

## Transliteration in the translation of Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*

Nomsebenzi Malele

University of South Africa, Pretoria  
malelnj@unisa.ac.za

### Abstract

Translating from a developed language like English into an African language may be daunting. This is because African languages like isiNdebele and isiZulu may lack some standardised terminologies for specific terms of the developed source language. When African language translators face complicated terms from a source language that do not have appropriate equivalents, they resort to transliteration as a term-creation strategy. This paper aims to compare the extent to which translators of both Ikhambo Elide Eliya Ekululekweni (isiNdebele) and Uhambo Olude Oluya Enkululekweni (isiZulu) have used transliteration as a term-creation strategy, and the impact this strategy had in enabling the readers of the isiNdebele and isiZulu version of Nelson Mandela's biography to access the source text easily. This paper is, therefore, qualitative and comparative. The researcher will describe transliteration used in both the isiZulu and isiNdebele versions. A corpus-based method of collecting data (from both translated biographies) was used. A theory of dynamic or functional equivalence formed the principle against which both translations were viewed. The findings are that transliteration in both languages, isiZulu and isiNdebele, has been overly used even in cases where coined known terms exist in these target languages.

**Key words:** theory of dynamic equivalence, translation, transliteration, source language, target language

### Introduction

IsiNdebele belongs to the Nguni languages of South Africa. The terminology of this language still needs to be developed so that it can gain the same status as other African languages, particularly the Nguni languages to which it belongs. For that to be achieved, productive term-creation strategies need to be implemented during translation. It is for this reason that this study seeks to compare the level of transliteration utilised by isiNdebele and isiZulu translators when they were translating the *Long Walk to Freedom* into these two languages and also the impact of this term-creation strategy in the target texts. Transliterated terms should not render the text inaccessible to the target readers.

Before understanding transliteration, one must first understand what a term-creation strategy is. Term creation is simply the process through which new meaning is created and given to words. This process involves collecting, describing, processing, and finally presenting the terms. Different scholars classify term-creation strategies differently; this paper, however, aligns itself with Sager (1990, p.80), who distinguishes between primary and secondary term-creation strategies (processes). Primary term-creation strategies draw and rely on existing or internal resources. Primary term information includes the coinage of terms. This method retains the character of the language. Secondary term-creation strategies, on the other hand, are those that draw and rely on external language resources. They include derivation, semantic shift, compounding, borrowing, transliteration, deideophonisation and abbreviation (Sager, 1990, p.80).

This study is about transliteration, referred to as Loan translations or Calque by other scholars, but for this paper, the term transliteration is used. Examples of transliterated terms are 'clinic' itliniga (class 9) instead of the coined term, umtholapilo (class 3) and 'nurse' unese (class 1) instead of the coined term, umhlengikazi (class 1).

As mentioned earlier, this study is comparative. It uses Eugene Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence, also known as functional equivalence. Through this theory, the use of transliteration in both isiNdebele's Ikhambo Elide Eliya Ekululekweni (Mandela, 2006) and isiZulu's Uhambo Olude Oluya Enkululekweni (Mandela, 2001), will be viewed. According to this theory, the recipients of the message in the target language (isiNdebele and isiZulu, in this case) should respond in the same manner as the recipients of the very message in the source language (English, in this context). This theory of dynamic or functional equivalence strives to ensure that the words in the SL and TL have the same effect on their respective readers (Nida, 1964).

### **Problem statement and aim of the study**

This article notes the challenges faced by isiNdebele translators and the need for this language to be developed while ensuring that its terminology development does not render the language inaccessible to amaNdebele. Abstract terminology that has been developed during translation and that is not well understood by amaNdebele, will mean that term formation has failed. When a text is inaccessible to the target readers due to applying a particular term-creation strategy, then that term-creation strategy is unsuccessful. Terminology should be accessible to the target audience; a term, whether transliterated or coined, should make the text accessible.

This article compares the isiNdebele to the isiZulu version of *Long Walk to Freedom*. This is done because isiZulu is more developed than isiNdebele. As mentioned in the introduction, the researcher will therefore establish whether the isiZulu translator used transliteration to the same degree as the isiNdebele translator and whether the transliterated term is appropriate, adequate, efficient and effective in the lexicon of both isiZulu and isiNdebele. Through these qualities, the accessibility of the translated terms will be measured.

This is important because the ability to import the message of the ST without distortion is vital in this research. It is through this aspect that the text will be considered accessible.

### **Literature review**

A three-fold approach to the literature review is followed below: literature on *Long Walk to Freedom*, literature on the term-creation strategy of transliteration and literature on the theory of Dynamic Equivalence.

