

**CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATING GREETING ROUTINES FROM SWAHILI
TO ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY OF “KIFO KISIMANI” AND “MAUA KWENYE
JUA LA ASUBUHI.”**

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DECLARATION

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**This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as the
University supervisors.**

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PROF. KITHAKA WA MBERIA

DATE

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PROF. JOHN HAMU HABWE

DATE

DEDICATION

TO

My dear parents

Samuel Kimotho Githinji

And

Mary Wambui Kimotho

Thank you for introducing me to Kiswahili literally works at an early age.

To

My dear wife

Martha Wangui Githinji

And

Our sons

Samuel Kimotho Githinji and John Kamau Githinji.

Thank you for your moral, spiritual and material support. Martha thank you for sitting with me as I burnt the midnight oil and for your perennial encouragement.

You are all a blessing to my life.

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I appreciate Prof. Jane Mutiga, the Program Coordinator, for her encouragement throughout the course. Your advice and desire to see us through is highly appreciated.

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To everyone who was involved with me through this journey, May God bless you all.

ABSTRACT

This project deals with the challenges encountered while translating Swahili greeting routines into English. We have considered the Swahili literary works of Kithaka Wa Mberia; *Kifo Kisimani* and its translation, *Death by the Well*, as well as Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi and its translation, *Flowers By the Morning Sun*. The main purpose of the study was to find out if politeness in Swahili greetings and the intended meaning is lost through translation.

Chapter One, is an introductory chapter that focuses on the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, hypothesis, significance of the study, scope and limitation, theoretical framework, literature review and methodology.

Chapter Two, deals with the challenges of translating greeting routines. We look at the structures of English greetings and partings as a conventional component.

Chapter Three, looks at overcoming the challenges found in the above chapter. It looks at real time greetings and all time greetings. It also looks at the problem of equivalence.

Chapter Four, look at the data collection. Data has been collected from *Kifo Kisimani* and *Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi* and their translation; *Death by the Well* and *Flowers by the Morning Sun*. These are works by Kithaka wa Mberia.

Chapter Five, is focused on the politeness theory and greeting routines. We shall check whether politeness is lost when translating greeting routines, from Swahili to English.

Chapter Six, gives the conclusion of our research in the challenges of translating greetings and we also give our recommendations.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Swahili greetings are completely intertwined with peoples' culture in such a way that one cannot talk of greetings without touching on the Swahili culture. Swahili culture is full of honorifics, euphemism and is generally polite. Respect of elders is highly expected of every young person. It is, therefore, expected that young people offer greetings to the elders else they will be seen as rude and the blame is extended to their parents. Actually, it is not uncommon for a conversation to go on for several minutes before it actually moves beyond saying what would be considered 'hello' in Western cultures. There is no generic word for "Hello" in Swahili. Instead, there are numerous options including relative ages and race of the people involved, as well as whether one is addressing one or more persons and time of the day.

Greetings are somewhat culture specific, regular and formulaic, with specific responses required. Often, Swahili greetings are structured in a call-and-response format, where a certain initial greetings will require a particular response. (For example, *Shika moo* is always followed by *Marahaba*).

As in many languages, Swahili greetings require positive responses even when the opposite is true. Thus one will not generally respond that he or she is unwell, regardless of their actual state. You will note that some greetings fall into 'categories' where many

greetings are derived from variation on a theme, such as the ‘habari’ category, which includes: habari yako, habari ya watu wako, habari za jamii, habari za utokako, habari za mjini na kadhalika.

It is worth noting that when learners of the language use greetings wrongly or mispronounce word in the language, Swahili people are not likely to become angry or offended, but they will instead be somewhat amused, understanding and helpful of your language difficulties especially if you are white-skinned. As a culture specific, greetings follow a systematic way, which makes sure that the meaning is not lost. Greetings follow the parameters of setting, participants and norms. As stated by Hubbard (2000) in his introductory article on discourse and languages in African setting, communicative competence enables the speaker to choose the appropriate way of speaking from among a variety of forms, styles and registers.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Greetings follow a certain linguistic routine. This routine is culture specific which means that it is difficult to get equivalence in another culture. Translating such greetings in another language will lose the intended meaning of the source text. A good example is the English greeting; “How do you do?” whose reply is, “How do you do.” These greetings are culture specific and if one tries to translate them in any language, he or she may not get the intended meaning.

While translating greetings which are culturally specific in literally works the translator is faced with many challenges. In fact there is limited literally works which have been translated from Kiswahili to English. Many times the translator has to use equivalent words and phrases in order to bring forth the intended meaning from the source language to the target language. This is the challenge that makes it hard to find Kiswahili novels translated into English. Much of the Kiswahili literally works that have been translated into English are the plays.

This is a gap that needs to be filled by the Kiswahili scholars. It is quite challenging to find any literally work for data collection. Many scholars have translated English literally works into Kiswahili and not the other way round. A scholar like Professor Ngugi Wa Thion'go has written his many of his books, first in English and then translated them into Kiswahili. Examples of such literally works includes; *The Devil on the Cross- Shetani Msalabani*, *I Will Marry When I Want- Nitaolewa Nikipenda*. Francis Imbuga first wrote, *Betrayal in the City* before his translating of Kiswahili-*Usaliti Mjini*. Shakespeare's books *The Merchant of Venice* and *Julius Caesar* have been translated by the late Mwalimu Nyerere in Kiswahili as, *Mabepari wa Venisi* and *Juliasi Kaizari*. George Orwel's novel, *The Animal Farm*, has been translated into Kiswahili as *Shamba la Wanyama*. In fact for the past one year I have been translating Wahome Mutahi's novel, *The Miracle Merchant* into Kiswahili as *Mabepari wa Miujiza*. This is to mention but a few of the English translated literally works.

Professor Kithaka Wa Mberia's literary works have been translated from Kiswahili into English. Khalfan Kasu has translated the plays "*Kifo Kisimani*" and "*Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi*" into English as "*Death by the Well*" and "*Flowers in the Morning Sun.*" This explains the gap that exists in translating Kiswahili literary works into English, a challenge that I would like to take. Another gap that exists is that no one has carefully looked at the Swahili greetings, whether the meaning is retained or lost. I am going to show it is a big challenge in maintaining the meanings of greeting. As earlier stated some greeting routines have completely no equivalence since they are culture and environmentally based.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Demonstrate the challenges of translating greeting routines from Kiswahili to English.
2. Find out whether or not Politeness is lost when translated from Swahili to English.
3. Demonstrate ways of overcoming the challenges.

1.4 Hypothesis of the Study

In this study I hypothesize that:

1. Greeting routines in Swahili cannot be successfully transferred into English.
2. There are challenges of translating Kiswahili literary works into English.
3. Swahili greetings are culture specific and, therefore, when translated into English, the meaning is lost.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

Greetings in Swahili are culture specific. They are well intertwined in the culture and everybody knows the importance of greetings. It is considered rude even to pass a stranger without greeting them. It is considered polite to greet and answer greetings in a positive way even when your condition states otherwise. Swahili greetings do not just happen in a flash like the Western greetings of, 'Hi?' And the answer is 'Hi.' The Swahili greetings will occasionally go a long way in asking the respondent about his family, his animals, his neighbours, his crops, the weather, his village and even if one has come from town, they will be asked about the state of the town more so if the interactants have not met for long. This forms the basis of a conversation. It is worth noting that even during parting, the same ceremony of who to greet is repeated.

