A comparative translation text analysis of the book of Song of songs in the Mbala And Mushindo Bemba Bibles

Translation of the Bible has played a very critical role in the evangelization Programmes of the Christian Faith throughout the world and Zambia in particular. The translated Bibles have provided an avenue for communication between divergent foreign languages and cultures. In Zambia, however, some translated Bibles have been a bone of contention among Church denominations as their members have sought to know which version was more accurate than the other. For instance, The Bemba Christian speech community, belonging to different church denominations, has had to choose between the Mushindo (KJV) Bemba version and the Mbala (Douay-Rheims) Bemba version. In the same vein, the translated Bemba version of the Bible used by the Catholic Church in Zambia is different from the Bemba version preferred by the Protestant Church. This study sought to investigate the linguistic differences and variations between the translation of the book of Song of Songs in the Mbala and Mushindo Versions of the Bemba Bible. It is meant to provide an understanding into the root causes of dissensions among the Christian users of the two Bemba versions. An intra-lingual comparative analysis of the translated book of Song of Songs was carried out to establish the differences and variations. The research employed Gideon Toury’s (1995) Descriptive Translation Studies Theory (DTS) to critically examine the products of translation, the processes used during translating and the intended function of the end product. In addition, the study also looked at the challenges encountered during the translation exercise. Data was collected qualitatively through document analysis and supplemented by interviews with individual respondents. The respondents included 14 Christian adults purposefully selected. Four of the respondents were translators and 10 were ordinary congregants from both the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church respectively. The study area included Kasama and Mbala. Data was analysed qualitatively. The findings of the study show that the translators of the Mbala Bemba Bible used more of the target text norms than the Mushindo Bemba Bible translators who were more inclined towards the source text norms. The results obtained show that 38.5% of the strategies used to translate the Mbala Bemba Bible were direct procedures as compared to 46.3% for the Mushindo version. As regards the oblique translation strategies, the study discovered that the Mbala Bemba Bible scored 45.3% while the Mushindo Bemba Bible had 32.6%. From the results, it is evident that the function of the Mbala version was to domesticate the Bible so that the target text recipients perceived the Bible as a foreign text written in their Language. Based on the above findings, it is important to carry out more linguistic investigations on Bible translation to avert possible dissentions among Church denominations in Zambia. Key words: Mushindo Bemba Bible, Mbala Bemba Bible, Domestication, Foreignisation and Intra-lingual.

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