#### ***Long Walk to Freedom***

Kanyane (2021, p.89) focussed on establishing whether the message carried by euphemism and hyperbolic expressions in the ST (English), *Long Walk to Freedom*, was successfully imported into the TT (Sesotho sa Leboa) without distortion. This is because it is challenging to translate euphemisms and hyperbolic expressions faithfully. Kanyane (2021) found that the translator of Sesotho sa Leboa successfully imported the message carried by euphemism and hyperbole of the SL into the target language. She emphasised that polite wording was used in the Sesotho sa Leboa translation, reflecting the language's culture. Therefore, the translator captured the author's politeness and intended meaning of the source text well. The hyperbole, characterised by excessive exaggerations, was also brought into this target language without losing effect or intention. This means that the message of the ST was not distorted in the TT.

Nokele (2011, p.327) did a study in which she compared isiXhosa and isiZulu. Her focus was on the translatability of metaphors in these two languages. Through her research, she wanted to establish how translation in African languages could be developed by using the conceptual metaphor theory. The conceptual metaphors were identified in Nelson Mandela's autobiography, the *Long Walk to Freedom*. In identifying metaphors from the source text, a Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU), was used. A ParaConc concordancer was used to compare and investigate the translation of metaphors. The findings were that isiXhosa and isiZulu translators translated most metaphors in a similar way. That implied that both the translators, although they were working independently, conceptualised the metaphors in the same way. The translators of both languages succeeded in presenting in their respective languages metaphors in ways acceptable to the target readers. Both translators, although their own styles and traces were evident in the texts, succeeded to draw from the style of the source text writer.

Nokele and Moropa (2016, p.13) published an article in which they compared the style of the isiXhosa and isiZulu translators during the translation of Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* into the two languages. IsiXhosa was translated by Mtuze and isiZulu by Ntuli. The researchers used a corpus-driven approach in their study. A comparison was made between the two translated biographies. The focus was mainly on how loan words, italics, contractions and expansions as features that distinguished the two translators, were used. Their findings revealed that although Mtuze and Ntuli were dealing with a biography, their personal imprints and styles were evident in their translations. Whilst Mtuze's translation is closer to the source text, Ntuli's was a bit further from the ST. Mtuze made more use of the addition procedure in his translation which is known to make what is implicit more explicit. Ntuli on the other hand used the reduction procedure. This procedure (reduction) does simplify the target text to the target audience, however, it does deny the target readers some valuable information.

### **Transliteration**

Transliteration is described by Sager (1990, p. 90) as 'the taking over of the term from another language but adjusting its morphological characteristics, pronunciation and spelling'.

Exploring the translatability of Xitsonga culturally oriented terms on human reproduction, Baloyi (2023, p. 16-17) illustrated how linguistic items impacted translation from English into Xitsonga. Baloyi employed a descriptive qualitative research method to advance a framework of translating words from English that are deemed vulgar into Xitsonga. Data for the study was extracted from a Grade 12 Life Sciences textbook through content analysis. The study concludes by mentioning the important role played by transliteration in as far as the words that are deemed vulgar in this language are concerned. According to Baloyi (2023), it is better to use a transliterated term to utter the Xitsonga culturally vulgar terms within the context of Life Sciences and generally, in the Xitsonga linguistic community. The transliterated term enables the Xitsonga speaker to use the term without distorting the message of the source language. This means that transliteration enables Vatsonga to use transliterated terms in public, without shame (Baloyi, 2023).

To add to Baloyi's (2023) findings regarding transliteration, Mtintsilana and Morris (1988, p.111) caution against the excessive use of this term formation strategy. They say that when a language excessively depends on this strategy, it is easy for it to lose its identity and character even if this is a most fruitful method of developing terms. Matšela and Mochaba (1986) emphasised the significance of transliteration. They say that in this strategy lexical items are coined from the internal resources of a language. They further argue that because of this, transliteration is a transparent strategy and for that reason it is preferable. They argue that even when the transliterated term is unfamiliar to the target reader or a native speaker, one can often infer its meaning.

Colas (2019, p. 779) did a study on Jihadist terms transliterated from Arabic in which he discovered that this language's terminology is filled with transliterated terms which many a time are unable to adequately transfer the connotative meaning the Jihadist groups, using them, experienced. Colas argues that these terms are inaccurately translated and as such they pose a serious challenge to policy makers and scholars who seek to understand the Jihadist movements.

