verb in the past tense “came”. This has led to change of initial meaning of the text. Grammatically the original meaning is expressed in a phrase whereas the translation is in a clause. When the translation remains as the author has done it then the original text should have read as “nacokeere mwarine jwa irinya.”

The original meaning is “almost to die” that is expressed in a phrase. In the author’s translation, he has added a subject and a verb to the phrase hence converting it into a main clause “he came back from the grave’s mouth” hence altering the original meaning.


(To hold intestines with the palm)

Author’s translation: *To hold ones intestines in the palm.*

The translation of the idiomatic expression above looked at keenly, contains an error. The original expression does not really tell whether it is one’s intestines or someone else’s. There is introduction of a possessive pronoun “one’s” in the translation. This can be said to be the cause of the mistranslation. It can therefore be proposed that a better translation of the expression
should omit the possessive pronoun so that the translation could read as “to hold intestines with the palm.”

11. *Guti nyoni injega mwerene*  
(There is no good bird in the millet)

Author’s translation: *There is no nice bird in the millet.*

This proverb is used to caution people that they should treat all enemies in the same manner for none of them is better than the rest. It can be pointed out that the proverb above would leave many people who are not familiar with Kiimenti culture wondering what it really means. The literal translation done on this proverb distorts the intended meaning as it takes it far away from what the source text really means. The need to briefly discuss the culture of the Kiimenti becomes of necessity to understand under what context the proverb becomes important. The Ameru people, being farmers, would plant millet as one of the staple crops. They protected it from birds by building high platforms on which boys, girls or women stood to frighten the birds away, while the harvest is ripening. This proverb is metaphorical and therefore if an English equivalent proverb is not found, then a better translation strategy such as paraphrasing could be adopted to explain the intended meaning. An expression such as “there is no good predator on the prey” could best used to express the meaning of the proverb. The Interpretive Theory guided us in translating the proverb. The main tenet of this theory is the re-expression of the meaning of the source text into another language. This theory enabled the researcher to use equivalent expressions which capture the message as it is intended in the original text.
12. *Guikira Kiama iratu*

(To put the shoes on the feet of the council of elders)

Author’s translation: *To put the shoes on the feet of the council of elders.*

This proverb is an example that demonstrates that proverbs are drawn from the cultural practices of a particular group of people. If a cultural aspect of a given text is not explained to the receptors, they would find it difficult processing the hidden meaning of the proverbs. This observation can then lead to a suggestion that the translator should briefly explain what the proverb intended to mean. Such explanation would enable the receptors put the proverbs in context so as to understand them better. The Meru people have a council of elders called “kiama” which is used to settle disputes in the community. The “kiama” while on a mission to settle disputes applied red ochre tattoos on their faces. They had plenty of food and drinks paid for by the person sending them on an errand. Once a person has provided plenty of food and drinks to them, he or she is said to have put shoes on the feet of the council of elders. A person who is not familiar with Meru Culture may not really comprehend this proverb.

13. *Aka bati nthuki*

(women have no age group)

Author’s translation: *Women have no age group.*

This proverb is an example that demonstrates that proverbs are drawn from the cultural practices of a particular group of people. If a cultural aspect of a given text is not explained to the receptors and a literal translation is rendered, the receptors would find it difficult processing the hidden meaning of the proverbs. The translator has however briefly explained it to enable the
receptors to comprehend it with ease. In the Ameru culture men are initiated into rigid age
groups. Women marry men and become members of age group of the men they marry
irrespective of their own age.

14. Guti Muka wenjagirwa mbwi kwa ng’ina

(There is no woman who shaves her grey hair at her mother’s home)

Author’s translation: *No woman will have her gray hair cut at her mother’s home.*

The Meru girls had their hair shaved by their relatives. As every woman was supposed to marry
and leave her mother’s home, it was unlikely they would develop gray hair while in their father’s
homestead. Divorce was illegal in the Meru culture. This proverb as per the Kiimenti customs
would be interpreted to mean once something has been “sold” it is never returned. Therefore,
receptors unfamiliar with Kiimenti customs would find it difficult to comprehend. The translator
has briefly described the aspect of girls getting married forever. After marriage negotiations are
done in the Meru Community, a dowry is paid and the girl is supposed to leave her father’s home
to her husband’s home. She is to live there forever. The translator would apply a strategy of
paraphrasing the proverb to read as “divorce is illegal” for better comprehension of the same
proverb.

15. *Cookie mwari (iriigi) ni cijaaga ciingene.*

(Close the door (hyenas) do come chasing each other)

Author’s translation: *Close the door, hyenas might run in while chasing one another.*
The receptors who are not familiar with Meru customs would find it difficult to understand this proverb. With the current modernization, it is difficult to understand the proverb. Mwiti (2004) realizing that this proverb would not be comprehended with ease has briefly explained the circumstances under which it was developed. At the beginning of the 20th Century population was very low. The forests and bushes were numerous due to low cultivation rates. Wild animals were plentiful. The Ameru people lived close to forests and bushes where wild animals lived. It was therefore quite common for mating carnivores to chase a female right to human huts as the female tries to get a hiding place. These are the circumstances under which it was derived.

16. Kugira Mwonyo Igombe

(To go for salt lick at “Igombe”)

Author’s translation: To go for salt at Igombe salt lick.

The text above contains figurative use of language. It can be noted that the English translation does not capture clearly the meaning that is conveyed in the original text because it is drawn from the Ameru customs. These customs are peculiar to the Meru people only. Naturally, when a person is said to have gone for salt at “igombe” salt lick it means that the person has died. The word “igombe” is a local proper noun for a place and can only be understood by those who have interacted with Kiimenti speakers. If the target speakers cannot understand some of the terms used in the source text then the translation is not accurate. Cultural Theory of Translation guided the researcher to interpret the meaning of the idiomatic expression in English. Under Cultural Theory linguistic units can never be fully understood in isolation from the particular cultural phenomenon for which they are symbols. This allows the researcher to assess the value of the idiomatic expression “kugira mwonyo igombe” in the lexical set. If the translation is
meant for a wider audience who understand English, then the translator ought to use 
expressions that can be understood by the majority of the receptors. Inclusion of an English 
idiomatic expression like “to kick the bucket” which is closer in meaning to the Kiimenti 
idiomatic expression makes the processing of the translation easier since it gives a clue as to 
what meaning is intended in the original text.