Adequate greeting behaviour in Swahili is first of all determined by the status or relationship of the participants/ interlocutors. The decisive factors are identified as age or seniority and kinship relationship. As is common in African languages in general, kinship terms for 'mother' and 'father' are used not only when addressing family members but also while addressing non kin members. In Swahili, anybody who is your mothers age-mate is addressed using the term 'mother,' while men who are of your father's age are addressed using the term 'father.' It is worth noting that the term 'babu' which in English means 'grandfather' is also used by the old to refer to the young men. This is an extension of politeness. This aspect is missing in the English greetings and therefore when someone is translating greetings from Kiswahili into English the meaning is lost. Some greetings have no equivalence in the English language.

For a young person to greet a lady;

“Hujambo mama,” who’s near English equivalence may be,

“Good morning Mother.”

It is worth noting that the Swahili greetings do not carry any blood relationship hence the English translation will not give the expected meaning. This means that the Swahili greetings can be used to all ladies as a sign of respect, unlike the English greetings which are specific to a biological mother.

1.6 Scope and Limitation

This study’s proposal deals with the translation of greeting routines from Kiswahili to English. Swahili greetings use a lot of polite language. It is natural that when people meet, even if they are strangers, they usually greet. Swahili greetings depend mostly on relationship, age and kinship. Like the English greetings, Swahili greetings use the time of the day. They sometimes discuss the weather, crops, animals and everything.

In this study, I will limit myself to two plays. One is *Kifo Kisimani* by Kithaka Wa Mberia and its translation, *Death by the Well*, by Khalfan Kasu. I will also look at *Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi* by Kithaka Wa Mberia and its translation *Flowers in the Morning Sun*. These plays are rich in the use of greetings by different people of different status and therefore they form the basis of this research.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This study will delve on the Face theory by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson. It will look at both the positive face and the negative face and how they affect greetings.

According to Brown and Levinson (1997), positive face is characterised by the desire to be liked, admired, ratified and related to positively noting that one would threaten face by ignoring someone. One can imagine if you greet someone and he ignores your greetings. The message expressed is that friendship is absent.

Negative face is defined as ‘the want of every competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others, or the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, right to non-distraction, for example, the freedom of action and the freedom from imposition. I shall use Politeness Theory to show case as to why it is difficult to translate cultural specifics like greetings from Kiswahili to English. Politeness is regarded as a virtue in many societies across the world. The use of euphemism in Kiswahili literally works is spread across many books. This is because the use of euphemism is intrinsic. Peoples’ conversations are guided by taboos and traditional ethos that require someone to always save the face of the hearer. Even the drunkards know this and they can only use Face Threatening Words at night.

A good example is the Kiswahili greetings.

Mtoto: Shikamoo babu

Mzee: Marahaba mwanangu.

These are normal greetings between the young and the old. The greetings are always one way in that it is tradition for the young to start greeting the old and not the other way round. The cultural meaning carried by the greetings is so deep that the meaning cannot be translated into English. It cannot just be expressed as:

Child: Good morning/afternoon/evening grandfather.

Old man: Fine my child.

The Swahili greetings are an expression of respect by the young towards the old. The child is expressing the idea that...I am on my knees grandfather...an expression of respect and obedience which is taught to the young by the parents and even at Madrasa for the Muslims.

In *Kifo Kisimani*, we have the following conversation;

Atega: Shikamooni

Kaloo na Azena: Marahabaa. Hujambo?

Atega: Sijambo.

In the translation *Death at the Well*, the translation is as follows;

Atega: (Respectfully) Good morning ladies!

Kaloo and Azena: Good morning young lady and how are you?

Atega: very well thank you.

The translation does not reflect the cultural respect and politeness that was portrayed in the source language.

1.8 Literally Review

According to Omboga (1986:95), the role of a translator is not only to translate language but also different situational features which assist him transfer themes to the target culture. Situational features are extra linguistic features which are deeply rooted in culture. In any culture, people depend on social politeness to be able to interact with others. One way of doing this is through greetings. Coulmas (1981), calls them conversational routines which enable social coordination and sustain communication.

Blum Kulka and Olshtain (1984), found that situational factors such as social status, familiarity and gender considerably influenced people's politeness strategies. They state that, power, rank and distance determine relationships in all societies. Positive politeness is used to maintain social distances. The use of 'Mtukufu Mtemi wa Butangi- Honourable Chief of Butangi is to show the difference in status between the people of Butangi and their Chief.

According to Habwe (2011:132), 'Kiswahili honorifics appear to be easily learnt during language acquisition. Most speakers use honorifics more easily than other strategies which need high level communicative competence. Swahili greetings use a lot of euphemism and honorifics and in many cases they are honorifics by themselves.

1.9 Methodology

This study will revolve around identification of Swahili greetings as used in *Kifo Kisimani* and *Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi*. This study will also look at the translations of the above works into English in the books *Death by the Well*, and *Flowers in the Morning Sun*. The study will look at the ways the greetings have been translated into English and whether or not meaning has been retained. The study will also give examples of other Bantu greetings and show how it is very difficult to translate them into English. The study will look at the challenges of translating greeting routines which are culture specific.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATING GREETINGS

There is widespread evidence that greetings are an important part of the communicative competence necessary for being a member of any speech community (Journal of Linguistics Anthropology 7(1): 63-67. Copyright 1977, American Anthropological Association. Greetings are one of the first verbal routines learned by children and certainly one of the first topics introduced in foreign languages classes.

In the ethological tradition, exemplified by Irenaus Eibl-Eibesfeldt's work, greetings are studied as a means of uncovering some of the evolutionary bases of human behaviour. By comparing humans with other species and adult-adult interactions with mother- child interactions (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1977), greetings are defined as rituals of appeasing and bonding that counteract potentially aggressive behaviour during a face -to -face encounters.

The presupposition here is that humans and animals alike live in a permanent, phylogenetically encoded condition of potential aggression (or fear of aggression) and, were it not for such adaptive rituals as greetings; individuals would be tearing each other apart. On the part of Kikuyus and greetings, they have a saying that, "Cia mburi ni hia." Meaning that when goats meet, they greet each other with horns, hence strangers should greet each other. (Kimotho: 2013).

Fear of aggression is also used by Kendon and Ferber (1973), to explain eye-gaze aversion during certain phases of human encounter. People look away just as primates and other animals do to avoid the threat of physical confrontation. According to Firth (1972) this is taken by others to interpret the common gesture of hand -shakes across societies as a symbol of trust in the other.

Greetings either immediately follow or are constitutive of the interactants' public recognition of each other's presence in the same perceptual field as shown by the fact that they are usually initiated after the parties involved have sighted each other (Duranti: 1992a; Kendon and Ferber 1973).

2.1 The Structures of Greetings and Partings

This section considers the kind of linguistic routines that greetings and partings involve and analysis of conversational components and internal structures. It focuses on studies that have helped to identify the structural characteristics of greetings and partings as part of wider phenomena of conversational interaction.

2.2 English greetings and partings as conventional components:

Greetings and partings are two components of the overall structural organisation of conversations. According to Goffman (1971), greetings are an "access ritual" that facilitates the greeter's entrance into the "self-territory" of the addressee. Through greetings, (if performed), one obtains the "access" into another's "self-territory".

According to Clark (1985:219-221), a conversation between two or more people has three major parts:

1. Opening section
2. Body of conversation
3. Closing section

The opening section, as Clark explains, usually begins with identification of each speaker by the other, either as a member of the category (e.g. a waiter) or as a known establishment or acquaintance if necessary and the preparation of each other for opening the first topic of conversation. According to him, this section consists of three subsections as follows:

- a. Contact initiation
- b. Greetings
- c. Topic initiation

The closing section usually begins with termination of the last topic, following three subsections:

- a. Topic termination
- b. Leave- taking
- c. Contact termination

Based upon Clark's analysis of English greetings, a simple structural definition of greetings and partings seems to be available: greetings is what occurs between contact initiation and topic initiation of a conversation and parting between topic termination and contact termination. For example:

(Contact initiation) A: Hi, Mercy?