Mphahlele (2004, p. 341-342) also cautions against the excessive usage of transliteration. He advises on the different terminological and lexicographical procedures that lexicographers and terminologists can use to supply translation equivalents that are appropriate and accurate without the over usage of transliteration. Mphahlele believes that for languages to develop to their full potential, users should be encouraged to communicate successfully in them. According to Mphahlele (2004) the excessive usage of transliteration by terminologists is a sign of being less productive and less creative. He further advises that transliteration should not be considered as the last resort, that is, after all other means of providing term equivalents have not succeeded.

### **Theory of Dynamic Equivalence**

As mentioned initially, the translation theory of Dynamic Equivalence or Functional Equivalence emphasises the conveyance of similar sense and emotions between the source text and the target text. This means that translation should not merely be a matter of word for word equivalence between the source text and its translated version. Khanlari et al. (2019, p. 31) compared two English translations of the Surah Al-Baqarah, a chapter in the Holy Qur'an. The translations were examined through Eugene Nida's theory of Dynamic Equivalence. Their findings were that the translation that was understandable was the one that preserved the structure of the source text. In this translation, the addition strategy was effectively used to make explicit what was implicit and ambiguous. Through this procedure, Khanlari et al. explained the terms from the source text that could be implicit to the target reader. The other translation of the other translator unfortunately violated the message of the source text, and could not achieve equivalence. Jabak (2020, p. 15 &16) also applied Eugene Nida's theory of Dynamic Equivalence in examining the translation of Surah Al-Shams which is a chapter in the Holy Qur'an, from Arabic into English. The purpose was also to examine whether the aspects of Nida's theory of Dynamic Equivalence could be applied in the translation of Surah Al-Shams. His findings were that Nida's theory of translation could not be fully applied to the English translation. This is because Arabic and English are in different language groups and their word order is different. The translator failed to achieve equivalence. This is proof enough that it is challenging to translate the sacred books. Ahmad and Iqbal (2022, p. 44) used the theory of Dynamic Equivalence to examine the translation of Surah Al-Tariq into English. The findings were that the theory of Dynamic Equivalence is not applicable to the translation of Surah Al-Tariq. Ahmed and Iqbal (2022) say that the translator resorted to literal translation. Literal translation unfortunately makes the text inaccessible to the target audience.

In all literature reviewed on Long Walk to Freedom, no one did transliteration, actually no one analysed term-creation strategies employed in the translation of Long Walk to Freedom. In the literature on transliteration, none analysed transliteration in Mandela's biography. No literature applied the theory of Dynamic Equivalence to Mandela's biography. This is the gap the present study is attempting to fill.

### **Discussion**

In this section, the discussion is on both the political and non-political terms as found in the source text, and their isiNdebele and isiZulu equivalents. The purpose is to compare English terms with their translated versions and establish the degree to which transliterated terms were preferred to their coined counterparts. See Table 1 on political terms.

Table 1 : Political terms

| Source Text | isiNdebele    | isiZulu     |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| democracy   | idemokhrasi   | idemokhrasi |
| cabinet     | ikhabinede    | ikhabinethe |
| comrades    | amakhomreyidi | amakhomredi |
| politics    | ipoletiki     | ipolitiki   |
| parliament  | ipalamende    | iphalamende |

According to Table 1, democracy is translated as idemokhrasi in isiNdebele and idemokhrasi in isiZulu. For both languages, there are known coined terms. Democracy is intando yeningi in isiNdebele and intando yeningi for isiZulu. Both these terms loosely translate as 'the will of the people'. These coined terms are actually more accessible to the target audience than the transliterated ones. The term 'politics' is translated as ipoletiki in isiNdebele and ipolitiki in isiZulu. Also, regarding this term, there is a known coined term for 'politics'. The term is umbanganarha for isiNdebele, which loosely translates as 'that which fights for the nation' and it is umbusazwe in isiZulu, which loosely translates as 'that which rules the nation'. The term 'parliament' has been translated as ipalamende in isiNdebele and iphalamende in isiZulu. There is an isiNdebele as well as an isiZulu known coined term for 'parliament' which is isibethamthetho in isiNdebele and isishayamthetho in isiZulu. The terms isibethamthetho and isishayamthetho both loosely translate as 'the legislator of laws'. The question is whether all these transliterated terms: idemokhrasi, ipoletiki, ipalamende, ikhabinede etc. (all isiNdebele and their isiZulu counterparts) are more accessible than their coined counterparts. Are they accessible to all target readers namely, the educated and the uneducated and finally, are they contributing towards the development of these languages (isiNdebele and isiZulu)? See Table 2 on non-political terms.