17. *Ita ugikinyaga muthwa.*

(Go stepping on termites)

Author’s translation: *Go stepping on termites.*

The author has rendered a direct translation of the above Kiimenti idiomatic expression hence 
conveyed the surface meaning. In Kiimenti customs somebody departing is wished well using 
the above idiomatic expression. Termites are so harmless that when stepped upon, one does not 
even notice. This implies that there are no negative repercussions upon stepping on them. If the 
idiomatic expression is interpreted at the literal level we fail to capture its intended meaning. 
Thus the author has explained the figurative meaning of the idiomatic expression. To enable this 
translation to reflect the meaning that is intended, the term “blessings” is suggested by our study. 
The translation could then read as “go with blessings”

18. *Njogu itiremagwa ni miguongo – eyo (yayo)*

(An elephant is not unable to carry its own tusks)

Author’s translation: *No elephant is unable to carry its own tusks.*
The rendering of the proverb into an English sentence to a considerable degree reflects a meaning different from that of the source text. The proverb is used warn people who are irresponsible. This is because in life, some people have proved to be lazy. Therefore it warns people to be responsible enough to carry out their duties just like the elephant carries its own tusks. A proverb in English that would be closer in meaning to this one is “each man and his burden.” It can be deduced that it is possible to find near equivalent expressions in English that reflect the intended meanings of the source text. Therefore the translator should strive to find such expressions for they will make the translation appropriate for the intended audience who may not be familiar with the culture of the source language from which these texts are drawn.

19. *Kumama toro mbithi*

(To sleep unripe sleep)

Author’s translation: *To sleep light sleep.*

The text above contains figurative use of language. It can be noted that the English translation does not capture clearly the meaning that is conveyed in the source text. Naturally, when a person is said to have “slept unripe sleep” it means that the person has passed on unexpectedly. Therefore, the term “sleep” has been used figuratively to refer to death. The word “death” in Kimeru is a taboo word because it is associated with evil spirits. If evil spirits are invoked, they can cause death in a family unexpectedly thus the use of the term unripe. The word “death” is therefore referred to metaphorically. Our study suggested that the translator should try to use expressions that are figuratively familiar to the target language receptors. For instance, the phrase “kicked the bucket”. Introduction of expression like this would enhance easier
interpretation of the idiomatic expressions. This is because figurative language use is now made available. The receptors can now use the images drawn from these expressions to figure out the meaning intended in the source text.

20. Kuthwa ja riua

(To set like the sun)

Author’s translation: *To set like the sun.*

The rendering of this idiomatic expression into an English sentence to a considerable degree reflects a meaning different from that of the source text. It can be deduced that the translation is a simile just as an expression like “Peter is like a lion”. But the idiomatic expression has a different meaning in Kiimenti. It is used to show that some things happen with finality. An expression that could be closer in meaning to this one is “as sure as the dawn is”.

4.3 DATA FROM THE RESPONDENTS

This section deals with data presentation that was obtained from the respondents. A questionnaire was used to establish how they interpreted the source text and how they could translate the same text and how they were also to interpret text that were already translated by Mwiti(2004) and re-translate them into Kiimenti. The respondents were native speakers of Kiimenti and were above thirty years in age and have grown up in Meru up to their teenage. They were therefore considered competent. They were primary school teachers and were expected by the researcher to interpret meanings of the Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions written in English. The twenty respondents who participated in the study were to respond to all the questions in the questionnaire. This questionnaire was categorized into two
sections. Section one dealt with proverbs while section two with idiomatic expressions. The data is presented in two sections. The first section illustrates data from proverbs while the second deals with data from idiomatic expressions.

### 4.3.1 Data from proverbs

In section one of the questionnaire, the respondents were to interpret the proverbs from Mwiti (2004) and translate them as they deemed appropriate to pass the message that was intended from the source text to the target text. They were also expected to interpret and re-translate already proverbs translated to Kiimenti by Mwiti (2004) and state whether the translation of the proverbs was difficult or not and to give reasons for their views. Observations that were made from responses given by respondents who were involved in the study are discussed.

Below are examples of the responses from the respondents.

Both the respondents’ and Mwiti (2004) translations are written down. This is done to illustrate the differences between the author’s translation and that of the respondents’.

21. *Kironda kia mwene giti nkoronjiru*

7 respondents: Your sore does not make you vomit.

5 respondents: One’s sore is not nauseating

4 respondents: A wound of a person does not cause vomiting

4 respondents: Did not translate the proverb
Author’s translation: *Your own sore does not make you puke.*

The above proverb literally means that one’s sore is not nauseating. The figurative meaning is that a person does not notice their weaknesses. In the translated texts, there are different meanings arising from different respondents as illustrated above. Seven respondents used possessive pronoun “your” instead of possessive pronoun “one’s” to stand for the Kiimenti words “kia mwene”. They also explained the meaning of the word “nkoronjiru” in English to read as “make you vomit” instead of using a single word that will express the feeling and not the action of vomiting. The feeling implied in the source text is nausea. This means respondents have altered the meaning of the source text. Eleven respondents literally translated the proverb but had not brought out the figurative meaning intended in the source text. Out of the twenty respondents only five had translated the proverb literally. Four respondents introduced an of-phrase (of a person) to indicate possession instead of using a possessive pronoun. The interpretive theory guided the researcher in analyzing the resemblance between the original and the translated text and to distinguish between the basic and the interpretive meanings of the objects mentioned in the text. This theory was used to determine whether the equivalent expressions have been used appropriately in the translation. Therefore, the phrase “of a person” in the English translation is ungrammatical hence the mistranslation.

Four respondents did not translate the proverb. Mwiti (2004) also mistranslated the proverb. In his translation he used possessive pronoun “you” instead of “one’s” and further explained that the owner of the sore will not vomit yet the source text means that or refers to the feeling and not the action of throwing up.
22. Kinya mpaka inkuru ninyunyaga iria ria rwitha.