B: Hi.

(Greetings) B: How are you?

A: Fine, thank you. And you?

(Topic initiation) A: You have finished your thesis, I suppose?

B: Yes, I have. Have you?

C: Well, I got a question.

B: What is it?

(Topic)

(Topic termination 1) A: I see, thank you very much.

B: You are welcome.

(Topic 2) B: Eh, do you know what happened to Richard last Sunday?

A: No, I don't

.....

B: How tragic!

(Topic termination) B: Oh! Its 4.00pm already. I must go now. Good bye Mercy

A: Good bye

In the above conversation, the greetings and parting can be easily recognised from the overall structure. However, this is a conversation with all three major parts and all their subsections in it. There are many occasions, as Clark notices when greetings and partings are dispensed. A conversation between two strangers is often much simplified in structure. E.g.

(Contact initiation)	A: Excuse me Sir.
(Topic initiation)	B: Yes
(Topic)	A: Could you kindly direct me to the Central Police Station?

Greetings and parting are usually omitted in repeated conversations with very short intervals. They are also simplified in conversations, i.e. the main body of conversation. They are sometimes independent social interchanges, such as “pass greetings,” e.g. two individuals say, “Hello” or “Good morning” etc.

2.3 The Structure of Greetings

Greetings in English usually begin with a contact initiation-(the addressing of speakers to each other either through summons or eye contact), followed by an exchange of some formulaic greeting expressions, a display of welcome or delight in meeting each other, and phatic communion. The structure of greetings thus consists of the following components.

- a. Addressing/ summons
- b. Greetings
- c. Welcoming remarks
- d. Expressing delight
- e. Phatic communion

This chapter looks at challenges and routine in Swahili greetings as portrayed in Swahili literary works of Kithaka Wa Mberia in *Kifo Kisimani* translated as *Death by the Well*

and *Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi* translated as *Flowers by the Morning Sun*. this work shall not delve on the Swahili greeting structures but solely on the translation done and if both politeness and the meaning is retained in the target language or is lost. In literally works, greetings may not strictly follow the linguistic structures as we have seen above. They may deviate depending on the body of the greetings, the status of the participants, past events between the participants and even the expectations.

One of the challenges of translating greetings is that they act as a significant aspect of politeness phenomenon that exists globally. As Brown and Levinson (1978) claim, greetings occur in all languages. They provide the means for opening conversations appropriately and for establishing and maintaining social relationships (Goffman 1971) People in English culture may find Swahili greetings inappropriate and unacceptable in that they are concerned about personal matters although this is quite healthy, positive and friendly to the speakers of Swahili language.

Communicative rule, according to Samovara and Potar (1991: 232), in a principle or regulation that governs conducts and procedures, meaning has to be rendered. In communication, rules act as a system of expected behaviour patterns that organise interactions between individuals. Communication rules include both verbal and non-verbal components, and Hymes (1972) uses rules of speaking the patterns of social linguistic behaviour of the target language for verbal communication

Swahili language uses lots of politeness while addressing someone. When two people meet, even if they are complete strangers, they greet as a way of expressing warmth to the other person. It is normal and always expected that the young person offers greetings first as a way of showing respect and being polite to the older person. When older people greet younger ones, they usually refer to them as 'Mwanangu'-My child, or they may refer to them with their names e.g. 'Hujambo Juma or they may even use the parent's name to refer to them e.g. 'Hujambo mtoto wa Athumani.' People of the same age may greet by calling each other by name. A person's name is very important and it shows that one fully recognises the other one.

This is a clear way of expressing politeness. Another challenge is that greetings of the Waswahili are usually used as a way of knowing the well-being of other members of the family, neighbours, and the society and also about crops and animals. An example of this kind of structure is found on *Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi*: by Kithaka wa Mberia:

Tungai: Hujambo Kabitho

Kabitho: Sijambo, Tungai. Habari za siku nyingi?

Tungai: Mzima kama kigongo; sijui wewe.

*Kabitho: Mzima.Labda sio kama kigongo; hata hivyo mzima. Je!
Habari za familia?*

*Tungai: Mama watoto na watoto hawajambo. Kifungua mimba
changu Wanyimu, alijiunga na Chuo Kikuu cha Makerere
mwaka jana. Anaendelea vyema na masomo yake. Watoto*

*wengine wawili wako huku na mama yao. Wanapambana
na masomo ya shule ya msingi.*

Kabitho: Vyema....

According to Yahya Othman 1994: 141, politeness is generally motivated by three factors; there is the factor of social distance where speakers feels that he has to express himself politely because of political distance between himself and the addressee.

Second, there is the power relations between the two and thirdly is the amount of imposition a speaker makes to his addresser by way of request or otherwise. In the above example the relationship between the two gentlemen seems to be cordial. Swahili greetings use euphemism as a way of expressing politeness. *Mzima kama kigongo* is a Swahili idiomatic expression whose meaning is not transferable. This poses a clear challenge in trying to pass the intended meaning to the target audience. The translator has tried to translate but this is one challenging part in translating routines in greetings. The translation of the above goes like this;

Tungai: How are you Kabitho?

Kabitho: I'm fine, Tungai. How have you been these many days?

Tungai: As fine as a cudgel. What about yourself?

*Kabitho: I'm fine. Perhaps not like a cudgel, but fine all the same.
How is the family?*

*Tungai: The wife and children are fine. My first-born Wanyinu,
joined Makerere University last year. She is proceeding*

well with her studies. The other two are here with the mother. They are struggling with secondary school.

Kabitho: Good...

According to Hubbard (2000) greetings that serve to indicate social encounter are usually complemented by additional routines that extend the greeting procedures by enquiring about the addressee well-being, family, and state of affairs. This is quite well expressed in the above greetings. There is a flow of language in the Swahili greetings that is not found in the translation. The translation comes out as a casual way of talking far away from greetings. The use of idiomatic expression in the English greetings seems to be out of place. The same goes with the words *wanapambana* which has been translated to mean *struggling*, not to mention the mix-up of *Shule ya msingi* (Primary) with Secondary school. One can only struggle with studies and not with a school. This is a clear picture that translating greetings which are culture specific is a big challenge.

The challenge is made hard by the use of an idiomatic expression. Idiomatic expressions just like proverbs, riddles and jokes, are culture specific and will only be used and understood in a certain specific culture. This is entirely because imageries, symbolism and metaphors used in languages take into account the specific environment. According to Omboga (1986:95), the role of a translator is not only to translate language but also different situational features which assist him to transfer themes to the target culture. Situational features are linguistic features which are deeply rooted in culture. In any culture, people depend on social politeness to be able to interact with others. Coulmas

(1981) calls them conversational routines which enable social co-ordination and sustain communication.

Another challenge brought by the failure of translated greetings to pass on the source language meaning is found in *Kifo Kisimani*; 2001: 4;

Atega: Shikamooni.
Kaloo na Azena: Marahaba, hujambo?
Atega: Sijambo.

These greetings are culture specific and also age oriented only used by young people as they greet their elders. As stated by Hubbard (2000) in his introductory article on discourse and languages in African setting, communicative competence enables the speaker to choose the appropriate way of speaking from a variety of forms, styles and registers. Younger interlocutors should show the socially appropriate linguistic respect to the elders as shown in the above example. After this exchange of first greeting routines, both interlocutors continue by asking about each other's well-being. Greetings are not only a form of etiquette but a discipline performed in order to maintain social well-being. Unlike the English greetings, Swahili greetings are not gender based. It is hard therefore to tell the gender being referred to in the above greetings. Though the translation tries to cope with this problem, the entire politeness is lost as shown below.