Table 2: Non-political terms

| Source Text        | isiNdebele      | isiZulu     |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| suburbs            | amasabhabhu     | amasabhebhu |
| sandwiches         | amasangweji     | amasameshi  |
| sand               | isanda          | isihlabathi |
| passage            | umrhoba         | iphasiji    |
| buckets            | amabhakede      | imigqomo    |
| breakfast          | isidlo sekuseni | ibhulakfesi |
| bell               | ibhele          | insimbi     |
| identity documents | amapasa         | amapasi     |

Terms in Table 2 are also analysed in terms of the questions of this paper. Just to remind the reader, the paper seeks to establish whether the terminology used is appropriate, effective, accessible, that is, whether or not it is creating barriers to target readers and whether the terminology increases the vocabulary of the target languages namely, isiZulu and isiNdebele: For the English 'sandwiches', the term amasameshi for isiZulu and amasangweji for isiNdebele have been used. The two terms are not accessible to all target readers neither do the terms amasameshi and amasangweji increase the vocabulary of the two languages. The same applies to amasabhabhu in isiNdebele and amasebhebhu in isiZulu. These terms will only be accessible to the elite and the educated. The people who do not know what a suburb is, will not know what amasabhabhu and amasebhebhu, are either.

For the English term 'bell' the transliterated term ibhele has been used instead of the known coined isiNdebele term, isimbi. In the case of the isiNdebele term amabhakede 'buckets', there is a more appropriate known coined word which is imigqomo and for the isiZulu term ibhulakfesi 'breakfast' there is a coined, known used paraphrase isidlo sasekuseni which loosely translates as 'the meal of the morning'. For the English term 'dinner', which is translated as idina in isiZulu, there is a well known term to the speakers of this language which is isidlo santambama or sakusihlwa which loosely translates as 'the meal of the evening or of the night'. This shows that transliteration as a term-creation strategy is over-utilised at the expense of indigenous term-creation strategies that would contribute

to the development of the indigenous languages. With regard to the term 'identity document', it is interesting to discover that this term has been translated in both languages in almost the same way, namely as amapasa in isiNdebele and amapasi in isiZulu. Both amapasa and amapasi are transliterated from Afrikaans 'pas', which is a term that is not even there in the source text. One would have expected that the term 'identity document' would be translated as i-ID by both isiNdebele and isiZulu translators but instead, the respective translators opted for the term amapasa for isiNdebele and amapasi for isiZulu, which are transliterated. Even in the case of this term, there is an isiNdebele and isiZulu term for the Afrikaans 'pas' or English 'identity document', the terms being abomazisi for isiNdebele and omazisi for isiZulu. The terms abomazisi and omazisi loosely translate as 'that which identifies one' or 'that which gives one an identity'.

What needs to be noted especially with isiNdebele is that this language does not only loan terminology from English and Afrikaans but also from the Sotho languages as shown in the following transliterated Sesotho terms:

UMarhistrata weMtata wemukela umrhala owawubuya eQueenstown (Ikhambo Elide Eliya Ekululekweni, p.16). The term umrhala is actually from the Sesotho term, mogala which is a term for the 'telephone'. This very sentence reads as follows in isiZulu: Umantshi weMtata wemukela ucingo olwaluvela eQueenstown. The isiZulu equivalent for the telephone which is ucingo is appropriate. IsiNdebele does have a coined equivalent term umtato for 'telephone'. One wonders why the isiNdebele translator opted for the Sesotho term whilst the isiNdebele indigenous term does exist. Consider the following sentences, too:

ST, p. 18: It was an exhausting journey, along rocky dirt roads up and down hills.

TT, p. 5: Sakhamba ama-iri amanengi eendleleni ezinethuli, sikhuphuka besithewuka imibundu.

The translator used the term thewuka for the English word 'down'. This term which is a verb in isiNdebele, is actually derived from Sesotho go theoga 'to go down'. It is also surprising that the translator chose to use this transliterated term from Sesotho whilst there is an appropriate isiNdebele term ukwehla 'to go down'. Based on the above examples, it is clear that isiNdebele does not only borrow from English and Afrikaans but also from the Sotho languages.

According to Mashiyane (2002, p.67), the reason why isiNdebele borrows from Sotho languages is because the two languages (isiNdebele and Sesotho sa Leboa) were once in close proximity and that caused the relationship of free-giving and taking to develop between the two languages. In the relationship between these two languages, it shows that isiNdebele accepted more Sesotho sa Leboa terms than the isiNdebele terms, that Sesotho sa Leboa accepted from isiNdebele. That is why isiNdebele has such a large collection of vocabulary which originates from Sesotho sa Leboa.

### Findings

Transliteration has proven not to be the greatest answer for a language with a shortage of terminology like isiNdebele. IsiNdebele and isiZulu have used the transliteration strategy in an equal way. The researcher thought because isiZulu is more developed than isiNdebele, its usage of transliteration would be minimal as compared to the case of isiNdebele, however, isiZulu also translated those terms using transliteration rather than the coined terms.