5 respondents: Even an old cat drinks raw milk.

6 respondents: Even an old cat loves fresh milk.

4 respondents: An old cat also drinks raw milk.

5 respondents: Even an old cat likes raw milk.

Author’s translation: *Even an old cat loves fresh milk.*

In the above proverb the word that was of interest in our study is the word “ninyunyaga” which can be translated as “drinks” in English. Five respondents out of twenty translated it correctly whereas eleven had slight different variations of the initial sentences. They used the word “love” and “like” instead of the word “drinks” which implies that the old cat has strong affection for milk instead of consuming it. This shows meaning loss in the translated version because the word “love” as used in the translation means that the old cat has a strong affection for milk yet the original text implies that the old cat consumes or takes in milk through the mouth.

Four respondents introduced a conjunction of addition “also” in the sentence to mean that besides the old cat doing another activity it also consumes the milk. This renders meaning loss at a structural level of the source text. Mwiti (2004) used the verb “love” instead of the verb “drinks”. Guided by the relevance theory, which focuses on choice of words in order to acquire the intended meaning, the study was able to establish the most appropriate words for the original words in the translation. The theory asserts that a translator should choose code according to the intention of the original author and cognitive environment of target language text reader. In this way we were able to find out optimal relevance between the translation and
context. Therefore, in the above proverb the word “drinks” is the most appropriate for the translation.

Majority of the respondents explained or used phrases that are close in meaning with the words in the source text, for example, in the proverb “kironda kia mwene giti nkoronjiru”. Explaining the meaning of the word “nkoronjiru” would make it easier for the English receptors to process the message. Eleven out of twenty respondents paraphrased the proverb with only five of them giving a literal translation. Four of them did not translate the proverb. It can therefore be argued that there can never be a total equivalence between languages that are not related.

It also shows that respondents were aware that if they translated the proverbs directly as the translator had done would distort the original meaning, hence there would be no interpretive resemblance between source text and target text.

Majority of the respondents explained the meanings of the proverbs as they interpreted them. The explanations they gave corresponded with the researcher’s views that proverbs entail the use of figurative language and therefore, could not just be understood at literal level.

Many of the respondents provided English proverbs that were close in meaning with those in Kiimenti. This implies that if one is able to find an expression that would make the understanding of the target text simpler, then he/she should use them in his/her translation instead of going for a direct translation. He should give a brief explanation on the original so that the receptors can be in a position to link the ideas being translated.

The respondents were expected to explain whether they experienced difficulties while translating the proverbs or not and to give reasons. Out of twenty respondents, fifteen said that they experienced difficulties while translating proverbs whereas five said they did not.
The pie chart below illustrate this.

**Figure1. Percentage of diffculty in translation of proverbs.**

25% of the respondents reported that they did not experience difficulties but 75% of the respondents reported that they experienced difficulties.

From this analysis, it can be said that majority of the respondents experienced difficulties while translating Kiimenti proverbs. They attributed it to the fact that the two languages are not related linguistically and culturally and therefore, they lacked correct words during translation into English. They seemed to notice that direct translation would not capture the intended meaning therefore, majority paraphrased the proverbs in their translation.
The respondents gave some reasons as to why they experienced difficulties while translating the proverbs. The reasons include:

- Some words could not be translated into English.
- Some words lost meaning when translated into English.
- Some words lost their aesthetic value when translated into English.
- Finding equivalent proverbs in English was not easy.

4.3.2 Data from idiomatic expressions.

Both the respondents’ and Mwiti’s (2004) translations are written down. This is done to illustrate the difference between the author’s translation and that of the respondents’

Below are examples of responses from respondents.

23. Gwikia Mutu

8 respondents: To take flour

3 respondents: To deliver flour

5 respondents: To die

4 respondents: To kick the bucket

Author’s translation: *To deliver flour.*

Eleven respondents gave a literal translation which did not capture the meaning of the source text. The Kiimenti idiomatic expression “gwikia mutu” means to die, therefore, when translated
as “to deliver flour” it means the flour is being transported from one place to a given destination hence the mistranslation. The words “take” and “deliver” are synonyms that are a literal translation of word “gwikia”. Mwiti(2004) has used the word “deliver” to mean that the flour was transported to a certain destination. This had led to a different meaning from the intended meaning of the source text. Five respondents explained the meaning of the expression whereas four respondents gave an equivalent expression in English. Relevance Theory asserts that a translator must make inference according to the behavior of the original author and the efficient contextual effect on one hand, and on the other he has to show his understanding of the original author’s intention to the target text reader so that the reader can make inference and get contextual effect. Guided by the relevance Theory we were able to give an expression that had an equivalent meaning to that of the source text for the intended meaning to be achieved by the readers of the translation. It can be deduced that meaning can only be achieved from a given context. That is why majority gave a literal translation of the text which did not capture the figurative meaning.


7 respondents: Shouts! Shouts! Do not help.

3 respondents: Yells! Yells! Do not help.

4 respondents: Screams! Screams! Do not help.

6 respondents: ……………… does not help.

Author’s translation: *What is the use of crying “Ui”, “Ui” and it will not help?*
In the above idiomatic expression there is the use of sounds “uui! uui!” to indicate that one is screaming which does not help because the action has already taken place. Fourteen respondents used words “shouts”, “yells” and “screams” which are nouns that express the actions done to produce the sounds written in the expression. This is misleading because the source text has written down the sounds produced during the action. Six respondents left out the sounds in their translations and translated the rest of the expression. Mwiti (2004) converted the declarative sentence into an interrogative sentence and put the sounds under quotation marks. This has led to mistranslation of the expression because the translator did not translate the onomatopoeic construction “uui uui” into English. Target readers who are not conversant with Kiimenti language will not comprehend that” uui uui” are sounds produced during yelling and not words.

Majority of the respondents gave a literal translation but noted that the initial implied meaning was not captured in the translation. This is because idiomatic expressions entail the use of figurative language and therefore, could not just be understood at the literal levels. The figurative use of language is coined from the cultural experiences and the observations that have been made in the environment of the Meru community.