Atega: *Good morning ladies?*
Atega and Azena: *Good morning young lady. And how are you?*
Atega: *Very well, thank you.*

That *Shikamooni* is translated as *Good morning ladies*, the whole meaning of politeness is lost. These traditional and cultural greetings literally mean “I hold your feet.” This is a show of respect and politeness. By holding someone’s feet one has to bow- a sign of respect to the addressee. It is very different from “Good morning ladies.” This is very casual and loses all the politeness expressed in the greetings. Michael N. Foster in his book, *About Hermeneutics*, talks about the need for Inter-linguistic collaboration. He says that on a certain level, translation is impossible. What is said in a particular language is said in a distinct form of life, a historical and cultural context of meaning. The only way to understand a text is to read it in its original language; the only way to read a language is to be familiar with its form of life.

None the less as Walter Benjamin explains, we must translate.

Another challenge is that translation is not a simple substitution of language but hermeneutic exercise of interpreting how a meaning can be transposed into a historical-linguistic horizon different from the one in which it originated. What emerges in the target language is not identical to the original, nor wholly different; it is a new expression of the meaning, an effect of its history. This also happens with greetings. Michael N Forster also explains the need for inter- national collaboration. He says that the business world knows that the economy is global; the world of academia has been slower to recognise the global unification of research through communication technology. A university can no longer remain content within its national boundaries; it must become a centre for inter- national collaboration. We only understand the other by entering their horizon. We only enter the horizon of others by acknowledging its otherness. We must

meet, we must translate. The contemporary university must become a centre of inter-cultural and inter-national dialogue if it is to achieve the goals of the twenty first century. The first ritual that takes place when two people known to each other or even real strangers meet is to greet. Greetings are the gateway to understanding the other person. According to Levinson and Brown, the person who offers the greetings first is more polite, out-going and most of all social.

The English structure of greetings is also quite challenging when one tries to translate into Kiswahili. For example, the most common greetings:

James: How do you do?

John: How do you do.

These greetings are culture specific and any attempt to translate them will bear no fruits. The wording and the meaning only hold water in that specific culture, if one tries to give them a translation in Swahili, they may not express the normal use of the verb do. There are no words in Swahili which can even give equivalence. To explain the culture specific greetings that cannot be translated into any other language, I went to Nyeri town of Central Kenya. In Nyeri, they have special greetings that are never used by their neighbouring Districts that is; Muranga, Kirinyaga, Laikipia and Nyandarua. The greetings are culturally used by all those who live there. Strangers are taught these greetings if they are to spend time in the area. The locals do not understand why other people do not understand the greetings. The greetings express a lot of politeness. They are also age and gender specific, that is, there are greetings for young girls to their mothers which are different from the greetings of the young boys to the others.

The greetings are also completely gender specific. (Kimotho: 2013);

Young man to a woman:	Wakiawa?
Woman to a young man:	Wakiamaitu
Young girl to a man:	Wakiamaitu?
Man to a young girl:	Wakiawa.
Woman to a young girl:	Wakiaiu?
Man to man:	Wanyua?
Man to man	Wanyua wakini.

These kinds of greetings are area specific. These greetings pose quite a challenge to anybody trying to translate them into another language. Their use and meaning cannot be expressed in another language. The most amazing thing about them is that even their neighbours do not use them or even understand them. Any person trying to translate these greetings will be faced with a lot of challenges since the words used have no equivalence even in the normal Gikuyu greetings. Such is the challenge one encounters while translating cultural and regional specifics in linguistics.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA COLLECTION

This chapter presents the data from the two works of *Kifo Kisimani* and *Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi*. It also attempts an analysis of the data by showing the styles adopted in their translations. It is an important chapter in this thesis since it is the one that reveals the strengths, weaknesses and challenges in the translation. The data is collected from two Kiswahili Plays, *Kifo Kisimani*, and *Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi*, and their translations, *Death by the Well*, and *Flowers in the Morning Sun*. The data has not been interfered with and has been reported in its original form.

KIFO KISIMANI by Kithaka Wa Mberia (*DEATH BY THE WELL*) by Khalfan Kasu Mberia.

I shall also discuss the data found in these books.

Pg1.

Kaloo: Mtoto wa Tanya umeamkaje?

Mwelusi: Nimeamka vizuri, nashukuru.

Translation:

Kaloo: Son of Tanya, How are you?

Mwelusi: It's well with me. I thank the good Lord.

Explanation:

The above greetings seem to be focusing on two different issues. The Swahili greetings Kaloo is asking how Mwelusi had woken up. He is actually trying to understand if there

were notable activities during the night. To the Swahili people, these are normal greetings every morning. The translation given has nothing to do with any particular event but rather normal English greetings. In fact one would have expected the answer to ‘how are you,’ to be, ‘am fine thank you’ rather than, ‘it is well with me.’

Pg 2

Batu: Kaloo!

Kaloo: Bee!

Batu: Habari za asubuhi?

Kaloo: Njema.

Translation:

Batu: Kaloo!

Kaloo: Yes Sir!

Batu: How are you?

Kaloo: Fine.

Explanation.

The Swahili people have a way of answering calls. They will either say “bee!” or “naam.” This is a normal way of answering and is not gender specific. Habari za asubuhi literally means ‘good morning.’ The translation given of ‘how are you,’ loses the politeness in the first greetings. The answer in Swahili of ‘Bee!’ shows politeness and this message is conveyed in the English answer of, ‘Yes Sir.’

Pg4

Azena: Habari za Asubuhi?

Batu: Njema.

Azena: Good morning Sir?

Batu: Good morning.

Explanation.

'habari za asubuhi' has well been presented as 'good morning.' The answer given in Swahili is a typical explanation of how the morning was. It is actually a polite answer of the greeting question posed by Azena. It is very different from the English translation of 'good morning sir?' and the answer 'good morning.'

Pg. 5

Atega: Shikamooni

Kaloo na Azena: Marahabaa, Hujambo?

Atega: Sijambo.

Translation:

Atega: Good morning ladies?

Kaloo and Atega: Good morning, young lady. And how are you?

Atega: Very well, thank you.

Explanation.

As a matter of fact, my thesis was prompted by the above greetings. The sole idea of Swahili politeness is completely lost when translated. These are cultural specific greetings with all mannerism and respect involved. The greetings are not gender specific as the translation show. “Shika mooni” has deeper meaning than mere “Good morning ladies.” The same case goes with, “Sijambo” which has been translated as “Very well, thank you.” the deeper meaning and purpose of the greetings is completely lost. The Swahili greetings cannot be interchanged by the interactants but the English greetings can.

Pg. 44

Gege: Umerudi!

Mwelusi: Nimerudi, habari za uwanja wa ngoma?

Gege: Murwa kabisa. Habari za mikutano?

Mwelusi: Si murwa....

Translation:

Gege: You have returned!

Mwelusi: I have returned. How goes the world of music?

Gege: very pleasant. How are your meetings going?

Mwelusi: Not very good...

Explanation.

Here the translation has met the expected transfer of meaning. The greetings are used as a way of getting information from the addressee. The relationship between the two brothers has also been well reported in both cases.

Pg. 50

Azena: Hodi! Wenyewe wamo?

Tanya: Wamo. Karibu!

Azena: Hujambo?

Tanya: Sijambo.

Azena: Habari za huku?

Tanya: Nzuri. Karibu. Keti.

Azena: Sitakaa sana. Nimepita kukujulia hali tu.

Tanya: Umfanya vizuri. Umetukuta katika hali mbaya. Hatutakukaribisha kwa chakula wala kinywaji chochote.