### Conclusion

Based on the examples given above, it is clear that transliteration does not serve any semantic purpose at all to the user or reader who does not know the transliterated term whilst it is in the source text. For instance when the reader does not know the terms democracy, cabinet, suburbs etc., that reader will not know them either when they are transliterated as idemokhrasi, ikhabinethi and amasabhabhu etc. A translator or a language user who does not know the meaning of these terms in English or any source language, will not know them even when they are transliterated.

This means that with transliteration, speakers of the target language may still find the transliterated concept foreign. Transliteration is therefore only useful when speakers of the target language are familiar with the concept referred to, but if they do not, transliteration does not assist. Transliterated terms should be accessible to all, whether educated or not and irrespective of where they stay.

It is evident that transliteration is the easiest and the most transparent common strategy to use when creating terms. There are purist terms that are hardly used in communication, such terms are unacceptable and amaNdebele actually frown upon their use because they are not accustomed to them; instead, they are used to the more generally used ones which may be transliterated most of the time. Examples of such terms are loan terms such as for example amavowudu 'votes' rather than amakhetho. The term amakhetho is a known indigenous appropriate equivalent for the English 'votes'.

We need dictionaries and glossaries in which the first lexical term/ entry would be a coined term, then a transliterated term. It is the truth that in this 21st century, we cannot do away with transliteration, it is the quicker method of producing more terms.

### Acknowledgments

This research was not funded by any institution or organisation.

### References

- Ahmad, F. & Iqbal, J. (2022). Application of Nida's concept of Formal and Dynamic Equivalence to English translation of Surah Al-Tariq. *Al-Misbah*, 2(4), 37-45. <https://almisbah.info>
- Baloyi, M. J. (2023). Transliteration as a solution to Xitsonga culturally vulgar words expressing human anatomy from English within the context of Life Sciences. *Open Access Library Journal*, 10(6), 1-20. DOI:10.4236/oalib.1110094
- Colas, B. (2019). Understanding the idea: Dynamic Equivalence and the accurate translation of Jihadist concepts. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 42(9), 779-797. DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2018.1425109
- Jabak, O. O. (2020). Application of Eugene Nida's Theory of Translation to the English translation of Surah Ash-Shams. *TranscUlturAl: A Journal of Translation and Cultural Studies*, 12(2), 3-18. <https://doi.org/10.21992/tc29461>
- Kanyane, F. M. (2021). A critical exploration of the usage of euphemism and hyperbole in the Sesotho sa Leboa translation of Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 41(1), 89-96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2021.1902147>
- Khanlari, J., Namdari, E., & Ozeiri, E. (2019). A comparison of Fooladvand and Omid Majd's translations of Surah Al-Baqarah based on Nida's theory. *Pazhouheshdini Journal*, 19(39), 31-50. <https://doi.org/http://pdmag.ir/article-1-1059-en.html>
- Mandela, N. (1994). *Long walk to freedom*. London: Abacus.
- Mandela N. (2001). *Uhambo olude oluya enkululekweni*. Translated by Ntuli DBZ. Florida: Vivlia.
- Mandela, N. (2006). *Ikhambo elide eliya enkululekweni*. Translated by Malobola JN. South Africa: Macmillan Publishers.
- Mashiyane, Z. J. (2022). Some socio-linguistic aspects of Southern Ndebele as spoken in South Africa. Unpublished M. A. Mini Dissertation. KwaDlangezwa: University of Zululand.
- Matšela, Z. A, & Mochaba, M. B. (1986). Development of new terminology in Sesotho. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 6 (Suppl. 1), 136-148. DOI:10.1080/02572117.1986.10586675.
- Mphahlele, M. C. (2004). The transliteration principle: Is this the best procedure in African language lexicography and terminology? (AFRILEX-reeks/series) *Lexikos*, 14, 339-348.
- Mtintsilana, P. N., & Morris, R. (1988). Terminology in African languages in South Africa. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 8(4), 109-113.
- Nida, E. A. (1964). *Towards a science of translating*. Leiden: Brill.
- Nokele, A. B. B. (2011). Metaphor in Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*: A cross- cultural comparison. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 29(3), 327-341.
- Nokele, A. & Moropa, K. (2016). Indlela or uhambo? Translator style in Mandela's autobiography. *Literator - Journal of Literary Criticism, Comparative Linguistics and Literary Studies*, 37(2), 1-13.
- Sager, J. C. (1990). *A practical course in terminology processing*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.