Under this section our study was guided by cultural theory of Translation. Under this theory language and culture are seen to be closely related and that both aspects must be considered for translation. Language is seen to express culture, therefore, linguistic units can never be fully understood in isolation from the particular cultural phenomenon for which they are symbols. The theory was used to explain how culture affects translation because the languages that were involved were culturally unrelated. Texts were therefore translated in their cultural contexts.
Most of the idiomatic expressions are expressed in phrases and therefore once they are translated into English they lose their original meaning in source text. Phrases in English do not render a complete thought therefore it has to be converted into a sentence in order to express an idea. For example the idiomatic expression “gutwira mata kibara” means to bless through the action of spitting on the chest. A receptor who is not familiar with kiimenti customs may not understand what the phrase “to spit on the chest” means. Therefore a translator should explain the meaning of the idiomatic expression rather than give a literal translation.

Onomatopoeic contractions were a big challenge to the respondents just as they were to the translator (Mwiti 2004). They are formulated from the sound made. They therefore cannot be translated in any other way. The translator should tell the receptors of the target text that those are sounds and not words for example, in the idiomatic expression “uui! uui! itigunaga” the translator should explain that the sounds “uui! uui!” Are not words but sounds to indicate that one is screaming.

The respondents were expected to say whether they experienced difficulties while translating the idiomatic expressions or not and to give reasons.

Out of the twenty respondents, twelve said that they experienced difficulties while translating the idiomatic expressions whereas eight said they did not.

The pie chart below illustrates this.
40% of the respondents reported that they experienced difficulties while translating the idiomatic expressions from Kiimenti to English is not an easy task. They noted that there were no equivalent English expressions for the Kiimenti idiomatic expressions.

It is therefore clear that out of the respondents involved in the study, majority agreed that there were no equivalent English expressions for the Kiimenti idiomatic expressions.

They respondents gave some reasons as to why they experienced difficulties while translating the idiomatic expressions. Firstly, some said Kiimenti words did not have exact English equivalents. Secondly, the idiomatic expressions are drawn from the day to day activities of the Meru people, their environment and their perceptions of life. The respondents were not sure whether such experiences were also the same in other cultures and how they could be captured in English...
To conclude this section, it can be pointed out that translation of proverb and idiomatic expressions need to capture the intended meaning and have a similar effect on the receptors in the same way the original text did. The interpretive theory guided this study in that it enabled the researcher to detect instances where there were no satisfactory resemblances between the source text and target text. The translator also should provide his interpretation in order to assist the receptors in processing the target text. It can be noted that Kiimenti proverbs that have English equivalent are easier to interpret than those that are literally translated. Interpretive resemblance can be achieved through explanation of the message intended in the source text.

4.4 Factors affecting translation

The data presentation and analysis is drawn from Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions that exhibit meaning loss after being translated into English (2004). After identification and explanation of instances of meaning loss from the book, our study further explains the possible factors that contribute to meaning loss in translation of Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions. The data was grouped into two broad categories. These are similar to those used in Wangia (2003). These are linguistic factors which comprise lexical and structural factors and socio-cultural factors which comprise both cultural and figurative language use factors.

4.4.1 Linguistic factors

Linguistic factors exert a direct and crucial influence upon the process of translation. It can safely be assumed that inter-lingual differences constitute a main source of translation difficulties. In this category, lexical and structural factors and their impact in translation are illustrated.
4.4.1.1 Lexical factors

In this section, attention was given to words also called lexical items. Crystal (2003) notes that when one language takes lexemes from another, the new items are usually called loan words. The translator from Kiimenti to English (Mwiti 2004) has retained Kiimenti words in his translation. These loan words are likely to lead to incomprehensibility to English receptors who are not aware of the meanings of these Kiimenti words. This means that the message from the source language that was to be conveyed is not captured in the target language.

For example: The word “mbara”. (See page 32, proverb 3) The translator used the word “mbara” in the English text and put it under quotation marks. This implies that probably he did not get an equivalent word in English. The use of this term without explaining what it means would hamper a complete comprehension of the text.

4.4.1.2 Structural factors

Structural errors are related to the structure of sentences. These occur when sentences in the language of data collection involve grammatical and syntactical structures that do not exist in English. Syntactical style, as Ercikan (1998) points out, is one of the most difficult features to carry over from one language to another. This occurs when sentences are resistant to translation because of incompatibility between languages in terms of the structure.

Under this section our study focused on structural errors that were evident in some of the expressions the author used in his translation. Guided by the researcher’s knowledge of the Standard English, it was identified that there were errors in some samples of the translated texts which led to incomprehension of the text by English receptors as illustrated below:

(See page 37, idiomatic expression 10 ) Kugwata mara na rwi (to hold intestines with the palm). The author translated it as; to hold one’s intestines in the palm. The original text does not really
tell whether it is one’s intestines or someone else’s. There is introduction of a possessive pronoun “one’s” in the translation which alters the original sentence structure hence causing mistranslation.

4.4.2.0 Socio-cultural factors

Wangia (2003) observes that there can be language problems attributed to social and cultural differences between source text and target text. Every community uses language in a peculiar way to express its culture. Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions were developed as a result of day to day activities of the Meru people.

4.4.2.1 Cultural factors

It is partly through language that cultures find expression. According to Karamanian (2002) translation entails the process of cultural decoding, re-coding and en-coding. A culture expresses its idiosyncrasies in a way that is “culture bound.” Cultural words, proverbs, idiomatic expressions, kinship terms and colour terms have their origin and use intrinsically and uniquely bound to the culture concerned. These words have meanings highly dependent on a cultural context; therefore, they pose a particularly difficult dilemma for the interpreter. The difficult arises from the fact that even words that may be taken to have equivalent meaning across languages may vary in terms of the connotations and nuances they have for speakers across cultures. This is further complicated by the fact that some expressions like idioms have non-literal meaning while others like proverbs may have literal and non-literal meaning. It is for such reasons that Gonzalez et-al (1991) notes that translating the cultural perspective conveyed in the language is the ultimate challenge to the interpreter.
It can be noted that the proverbs and idiomatic expressions looked at in our study were developed within the traditional setting of the Ameru. They therefore express experiences many of which could only be peculiar to the natives. Some of these texts when literally translated are likely to have totally different meanings from what was intended in Kiimenti.