Azena: Si kitu. Mimi si mgeni hapa. Nikija kwako nakuja kwangu...habari zaidi?

Tanya: Nikwambie nini ndugu yangu!uchungu mtupu! Huzuni imejenga nyumba moyoni mwangu.

Translation:

Azena: Hello! Anybody home?

Tanya: We're in. Please do come in.

Azena: How are you?

Tanya: I'm well.

Azena: How are things in this house?

Tanya: Fine. Welcome. Please sit down.

Azena: I shall not stay long. I just passed by to see how you were.

Tanya: You did well. You have come at a bad time though. We can't offer food nor drink.

Azena: That's okay. I am no visitor here. When I visit you is like coming to my own home... What news?

Tanya: What can I say, my sister! Only pain! Grief has built a home in my heart.

Explanation.

The exchange between the two ladies shows that they are good friends. The expectation that when someone visits somebody, he/she should expect may be a cup of tea or food comes out well in both the source language and the target language. The narration that follows is also part of greetings which may be found mostly in the Swahili greetings than in English greetings.

Pg 53.

Tanya: Hamjambo wanangu?

Askari I: Hatujambo mama.

Tanya: (kwa Askari II na III): Wanangu hamjambo?

Askari II: Salama!

Askari III: Unataka nini?

Translation:

Tanya: How are you my children?

Askari I: Alright Mum!

Tanya: (to Askari II and III): My children how are you?

Askari II: Alright.

Askari III What do you want?

Explanation.

This is a clear case of FTA. Despite the status of Askari 11 and 111, they should have realised that Tanya referred to them as “my children.” This should have given them a hint to accept the greetings. The question asked by Askari 111, is a clear way of showing disrespect to the elders and bad use of privileges and status that the Askari has over the poor woman. The author has used this as to show how the society is and that policemen have no decorum and works towards instilling fear to the people. This being a normal scene of what happens in the police cells, I would say that the author has greatly achieved. Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that in human communication, either spoken or written, people tend to maintain one another's face continuously. In everyday conversation, we adapt our conversation to different situations. Among friends we take liberties or say things that would seem discourteous among strangers. And, we avoid over-formality with friends. In both situations we try to avoid making the hearer embarrassed or uncomfortable. Face-threatening acts (**FTAs**) are acts that infringe on the hearer's need to maintain his/her self-esteem, and be respected. This is exactly what

Leech(1980:19) says that politeness is strategic conflict avoidance which can be measured in terms of the degree of effort put into the avoidance of a conflict situation.

“If a breach of face respect occurs, this constitutes a kind of debt that must be made up by positive reparations if the original level of the face respect is to be maintained. Reparation should be of an appropriate kind and paid in a degree proportionate to the breach” (Brown and Levinson: 1987: 236, Balance Principle). Due to the status of the Askari and the old lady, the FTA cannot be repaid.

Pg 70

Talui: Hamjambo mabwana?

Mweke na Gege: Hatujambo.

Translation:

Talui: How are you, gentlemen?

Mweke and Gege: Very well, thank you.

Explanation:

The last bit of greetings in *Kifo Kisimani*, the interactants express lots of politeness. The use of the word ‘bwana’ in Swahili carries with it status of high esteem. In fact the equivalent word may be ‘lord’. Though the word is also used generally to mean a gentleman but in this case the expected connotation of politeness will be lost.

All in all we find that in the first book *Kifo Kisimani*, greetings have mostly lost their intended politeness meaning. This I should point out that it is not the weakness of the translator but the fact that greetings fall under the category of culture specifics hence translating to another language, the meaning will be lost.

DATA COLLECTED FROM

MAUA KWENYE JUA LA ASUBUHI BY KITHAKA WA MBERIA. / *FLOWERS IN THE MORNING SUN* by Khalfan Kasu.

PG 7

Tungai: Hujambo, Kabitho.

Kabitho: Sijambo, Tungai. Habari za siku nyingi?

Tungai: Mzima kama kigongo; sijui wewe.

Kabitho: Mzima. Labda sio kama kigongo; hata hivyo mzima. Je! Habari za familia?

Tungai: Mama watoto na watoto hawajambo. Kifungua mimba changu Wanyinu, alijiunga na Chuo Kikuu cha Makerere mwaka jana. Anaendelea vyema na masomo yake. Watoto wengine wawili wako huku na mama yao. Wanapambana na masomo ya shule ya msingi.

Kabitho: Vyema...

Translation

Tungai: How are you Kabitho?

Kabitho: I'm fine, Tungai. How have you been these many days?

Tungai: As fine as a cudgel. What about yourself?

Kabitho: I'm fine. Perhaps not like a cudgel, but fine all the same. And how is the family?

Tungai: The wife and children are fine. My first-born Wanyinu, joined Makerere University last year. She is proceeding well with her studies. The other two are here with the mother. They are struggling with secondary school.

Kabitho: Good...

Explanation:

This comes out as a good translation. Swahili greetings use a lot of euphemism e.g. “Mzima kama kigongo.” There is no direct translation for this in English. May be the similar saying which should have been used is, “as fit as a fiddle,” instead of, “as fine as a cudgel.” This is because translation will look for a similar saying in the target language. The Swahili extension of greeting about the wife and the children comes out very clearly but the English translation sounds out of place. There is also the misplacement of “Masomo ya Msingi” with “Secondary School” instead of the primary school as the author of the source language had intended. If routine formulae are closely linked to cultural values, this will lead to differences in conversational styles cross-culturally. For example, in many languages, the first part of a politeness formula prospects a particular response establishing a mini dialogue between interactants (Slama-Cazacu, 1991:398; Tannen and Oztek, 1981).

Pg.10

Waito: Tungai, uko hapa wewe pia? Habari za siku nyingi?

Tungai: Njema, Sijui zako?

Waito: Nzuri. Sikujua kwamba umerudi nchini.

Tungai: Nilirudi siku nne zilizopita

Translation

Waito: Tungai, you are also here? I haven't seen you in many years. How have you been?

Tungai: Fine. What about you?

Waito: Very well, thank you. I had no idea that you are back in the country.

Tungai: I arrived four days ago.

Explanation:

As stated earlier there is flow of the source language in terms of wording and meaning. Normally it doesn't sound English to say, "Tungai, you are also here?" this sounds more of translation than original. The translation of "Habari za siku nyingi" to "I haven't seen you for many years..." also shows some flows in connecting with the target audience. Siku nyingi literally translated will be many days and not in the inclusion of many years.

Pg 21.

- Chebwe: Hujambo, kipenzi?
Neché: Sijambo. Karibu nyumbani.
Chebwe: Asante. Habari za hapa?
Neché: Nzuri, na za utokako?
Chebwe: Njema.
Neché: Pole na safari.
Chebwe: Nishapoa.
Neché: Nikuletee chai ama kahawa?
Chebwe: Utakachoamua kipenzi...

Translation:

- Chebwe: How are you, my darling?*
Neché: I'm fine. Welcome home.
Chebwe: Thanks. How are things over here?
Neché: Ok. What about where you come from?
Chebwe: Alright
Neché: You look tired. Shall I make you a cup of tea or coffee?
Chebwe: Whatever you prefer, sweetheart.

Explanation:

Again the use of euphemism which earlier stated is invested in Swahili greetings. Kipenzi is a pet name used by lovers. The English translation has used two words for it –darling and sweetheart. This shows the translator’s ability in the target language but if one was to back translate, the meaning may be distorted. Euphemisms in Swahili require someone to look for a similar euphemism in the target language and not necessarily translate.

Pg 37.

Nyagachi: Wenyewe wamo?

Tungai: Wamo...huu ni uso wa Nyagachi!