Below is an example that illustrates this argument.

(See page 40, proverb 14) “Guti muka wenjagirwa mbwi kwa ng’ina” translated as “no woman will have her gray hair cut at her mother’s home”.

The Meru girls had their hair shaved by their relatives. As every woman was supposed to marry and leave her mother’s home, it was unlikely they would develop gray hair while in their father’s homestead. Divorce was illegal in the Meru culture. This proverb as per the Kiimenti customs would be interpreted to mean once something has been “sold” it is never returned. Therefore, receptors unfamiliar with Kiimenti customs would find it difficult to comprehend. The translator has briefly described the aspect of girls getting married forever. After marriage negotiations are done in the Meru Community, a dowry is paid and the girl is supposed to leave her father’s home to her husband’s home. She is to live there forever.

4.4.2.2 Figurative language use

Figurative language is a language that does not mean what it says. Language which means or intends to mean what it says and which uses words in the standard sense derived from the common practice of ordinary speakers is said to be literal. Figurative language deliberately interferes with literal usage by its assumption that terms literary connected with one object can be transferred to other object (Hawker, 1977).
Under this category, figurative language used in the proverbs and idiomatic expressions is considered. The figurative language used in Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions are drawn from the Meru customs hence their translation to English will not enable the readers to establish the source text’s intended meaning.

An illustration is discussed in this category to clear the claim that meaning is lost after translation.

(See page 37, idiomatic expression) “Kugwata mara na rwí” translated as “to hold ones intestines in the palm”.

The above text illustrates the importance of figurative language in translation. The rendering of this idiomatic expression into English reflects a meaning different from that of the source text. The author’s translation is however only the surface meaning of the idiomatic expression. The use of figurative involves the transference of meaning from the normal literal meaning to a “special” meaning. Its special meaning is that a person is in a state of anxiety as the translator notes after his translation.

4.5 Ways of improving translation

The third objective sought to suggest possible ways of improving translation of Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions were recommended. There are several strategies that a translator can apply in a bid to translate lexical items that do not have equivalents in the target language. Most of these entail coming up with a new term in the target to fill the missing gap. Klaudy (2003) discussed the following strategies.
1. **Generalization**: This is whereby the source language unit of a more specific meaning is replaced by a target language unit of a more general meaning. For example, in the Kiimenti idiomatic expression “kuna mburi kuguru” could be generalized as “to impregnate a girl” in English.

2. **Circumlocution**: This is where explanation or use of many words to say something that could be said in one word or in a few words. For example, in the Kiimenti idiomatic expression “ncamba iti matina” could be explained in many words as “the strength of a hero is not judged by the size of his buttocks”.

3. **Addition**: This is where the new meaningful elements that cannot be found in the original appear in the translation to supply background knowledge for the target language readers. For example, in the Kiimenti idiomatic expression “ndatanwa kairi” which is translated as “I would be circumcised a second time” would be meaningless to the receptors who are not familiar with Kiimenti language, therefore, the translation should strive to make it understandable to readers of target language by adding extra information by explaining that in Kiimenti there are swear words and phrases. "ndatanwa kairi” is an example of a swear phrase. In Meru community, circumcision is a rite of passage from childhood into adulthood. It involves removal of the foreskin of a boy. The operation is extremely painful. When the phrase “ndatanwa kairi” is used, it means that the person would rather undergo circumcision which is quite painful a second time than do the event he/she is swearing against. The translator should therefore translate the idiomatic expression into English and add extra information to indicate that the phrase is a swear word as “I would be circumcised a second time (swear word)”
4. Omission: Lexical omission means dropping meaningful lexical elements of the source language text. For example, in the Kiimenti expression “gwikia mutu” translated as “to deliver flour”, the direct translation would be omitted and the translator would give an English equivalent or near equivalent like “to die”

4.6.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.6.1 Introduction

This section deals with various types of factors affecting translation that lead to meaning loss. The data got from the respondents is also discussed in this section, and ways in which the translation could be improved are suggested here.

4.6.2 Translation problems

These factors have been classified into two broad categories. These are similar to those used in wangia (2003). These are linguistic and socio-cultural categories.

4.6.2.1 Linguistic inequivalence

Linguistic factors exert a direct and crucial influence upon the process of translation. In this category, lexical and structural factors and their impact in translation are illustrated.

4.6.2.1.1 Lexical problem

These are various lexical items that were a challenge to both the translator and the respondents in translating. This is due to such items lacking their equivalents in the target language. During data analysis, it was however realized that there were English expressions that could be used to expound such lexical items. The use of foreign items in translation reduces the chances of
comprehension. The translator should strive to look for strategies that would enable the meaning intended by these lexical items to be made available for the receptors of the translation. For example: The translator could paraphrase the items that are problem.

Illustration

Kiimenti idiomatic expression: Uui! Uui! itigunaga

Author’s translation: What is the use of crying “ui, ui” and it will not help?

The author’s translation contains a foreign words “uui, uui”. This hinders a complete comprehension of the original text by foreigners who do not know the meaning of the word. It is from such illustrations that it can be suggested that the translator should adopt a method that would enable him to render an appropriate translation. Definition of foreign terms helps the readers in interpreting the source word. The term uui, uui is an interjection of deep grief. The translation can be simpler to interpret if the term “sadness” is used instead of transferring the word “uui, uui” in the TT. The target text could then read “sadness, does not help.”

4.6.2.1.2 Tense

The difference between the tense of the source text and that of the target text gives different information.