Nyagachi: Ni uso wa Nyagachi na Nyagachi mwenyewe. Hapa ndiko kwako?

Tungai: Ndiyo, hapa ndiko kwangu. Ingieni. Karibuni.

Nyagachi: Ni miezi mingapi tangu niukuone kwa mara ya mwisho?

Translation

Nyagachi: Halloo! Anybody home?

Tungai: Yes. I'm here. The face of Nyagachi.

Nyagachi: Not only the face of Nyagachi, but Nyagachi herself? So this is where you live then?

Tungai: Yes. This is my home. Come in. Welcome.

Nyagachi: It's been months since I saw you last.

Explanation:

This is a perfectly translated piece. Both the interactants have started with an introduction, then the body and delight. According to Coulmas (1981:13) routines make the fullest use of cultural knowledge common to a member of a community. He states that there is a strong link between routines formulae and culture.

Pg. 42.

Tungai: Kabitho!

Kabitho: NaamTungai! Hujambo?

Tungai: Sijambo. Habari za tangu jana?

Kabitho? Wasiwasi mtupu. Ni vizuri nimekukuta nyumbani.

Tungai: Umejuaje niko nyumbani?

Translation

Tungai: Kabitho!

Kabitho: Yes, Tungai. How are you?

Tungai: I'm fine. How have you been since Yesterday?

Kabitho: Worn by anxiety. It's good that I have found you home.

Tungai: How did you know that I was home?

Explanation:

This part also has been translated well, the translator was able to put forward the information found in the source language into the target language.

Pg. 53.

- Waito: Habari za siku nyingi Chungu?
- Chungu: Njema. Vipi hali?
- Waito: Bado tupo.
- Chungu: Nimekutafuta sana. Kukupata si rahisi.
- Waito: kunipata si vigumu kama unavyoona...
- Nali: Habari za Kituo cha Masomo?
- Chungu: Bado tunapambana na mlima.
- Waito: Mngali mnaimba wimbo wa kupanda mlima?
- Chungu: Kwa juhudi nyingi.

Translation

- Waito: How are you, Chungu?*
- Chungu: I have been looking for you and it seems that you are not easy to find.*
- Waito: It is not difficult to find me as you can see...*
- Nali: How is the study Centre?*
- Chungu: we are still struggling to scale the hill.*
- Waito: Do you still sing the hill climbing song?*
- Chungu: With much gusto.*

Explanation:

This is another perfect transfer of information. Only that the symbolic language used about 'Mlima' in the source language should have been given a better translation than that of just a hill. A mountain for example would have been a better choice.

Pg.59

- Neche: Hamjambo wanangu?
Waito na Chungu: Hatujambo mama.
Neche: Mlikuwa mnateta mbele ya wageni?
Chebwe: Kuteta, mimi nitete na binti yangu?
Neche: Anayeyatenda unayoyatenda...

Translation:

- Neche: How are you my children?*
Waito and Chungu: We are fine Madam.
Neche: Were you quarrelling in front of the visitors?
Chebwe: Quarrelling? I quarrelling with my own daughter?
Neche: He who does what you do...

Explanation:

The transfer of 'wanangu' to 'my children' has left the intended meaning out. As a matter of fact, the use of 'wanangu' in the source language is natural. The use of 'my children' in the target language seems like it has

been forced there. The intrusion by Neche is also not African not to mention the way she addresses the husband in front of the children. This she justifies by claiming that Chebwe does not behave well.

The above data used in the two Swahili literally works has brought out the challenges of translating greeting routines that are culturally specific. At the same time we find that the information and politeness expressed in the source language is sometimes lost when translated into English. This calls for a perfect research on the right equivalent or similar meaning of the word used in the source language into the target language. Moreover where euphemism has been used in the source language, it poses a big challenge to the translator to express the same meaning to the target audience. Compared to English, Swahili language is more polite and people are culturally expected to behave in a more polite way.

As Coulmas (1981:1), puts it, much of what is said in everyday interactions is by no means unique. Rather a great deal of communicative activity consist of enacting routines, making use of a prefabricated units in a well- known and a generally accepted manner. This is what brings a challenge in rendering such a routine into a foreign language. Languages use symbolisms and metaphors that are found within their environment making it a challenge to find equivalence in the target language.

CHAPTER FOUR

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

In the Swahili forum 18(2011): 97-113 on Cross- Cultural Communications, Zaja Omboga introduces the work by saying:

Communicating the concept and practices of development by way of translating across languages and cultures is always intertwined with linguistic and conceptual tensions which blur meaning, distort communicative intentions and nurture conceptual ambiguity in target paradigms.

This is the case with the translation of greeting routines from Swahili to English. In fact translating the greeting routines from English to Kiswahili still poses great challenge because of the foresaid cultural specifics. While it is normal for an English man to instinctually answer the routine of;

“How do you do?”

“How do you do?”

Or even on a freezing foggy morning when someone uses the cultural typical greeting of;

“Good morning” and gets answers like

“What is good about the morning?”

The above will be accepted in the Western (European) World but the translation of the same into Kiswahili will have distorted and actually end up not being greetings and thus not communicate the intended meaning. This is a case of negative face as discussed by Brown and Levinson (1987). It is very common for the greetings routines in Swahili to

measure up to the expected reply and not to cause a face threatening act (FTA). I casually spot checked this by visiting both the Nairobi hospital and Kenyatta National Hospital. During the patients visiting hours, I greeted many patients some of whom were in very bad conditions and pain but all of them gave a positive answer as a way of showing positive face. I will demonstrate how I used different greeting words to prove this case:

Scene 1

Me: Hujambo! (How are you?)

Patient: Sijambo. (I am fine)

Scene 2

Me: Habari za mchana? (Good afternoon?)

Patient: Mzuri Sana (I am very fine)

(Note that this came from an accident victim who had bandages all over and only his voice had life)

Scene 3

Me: Habari yako (How are you?)

Patient: Mzuri Sana (Very fine)

These were given even when the patients were writhing in pain. According to Brown and Levinson (1997) in the aspect of “positive politeness” the interactants satisfy each other’s “Positive face” by showing their engagement in these interactions.

According to Habwe: *Politeness and Honorifics* in Kiswahili, the use of honorifics is a linguistic attempt to uphold an individual’s face by avoiding face threatening acts and minimizing conflict and maximizing cost for speaker in order to have a fruitful encounter that is mutually acceptable to all and in society in question (Leech 1983, Levingson 1983, Brown and Levinson 1978,1987)

According to Habwe, (2009), the expression of polite behaviour is somehow complex. It involves many strategies; one strategy (which relates to greetings routine) is related to age. For those speakers who are Muslim, for example, it is the younger person who initiates a greeting to an elderly person

1. Shikamoo bibi

I hold your feet, lady (said by a younger person)

Marahaba mwanangu.

Thank you, my child (said by an elderly person)

If the conversation were to proceed for some time, it would be impolite for the younger person to interrupt when the elderly person is talking.

4.1 The challenges of Translating.

According to Mona Baker (In Other Words) If languages were simply a nomenclature for a set of universal concept, it would be easy to translate from one language to another. One would simply replace the French name for a concept with the English name. If languages were like this the task of learning a new language would also be much easier than it is... each language articulates or organizes the world differently. Languages do not simply name existing categories; they articulate their own (Culler 1976; 12-2)

In Swahili greetings are specific to the addressee whether singular or plural.

For example;

Hujambo; for a singular person

Hamjambo; for many people

The English language greetings of “good morning” are not specific and can be used to a single person and too many people while maintaining the meaning. Even the simplest most basic requirement we make of translation cannot be met without challenges, one cannot always match the content of a message in language A By an expression with exactly the same content in languages B) because what can be expressed and what must be expressed is a property of a specific language is much the same way as how it can be expressed (Written 1961; 98)

Halliday 1970:143 says language...gives structures to experience and helps to determine our way of looking at things so that it requires some intellectual effort to see them in any other way than which our language suggests to us.