Illustration

Kiimenti idiomatic expression: Ari togi atiagaa mwanki

Author’s translation: Where smoke is coming out, there must be fire.
The above kiimenti idiomatic expression is presented in present simple tense. Translated as “where smoke is coming out, there must be fire.” The word “coming” here is in the progressive aspect and we need the help of the verb ‘do’ to mark tense. The translation should therefore read “where there is smoke there does not lack fire”

4.6.2.1.3 Structural errors

The omission of words like adverbs could lead to incomprehension of the text. For example: In the idiomatic expression ‘Antu batiumbi umwe’ (People are not created the same). The adverb ‘not’ is omitted in the translation hence the receptors do not capture the intended meaning in the ST. Translated by (mwiti 2004) as “people are created differently” he omits the negative adverb ‘not’. The kiimenti word ‘ti’ is used to negative the sentences. However in the idiomatic expression “Antu batigagua umwe”. The author translated it as ‘People do not understand in the same way.’ The kiimenti proverb word ‘ti’ is used to mark negative aspect of the sentence hence the translation “people do not understand in the same way”

4.6.2.1.4 Tone

Kiimenti is a tonal language. A translator needs to know that. He should therefore be specific on what he intends to pass across and this can only be achieved if he uses tone appropriately. It can be noted that tone is always difficult to mark in kiimenti language. Most writers leave the task to the readers to identify what meaning they are trying to pass across.

Illustration:

Kiimenti proverb: kinya mpaka inkuru ninyunyaga iria ria rwitha.

The word ‘ iria’ may mean many things depending on the sound the tone is assigned to.
/ria/ may mean – milk

- Sea

- Weeds

The context in which the word is used determines what meaning is intended by the speakers. The translator should therefore have this information so as to render a correct translation of the proverb.

4.6.2.2 socio-cultural factors

There can be language problems attributed to social and cultural differences between SL and TL communities. Every language has ways of expressing ideas, values, and beliefs etc which reflect the culture of the community that uses it (Wangia 2003: 170). The proverbs and idiomatic expressions in this study were developed from daily activities of the Ameru people. They observed their customs and came up with proverbs and idiomatic expressions that were relevant to their situations.

Translating proverbs and idiomatic expressions will require the translator to be aware of the SL cultural circumstances under which they were formed and try to reproduce them in the appropriate manner that will enable them to capture the intended purpose in the TT for the receptors to interpret their meaning correctly.

4.6.2.2.1 Figurative language use

Different communities have different ways in which they use the figurative language. As it has been observed above, figurative language is drawn from the ways of life of the given community. The various objects and ideas that they deem fit to be used in figurative language
may only be peculiar to them. Translators therefore need to be very careful while translating figures of speech.


1. Translate the figure of speech exactly, word-for-word
2. Rephrase it.
3. Translate it into an equivalent figure of speech in the target language
4. Translate it using literal language – This of course gets the point across but destroys the imagery of the figure of speech.
5. Use the figure of speech but provide all the necessary referents so that any listener will understand it, that is, explain it.

This shows that translators should not perform literal translation where a ‘special’ meaning is involved. For example: the idiomatic expressions “Gutwira mata kibara” which the author translates as “to spit on the chest” The figurative meaning of this idiomatic expression is to ‘bless’ through the act spitting on the chest. Taken directly as translated above does not capture its original meaning. Therefore the receptors who are not familiar with the figurative nature of this expression will find it difficult to decode the original meaning of it.

4.6.3 Discussion of data from the respondents

In this section, observations that were made from responses given by the respondents who were involved in the study are discussed.
4.6.3.1 Data from the proverbs

Section one of the questionnaire dealt with proverbs. Observations that were made are discussed here. It was noted that lexical terms that were transferred directly into the translation by (mwiti 2004) also presented a challenge for the respondents.

Illustration:

K.P: Cookera akui, Nturutimi yacookere Nciru, niyo itwire

R.T: Return nearer, Nturutimi returned at Nciru that is where it lives.

A.T: Go back while still near home. Those of Nturutimi age group who returned back at Nciru are the ones still there.

Majority of the respondents explained or used phrases that are close in meaning with the term ‘Nturutimi’ which is a name given to a certain age group. Explaining the meaning of the word would make it easier for the receptors to process the message.

Majority of the respondents that is fifteen out of twenty paraphrased the proverbs with only five of them giving a literal translation. It can therefore be argued that there can never be a total equivalence between languages that are not related. It also shows that respondents were aware that if they translated the proverbs directly as the translator had done would distort the original meaning; hence there would be no interpretive resemblance between the ST and TT.

Majority of the respondents explained the meanings of the proverbs as they could interpret them. The explanations they gave corresponded with the researcher’s views that proverbs entail the use of figurative language and therefore, could not just be understood at literal levels.
Many of the respondents could provide English proverbs that were close in meaning with those in kiimenti. This implies that if one is able to find an expression that would make the understanding of the TT simpler, then he/she should use them in his/her translation instead of going for a direct translation. He should give a brief explanation on the original so that the receptors can be in a position to link the ideas being translated.

**Illustrations of proverbs with their near English equivalents**

1. K.P: Kurerera njoka rukune igiuka igoka nagwe
   (Rearing a snake in firewood finally it will bite you.)
   E.P: To be hoist with one`s own petard.

2. K.P: Batiiji nku botaga ncang`i
   (Those who do not know hard firewood are content with twigs)
   E.P Experience is the best teacher.

The respondents gave some reasons as to why they consider the translation difficult. These were:

- Some words could not be translated into English
- Some words lost meaning which translated into English
- Some words lost their aesthetic value when translated into English
- Finding equivalent proverbs in English was not easy.
4.6.3.2 Data from idiomatic expressions

Section two of the questionnaire dealt with the idiomatic expressions. Observations that were made are discussed here.

Onomatopoeic constructions were a big challenge to the respondents just as they were to the translator (mwiti 2004). They are formulated from the sound made. They therefore cannot be translated in any other way. The translator should tell the receptors of the TT that these are sounds and not words. For example, in the idiomatic expression “uui, uui! itigunaga “ the translator should explain that the sounds ‘ uui, uui are not words but sounds to indicate that one is yelling.

Most of the idiomatic expressions are expressed in phrases and therefore once they are translated into English they lose their original meaning in ST. Phrases in English do not render a complete thought therefore it has to be converted into a sentence in order to express an idea. For example the idiomatic expressions “gutwira mata kibara” means to bless through the action of spitting on the chest. A receptor who is not familiar with kiimenti customs may not understand what the phrase “ to spit on the chest” means. Therefore a translator should explain the meaning of the idiomatic expression rather than give a literal translation.