Iviv 1981:56 explains that languages are differently equipped to express different real world relations and they certainly do not express all aspects of meaning with equal ease. Actually the formation of Swahili language is completely different from the English language. This explains why it is hard to transfer meanings in the said languages.

4.2 Swahili greeting routines

STATUS

The Swahili greetings recognize fully the status of the addressee, his/her status in society and would even go a step further to explain a kind of relationship between them. Therefore politicians, religious leaders, teachers and members of other professions are cordially greeted using their titles. The following examples show the case at hand

-Hujambo Mheshimiwa (How are you Honorable)

-Hujambo Waziri (Good morning, how are you Minister)

-Hujambo bwana hakimumu (Good afternoon Judge)

-Hujambo mwalimu (Good evening teacher)

-Hujambo chifu (Good night Chief)

-Hujambo Imaam (Good morning Imam)

The titles of the given status are used instead of their real names even when the addressee comes from the same village. The same happens with people who know each other. The greeting routines require that if one is greeting a woman he/she should refer to her as mother of so and so rather with their real name.

This routine is used by children and adults together. The same case happens to men, they are referred using their children's name. The children's names used are usually that of the first born. In case of an exemplary good child in the family, his/her name is used to show the importance and appreciation of the good work done by the child, for example;

-Hujambo mama Maria?

-Hujambo mama Wambui?

-Habari ya mama Kamau?

-Umeamkaje baba Ochieng?

-Hujambo Proffesor?

-Hujambo mpenzi?

-Habari zako daktari?

According to Brown and Gilman 1972, the difference between modes of addressee and pronouns in that the use of pronouns is unavoidable, particularly since pronominal reference is coded in the inflection of verbs in many languages, whereas one can often avoid addressing a person directly

The translation of pronoun from Swahili to English is somehow difficult because the meaning will be lost. For the Swahili person to just say

Hujambo daktari is quite easy. Names even when known are not mentioned but in English, rather than just say:

“Good morning doctor.” They will use both the title and the name i.e.

“Good morning Doctor Martin?”

As Brown and Gilman 1972, puts it, the decision in translating pronouns from English to other languages may have to be made along such dimensions as gender, the degree of intimacy between participants or whether reference includes or excludes the addressee. Translation of the above from Swahili to English will frequently involve loss of information.

According to Mona Baker in her book- *In other words* a number of scholars have agreed to the point of loss of information in translation. Due to semantic, social-cultural, grammatical differences between the source language and the target language, loss and addition of information in translation cannot be avoided. Barnett Mc Guire(1991), states that once a principle is accepted the sameness cannot exist between the two languages, it is possible to approach the question of loss and gain in the translation process (p.30) Bell(1991:6) suggests that “something” is always lost or one might suggest, gained in the process, and according to Nida (1975), all types of translation involves a) loss of information b)addition of information and or c)skewing of information(p.27)

Translation also seeks to get equivalence in meaning between the source language and the target language. It is quite difficult to translate culture specific materials from the source language to the target language. The idea of trying to use equivalence in meaning may also not work because the meaning may be distorted. A good example is the English greetings of:

“How do you do?” if one was to get equivalence in Swahili meaning, the nearest one can get which is also distorted is;

“Wafanya je?” actually this will literally mean, “What are you doing?” and hence rendering the meaning vague. It is amazing how Firth talks of translation:

‘Do we really know how we translate or what we translate?... Are we to accept “naked ideas” as the means of crossing from one language to another? ...Translators know they cross over but do not know by what sort of bridge. They often re-cross by a different bridge to check up again. Sometimes they fall over the parapet into limbo. (Firth; 1957: 197), this is a clear indication that translation may lose meaning as the translator is crossing over from language A to B.

4.3 The Problem of Equivalence

There are three main reasons why an exact equivalence or effect is difficult to achieve. Firstly, it is impossible for a text to have constant interpretations even for the same person on two occasions (Harvey, Higgis and Haywood. 1995:14)

Secondly, translation is a matter of subjective interpretation of translators of the source language text. Thus, producing an objective effect on the target text readers, which is the same as that of the source text readers is an unrealistic expectation.

Thirdly, it may not be possible for translators to determine how audiences responded to the text when it was first produced. (ibid, p 14) Miao (2000) gives specific examples of the impossibility of the equivalence relations. Nida (1964) suggest formal and dynamic or functional equivalence. Formal equivalence focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content. It requires that the message in the target language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language (p. 159). Dynamic equivalence is based on the principle of equivalence effect, where the relationship between the receptors and the message (p.159).

This is the case with translating routines that are cultural specific e.g. greetings. Words that are culturally bound, and in most cases the meaning(s) of a word may only be understood through its context of use. The Swahili greetings of:

“Hujambo?” for one person, and:

“Hamjambo?” for two or more people, are not time specific. They are culturally used in the morning, afternoon, evening and even at night, expressing the same information and expecting the same response.

The English translation of the above will differ since English greetings are time specific, i.e.

“Good morning” (Used in the morning).

“Good afternoon” (Used in the afternoon)

“Good evening” (Used in the evening)

“Good night” (Used at night)

At the same time, it should be worth noting that the Swahili greetings of,

“Habari yako?”

May also pose some challenges while translating. The word “habari” has many meanings one of which is ‘information.’ Hence when one greets/ asks you;

“Habari yako?” He / she require a narration of all about you and your environment. Actually most Swahili greetings do not just end in asking the person about his state, but as earlier stated, they continue to ask more about the family, the village and the animals.

It is worth noting that when a person greets a group of people in Swahili, e.g.

“Hamjambo?” Each of the respondents has to answer in affirmative and for the welfare of the whole group of people;

“Hatujambo?” meaning

“We are fine.”

Even when only one person answers’ and the others are quiet, the answer is always in the affirmative;

“Hatujambo.”

This is a routine used in Swahili and mostly it is used to cover FTA.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE POLITENESS THEORY AND GREETING ROUTINES.

Politeness has been given different definitions by different scholars. Robin Lakoff (1975:64) says that politeness is developed by society in order to reduce friction in personal interactions. Leech (1980:10) explains politeness as a 'strategic conflict avoidance' which can be measured in terms of the degree of effort put into the avoidance of a conflict situation.

Sifianou (1992:86) politeness is the set of social values which instruct interactants to consider each other by satisfying shared expectations. Hill at al (1986:49) explains that politeness is one of the constrains on human interactions, whose purpose is to consider others feeling, establish levels of mutual comfort and promote rapport. According to Brown and Levinson (1978) politeness strategies are developed in order to save the hearers 'face.' Face refers to the respect that an individual has for himself or herself, and maintaining that "self-esteem" in public or in private situations.

Brown and Levinson define the face as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (1978:66). They then divide the face into two separate but related aspects-positive face and negative face (1987). Positive face is the consistence self-image or personality (crucially including the desire that this self -image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants (Brown and Levinson 1987:61). Negative face

is the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, and right to non-distraction i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition.

The notion of face is derived from Goffman (1967) and the English folk term (“losing face”). For Goffman, face is “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact...an image of self- delineated in terms of approved social attributes” (Goffman 1955/1967).

Swahili greetings are culturally polite. This is seen through the use of honorific terms while greeting people of high status. The Swahili use of the word “Mtukufu” as a prefix used to Presidents is a clear show of politeness. The near meaning in English for “Mtukufu” is “Holy” which may not directly explain the cultural attachments that the users of Swahili language have for their leaders. The reference to the Pope as “Baba Mtakatifu” (Holy Father) goes beyond the English comprehension. To the Swahili it is a way of expressing politeness to the Pope.