Majority of the respondents gave a literal translation but noted that the initial implied meaning was not captured in the translation .This is because idiomatic expressions entail the use of figurative language and therefore, could not just be understood at the literal levels .The figurative use of language is coined from the cultural experiences and the observations that have been made in the environment of the Meru community.
Majority of the respondents said that the translation was difficult and gave various reasons. Firstly some said Kiimenti words did not have exact English equivalents. Secondly, the idiomatic expressions are drawn from the day to day activities of the Meru people, their environment and their perceptions of life. The respondents were not sure whether such experiences were also the same in other culture

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at data analysis, presentation and discussion. This was done under three headings. The data was analyzed qualitatively. The next chapter will give a summary, conclusion and recommendations based on the undertaken study.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with a summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study. It summarizes the findings from the data that was used in this study. It gives a brief view of the theories that helped this study. The recommendations on what the translator should try to do in order to provide an accurate translation are also addressed. Areas that could be investigated for further research are also suggested. A conclusion of the entire study is given.

5.1 Summary of findings

This study was guided by three objectives; to identify instances of meaning loss in selected translated Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions into English; to explain the possible factors that contribute to meaning loss; to suggest possible ways of improving the translation.

For the first objective, texts that exhibit the phenomenon of meaning loss were identified from the book “Kimeru 1200 proverbs” (Mwiti 2004). These texts were summarized then categorized into four. Under each category, five illustrations were analyzed and explained. It was observed that some of the sampled texts could fall into more than one category. This shows that a text could fall both in the lexical and figurative language categories. For example, in the idiomatic expression “kugiira mwonyo igombe” (to go for salt at igombe salt lick) the translator borrows the term “igombe” and uses it as a foreign word. This term could be analyzed both under lexical and figurative language categories. If a foreign term is used in the translation, the receptors of the
translated text would not comprehend the message. Therefore, the translator has to explain what the term means if he cannot find a word equivalent to it in the target language.

For the second objective various factors that contribute to meaning loss emerged from the analysis. These were lexical, structural, cultural and figurative language. In the lexical category, the translator used Kiimenti terms alongside English ones. This hindered those who are not conversant with the meaning of these Kiimenti words from comprehending the texts. These Kiimenti terms would be meaningless to them. In the analysis of the responses given by the respondents, it was noted that the words that were a problem to the translator were also a problem to the respondents. This is because these terms do not have English equivalents. The translator would have used phrases to explain these terms to make it possible for the receptors to understand them. It was found out that there are phrases that can be used to capture the meanings intended in Kiimenti. The lexical problems were as a result of direct transfer of Kiimenti terms in the translation. This led to meaning loss.

In the structural category, we noted that there was use of wrong tense and obscure expressions that led to meaning loss. We also noted the attempt to replace pronouns with nouns that led to obscurity. Introduction of wrong possessive pronouns and nouns was also noted.

In the cultural and figurative language categories, the translator used Kiimenti expressions that expressed the cultural issues that are peculiar only to the speakers of Kiimenti. Most of the Kiimenti proverbs are derived from a close observation of natural and social realities of the Meru community like the activities of the council of elders. The direct translation of these proverbs into English does not capture the normally intended use of the source text. A proverb in Kiimenti is not necessarily a proverb when translated into English. Therefore, a translator should strive to
get an equivalent proverb if possible in English. This would enhance comprehension of translated Kiimenti proverb into English language. For example in the Kiimenti proverb “guitaitani gucionera” which is directly translated as “travelling is seeing” would not capture the meaning intended in Kiimenti. Instead of the author’s literal translation, he could have used an English proverb like “travel broadens the mind” whose meaning is closer to that of the Meru idiomatic expression.

These categories pointed out practices and customs that are peculiar to Kimeru culture in the source text and were difficult to translate into English because Kiimenti and English do not share a common cultural background.

It was noted that most respondents did not give direct translations of the proverbs. They paraphrased the proverbs and idiomatic expressions and gave explanations of what each proverb and idiomatic expression meant. Therefore, it was noted that categories that contain figurative languages should not be directly translated but the underlying meaning should be explained to the reader of the target text. If, the translator cannot find an equivalent expression.

For the third objective, possible ways of improving translation of Kimeru proverbs and idiomatic expressions were recommended. There are several strategies that a translator can apply in a bid to translate lexical items that do not have equivalents in the target language. Most of these entail coming up with a new term in the target text to fill the missing gap. It is noted that a perfect translation is impossible. The translation focusing on the purpose of writing the source text is however possible.
From the foregoing summary of the translation problems observed in Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions, the following deductions can be made. There are texts in the book “Kimeru 1200 proverbs” by Mwiti (2004) that cannot be accessible to many English readers.

This is because the translator has done a direct translation even where figurative language has been used. The translator has also borrowed and used Kiimenti items in the translations without explaining them. There were difficulties in comprehension of the translated texts because the source language and target language do not share the same cultural background. It was difficult to get suitable terms that would deliver the same messages in the two languages.

The study employed three theories: The Interpretive Theory, The Relevance Theory and The Cultural Theory of Translation

The Interpretive Theory, which talks about resemblance between source text and target text, was very useful in the study. It enabled us to distinguish the difference in meaning between source text and the target text. It also enabled us to understand the importance of using equivalents where possible or employing other translation strategies that would enable the translator to maintain the interpretive resemblance between source text and target text.

The Relevance Theory, which focuses on choice of words in order to acquire the intended meanings, was very vital in this study. It asserts that a translator should choose code according to the intention of the source text and the cognitive environment of target text reader. This theory enabled us to establish the most appropriate words for the original words in the translation. The study required its use because we were dealing with meaning loss.
The Cultural Theory of Translation captured instances where there were foreign terms in the translations. The study was able to demonstrate that the differences on cultural backgrounds of the source text and target text should be considered while translating to avoid meaning loss.

5.2 Conclusion

The study has investigated numerous aspects in translations. The following conclusions were made:

1. The study has shown the importance of understanding the meaning of the source texts that are to be communicated by source texts and how the translator should strive to achieve a better translation.

2. The study revealed various issues that may make translation difficult to be understood by the receptors of the target text. These are linguistic and socio-cultural factors. It has been noted that attention needs to be given to these factors of the language for an appropriate translation to be achieved.