As brown and Levinson put it, “the use of each (Politeness strategy) are tied to social determinants, specifically the relationship between the speaker and the addressee and the potential offensiveness of the message content” (Brown and Levinson 1987:2)

According to Brown and Levinson, politeness strategies are developed in order to save the hearers ‘face’. Face refers to the respect that an individual has for him or herself, and maintaining that ‘self- esteem’ in public or in private situations. Usually you try to avoid

embarrassing the other person, or making the first step used by interactants in maintaining the positive warmth even while they are strangers. The natural recognition of other people as human beings brings about the positive face. In this case therefore I can say that greetings are a way of expressing politeness. The only challenge that comes up when one translates Swahili greetings into English, politeness is lost. If we first look at some Biblical politeness and its translation, for example;

- Maria Mtakatifu mama wa Mungu, utuombee sisi wakosefu. (Kiswahili)
- Hail, Mary mother of God, pray for us sinners. (English)

The Swahili word “Mtakatifu” which means ‘Holy’ is a polite way of referring to Mary mother of Jesus. But the translation of “Hail Mary” loses all the intended politeness. The name “Mtakatifu” also refers to God. It is used to show the utmost reverence and respect to a high being. Therefore the translation both loses the meaning and politeness.

Another example is the Swahili greetings:

- Shika moo
- Marahaba

These are the traditional Swahili greetings which are an expression of politeness and respect. They are used by the young towards the elders (the young expressing their respect towards the elders). By saying “Shika moo,” literally meaning ‘I hold your legs,’ creates a picture of someone bowing in front of another which is a sign of respect. Any translation of the above greetings to a foreign language dethrones them of politeness and respect. The Swahili greetings can be categorised as ‘all time’ greetings as compared to

the English greetings which can be termed as 'real time' greetings. While translating Swahili greetings therefore, one is forced to express 'all time' greetings to a 'real time' greetings which loses the meaning.

Tracy also explains, "Positive face concerns the desire to be appreciated and approved off by selected others. Negative face concerns a person's wants to be unimpeded and free from imposition." (Tracy 1990:210).

When an act of verbal or non –verbal communication, 'runs contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/ or the speaker' (Brown and Levinson 1978:70), this is called a Face Threatening Act (FTA).

I am going to use the above definitions and introductions in explaining how they are used in Swahili greetings and also checking whether greetings do cause 'FTAs', the positive face of greetings and the negative face. I will also demonstrate if politeness is lost when Swahili greetings are translated into English.

Swahili greetings are crafted in politeness and we can say that the greetings are used to express politeness, where the positive face is expressed. According to Hill at al. (1986:49), politeness is one of the constrain in human interactions, whose purpose is to consider others feelings, established levels of mutual comfort and promote rapport. Politeness is the practical application of good manners/ etiquette. It is a culturally defined

phenomenon and therefore what is considered polite in one culture can sometimes be quite rude or simply eccentric in another cultural context.

It is important to state that greetings in Swahili are considered a routine. Each time when strangers meet they have to customarily greet. Swahili greetings are not time specific and therefore the same greetings will be repeatedly used throughout the day. As a cultural specific, in the Swahili greetings the routine is that, it is the young who generally offer greetings to the elders. This is a perfect expression of politeness. The reverse can never be used even by a drunkard person. For example, a young man will greet the elder:

Young man: Shika moo

Elder: Marahaba mwanangu.

The above greetings can never be reversed in any way for the elder to offer the greetings. Unless when the young person has not seen the elder, and the elder has to start by either an introductory which immediately prompts the young person to offer greetings.

The meaning of “Shika moo” can literally be explained as “I hold your feet.” One cannot hold ones feet while standing. It is the act of bending that conveys the maxim of politeness which therefore poses a great challenge if it were to be translated into English. Many translations have not been keen on the politeness embedded in the greetings. They have therefore translated it just as, “Good morning? / Good afternoon? / Good evening? or Good night.” This therefore shows that relayed meaning is lost in the target language as well as the politeness.

In the data that I got, there are cases of positive face and negative face. This has been explained on some previous pages. Positive face shows appreciation of the participants while the negative face expresses rejection. I would therefore say that Brown and Levinson theory of politeness is well invested in the Swahili literary works. The literary works that I got my data from, being plays, also portrays the characters better in their facial expressions, moods and character. These three can tell someone what kind of face to expect once you greet someone.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

6.1 Introduction

This research has delved on two Swahili literary works *Kifo Kisimani* and *Maua Kwenye Jua la Asubuhi* by Kithaka Wa Mberia, and their translation by Khalfan Kasu. This came as a result of lack of many Swahili works that has been translated into English. Other books that have been translated into Swahili did not have the data that I was collecting. In fact only a few books have been translated from Swahili to English unlike the big number of English books (both plays and novels) that have been translated into Kiswahili. Even English books by Kenyan authors have been translated into Kiswahili e.g. *Devil on the Cross (Shetani Msalabani)*, *I will Marry When I Want (Nitaolewa Nikipenda)*, *The Black Hermit (Mtawa Mweusi)*, *The arrow of God (Mshale Wa Mungu)*, *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born (Wema Hawajazaliwa)*, *The Pilgrims Progress (Safari ya Msafiri)* among many others.

The translation of Swahili into English seems to be difficult to authors due to the nature and form of Swahili language. The Swahili language is culture bound, that is, it is quite deep rooted in the culture and many of the phrases cannot be used individually or even dissected from the culture. Swahili use of metaphors, proverbs, riddles, idiomatic expressions as well as symbolic language makes it hard for a learner to understand. Some books like, *Asali Chungu*, *Mzingile*, *Kisima cha Giningi* among others may take even the best translator time to translate.

Swahili greetings which are culture specific also express a lot of politeness. The use of idiomatic expressions in the greetings makes it hard for someone to translate them. For example, the following answers given to greetings may be challenging if one attempted to answer.

1. Mzima kama kigongo
2. Sina hali
3. Sijambo sijui wewe.
4. Hofu na mashaka ni kwako

Another challenging feature of the Swahili greetings is that they sometimes go beyond greetings. They venture into the respondent's family, clan, and environment and to a larger extent his scope of life. This mostly happens when the interactants have not met for quite some times and would like to clearly understand the others life. When translated into English, they no longer look or even sound like greetings. The deeper expected meaning is lost as well as the politeness used in the source greetings. It is considered polite when one asks how the family and even animals of the respondent are faring. The practical holding of hands, hugging of different styles is common with the Swahili expression of greetings unlike in English. These culture specific greeting routines become a challenge when one has to translate them into English.

6.2 Recommendations

It is evident that English language has been preferred both by governments and even authors. Kiswahili happens to be our national and also our official language. These factors are supposed to accelerate the use of Kiswahili by many Kenyans. Many government officials cannot communicate fluently in Kiswahili as they do in English. This has not helped the language to grow. The government will need to strengthen the use of Swahili language and it should not leave this work to the teachers.

I would urge Swahili writers and authors to try and translate the already existing Swahili literally work. This will help not only in the growth of the language but also in extending the knowledge to the outside world.

It also appears that there might be lack of data in different areas due to the few translated Swahili literally works. Many people try and translate already existing English works living out Kiswahili. Researchers should be encouraged to write their findings in Swahili language in order to create room for others to translate their findings. This will also help in job creation to our country. The above should be started by the Department of Linguistics and Languages. Proposals and thesis in translation courses should be written in Swahili as a way of cleaning the cup from the inside. The game should change sides, and I believe it is time for English to borrow from Kiswahili.

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