3. It was noted that use of foreign terms in the translation leads to incomprehensibility of the target text. If an equivalent term is not available to be used in the translation, the translator should therefore adopt a strategy that will ensure that the message he meant to communicate is easily received by the TL receptors.

4. For problems that lie within socio-cultural category, the translator should adopt a strategy that would enable him to capture the intended meaning. Since a literal translation of Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions that entail figurative use of language and are cultural bound, would only lead to their surface meaning and not the metaphorical meanings.
5.3 Recommendations

From the data analyzed in this study, some recommendations can be made.

1. It can be suggested that the translation of the text that was investigated should adopt appropriate strategies that would ensure interpretive resemblance between the source text and the target text. Direct translation of these texts is seen to have contributed to meaning loss.

2. The translation should strive to use near equivalent terms or phrases so that the meaning of the text is made clear to the target text receptors. The languages being investigated (Kiimenti and English) are not linguistically and culturally related. Therefore, there can be no equivalence for all terms. It can therefore, be suggested that the translator should adopt the strategy called circumlocution.

   Circumlocution is a strategy which Klaudy (2003) asserts that it entails explaining or using many words to say something that could be said in one word or in a few words.

3. The interpretive Theory demands that the translator understands the source text and re-words that understanding in a different language. This means that the translator can use utterances to represent another. It can therefore be recommended that translators should strive to find the most appropriate strategy that will enable them to render an accurate translation.

4. It can also be recommended that translators to strive to find appropriate linguistic ways and translation strategies that will ensure that the source text is made accessible for the target text in the best way possible. For example the translator can paraphrase Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions that have no equivalents in English.
5.4 Suggestions for further research

This study has discussed some of the issues that may lead to meaning loss in translation of Kiimenti proverbs and idiomatic expressions into English. The following suggestions have been made:

1. It can be suggested that a similar research be carried out in other genres of oral literature like poetry, narratives and songs.

2. Another area of study is on other Kenyan languages that have their oral materials translated into English to establish if the issues discussed in this study also exist in other works.

3. A research be carried out to establish other strategies that can be used to translate texts that contain figurative language use.

5.5 Conclusion

This study has investigated numerous aspects in translations. It has shown the importance of understanding the meaning of the source texts and how the translator should strive to achieve a better translation. The study adapted four factors that influence translation. These were: lexical, structural, cultural and figurative language. The analysis revealed various issues that may make the translation difficult to be understood by the receptors of the target text. The findings from the research have shown some of the implications of the translation of proverbs and idiomatic expressions from Kiimenti into English language.

Recommendations on what the translators who are faced with difficult terms in translation should adopt have also been made. The study has gone further to suggest ways in which the
translation should be approached in order to come up with a good text. It can be noted that these
are only suggestions and may not be conclusive.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1

CATEGORIES OF PRIMARY DATA

Lexical category

1. K.P: Kuurira maagati ta Kiundu.
   A.T: To be a victim of indecision like Kiundu.

   A.T: Anybody can miss. Even M’Nkubi missed the nose of the bush buck.

   A.T: Men do not have ‘mbara.’

4. K.P: Guti mutanirwa kwaitha uri ndigi ndaja.
   A.T: Nobody is circumcised away from his relatives has a long ‘ndigi’.

   A.T: He did not translate the proverb.

Cultural category

1. K.P: Guti nyoni injega mwerene.
   A.T: There is no nice bird in the millet.
2. K.P: Guikira kiama iratu.
A.T: To put the shoes on the feet of the council of elders.

A.T: Women have no age group.

A.T: No woman will have her gray hair cut at her mother’s home.

5. K.P: Cookia mwari (iriigi) ,ni ciijaga ciingene.
A.T: Close the door, hyenas might run in while chasing one another.

**Structural category**

1. K.P: Ari togi atiagaa mwaki.
A.T: Where smoke is coming out, there must be fire.

2. K.P: Ciitanagia urea ikwiganua(ikwendana)
A.T: Animals or age mates keep company as they understand each other.

A.T: A guest is like a river, he/she passes quickly.

A.T: He came back from the grave’s mouth.
5. K.I: Kugwata mara na rwi

A.T: To hold one’s intestines in the palm.

**Figurative language use**

1. K.I: Kugira mwonyo Igombe.

A.T: To go for salt at Igombe salt lick.

2. K.I: Ita ugikinyaga muthwa.

A.T: Go stepping on termites.


A.T: No elephant is unable to carry its own tusks.

4. K.I: Kuthwa ja riu.

A.T: To set like the sun.

5. K.I: Kumama toro mbithi.

A.T: To sleep light sleep.
APPENDIX 2

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RESPONDENTS

Please answer the following questions. Any information you give will be treated confidentially and will be used for the purpose of academic research.

Name (optional) ____________________________________________________________

Age ________________________________________________________________

SECTION A

Proverbs

Q 1 (a) Translate the following proverbs into English.

1. Comba ya mwangia ikubunja kambi.

2. Cookera akui, Nturutimi yacookera Nciru, Niyo itwire.


4. Kurerera njoka rukune igiuka igoka nagwe.

5. Kinya mpaka inkuru ninyungaga iria ria rwitha.

(b) Translate the following proverbs into Kimeru.

1. He who has a quiver has arrows.

2. Experience is the best teacher.

3. What is spoken cannot be taken back.
4. Let the sleeping dog lie.

5. To make a mountain out of an ant hill.

(c) Do you consider the translation of the above proverbs to be difficult? If yes, briefly give reasons for your views.

SECTION B

Idiomatic expressions

Q 1 (a) Translate the following idiomatic expressions into English.

1. Gwikia mutu.

2. Kuura ruuji na ntiri.


4. Njoka ya miromo iiri.
5. Uui! uui! Itigunaga.

(b) Translate the following English idiomatic expressions into Kimeru.

1. Travel broadens the mind.

2. Silence is golden.

3. To be swept by the current of the flood.


5. All things have a beginning.

(c) Do you consider the translation of the above idiomatic expressions to be difficult? If yes, briefly give reasons for your views.
APPENDIX 3

SAMPLES OF RESPONSES FROM RESPONDENTS

In the next pages are five samples of responses from various respondents.