

A glass containing a blue liquid on the left and a fire on the right, with text overlaid.

*Translation Strategies*  
*Übersetzungsstrategien*  
*Stratégies traductologiques*  
*Estrategias traductológicas*



# ***Linguistic and Cultural Evaluation of Etienne Galle's Translation of Chinua Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah as Les Termitières de la Savane***

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**Abstract:** The paper analyses Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and its French translation *Les Termitières de la Savane* in order to bring to the fore areas of identity and differences between the original text and its French version in the handling of the linguistic and cultural situations in the translating process. The paper adopts a comparative approach and concludes that in spite of the cultural and linguistic challenges faced by the translator, facing us is a faithful translation of the text.

**Key-words:** translation, language, faithfulness, culture, text

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (AOS) was first published in London in 1987 by William Heinemann but Heinemann Educational Books published the Nigerian edition in 1988. It was translated into the French language as *Les Termitières de la Savane* (LTS) in 1990 by Etienne Galle and published by Pierre Belfond in Paris, France. Chinua Achebe is an author whose works have provoked a lot of criticisms,

which translators cannot easily gloss over. These criticisms are engendered by Achebe's use of language. Since language, world view or ideologies share an intrinsic relationship, one can infer the peculiar problems of any writer faced with the task of creating a literary work in another (or alien) tongue. This same situation also applies to any translator. According to Virginia Azohu (1996:411),

There is an enormous amount of literature on various aspects of the novels of Chinua Achebe. Yet going through this large volume of scholarship, one hardly meets a sustained, painstaking attempt at giving an in-depth analysis of Achebe's language beyond the commonplace concerns of literary criticism.

In pursuance of the fact that a critique of any translation work does not inevitably imply a condemnation of the work but rather seeks to identify the level of accuracy and fidelity in relation to the original text, our preoccupation here is to carry out a comparative analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and its French translation *Les Termitières de la Savane* in order to bring to the fore areas of identity and differences between the original text and its French version in the handling of the linguistic and cultural situations in the translation.

## **2. ETIENNE GALLE: CHINUA ACHEBE'S TRANSLATOR**

Not much is known or written about the life and educational background of Etienne Galle. He is however, a notable writer, critique and translator of modern African literature from English to French. He has a very great passion for and interest in the works of Wole Soyinka in particular. He lives and teaches at the University of Rennes 2, France, from where he has been contributing to the growth and expansion of

modern African literature through the publication of scholarly articles in both French and English Languages in reputable journals and the translation of modern African literature from English into French.

To be a successful literary translator, the translator needs a good working relationship with the author, his work and even his time. Etienne Galle established a great affinity especially with Wole Soyinka by translating most of his works including his autobiography: *Ake: The Years of childhood* (1981) rendered as *Ake, les années d'enfance* (1984) in order to gain more insight into modern African literature. The translation of the works of Wole Soyinka gave him the impetus and experience to translate Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988) into French as *Les Termitières de la Savane* as well as those of other authors.

Prominent among the many and varied works of Etienne Galle are: *Wole Soyinka and Ritual Drama* (1984); *Indigenous Embedments in Europhone African literature* (1991); *Wole Soyinka: Le Tout et le Rien* (1993) and *The Probable Young African Hero* (1992). Etienne Galle has translated almost all the works of Wole Soyinka namely *The Interpreters* (1965) as *Les Interprètes*, *Isara – A voyage around "Essay"* (1988) as *Isara: périple autour de mon père*; *Mandela's earth and Other Poems* (1988) translated into French as *La terre de Mandela* (1989); *Season of Anomy* (1974) as *Une Saison d'anomie* (1987); *The Man Died* (1972) as *Cet homme est mort*; *Requiem for a Futurologist* (1985) as *Requiem pour un futurologue*; *Africa: Climate of Fear* as *Afrique, climat de peur* (1985). He also translated Chukwuemeka Ike's: *The Bottled Leopard* into French as *Fils de Panthère*; Francis Selormey's *The Narrow Path* as *Kofi, L'Enfant du Ghana* and Zaynab Alkali's *The Stillborn* (1984) as *Jusqu'au bout de ses rêves* (1998), etc.

Virtually all the translated works of Etienne Galle are published by the same publisher: Editions Pierre Belfond, Paris in France. The successful translation of these distinguished authors, in particular Chinua Achebe has placed Etienne Galle among the outstanding literary translators of modern African literature.

### **3. LINGUISTIC EVALUATION OF ETIENNE GALLE'S TRANSLATION**

Linguistics is primarily the scientific study of language. It is in fact, a systematic study of the combination and organization of the elements and principles in language, that is, how language works. Each language is full of its own peculiarities and conveys its own specific meaning. In lexical meaning, words acquire various overtones and associations that are not shared by the nearest equivalent word in another language. Since translation has been defined in relation to language, the major problems of translation are therefore generally closely related to the problems of linguistic analysis.

It is our aim, therefore, in this sub-section to examine Etienne Galle's translation of Chinua Achebe's use of language, style and choice of words in *Anthills of the Savannah*. Chinua Achebe's novel is full of elements of oral tradition such as old stories, songs, proverbs and imageries.

Oral tradition or oral literature is the basis of modern or written literature and this explains why Achebe uses imagery, allusions, proverbs and Igbo speech patterns to blend the standard English and pidgin in order to enlarge the resources of his literary creation. Normally, these elements of oral tradition could present some challenges in translation as lack of understanding of these Igbo words and speech patterns may lead to inaccurate transfer of meaning. But this is not the case with Achebe as he is perhaps one of the best examples of a writer using a language of wider diffusion to express his

African experience. His definite use of language does not generally give rise to problems of comprehension or interpretation.

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, some of the words that we encounter are not meant to represent standard English but Igbo speech patterns. Achebe makes their translation easy by distinguishing between words that are actually uttered in English and those uttered in the mother tongue. Words in the latter are written in italics. The expression of words uttered in the mother tongue can be seen in Chapter Nine “Views of the struggle” where one elder from Abazon says:

I do not hear English but when they say catch am  
Nobody tells me to take myself off as fast as I can  
(AOS, p.127).

Etienne Galle’s translation :  
J’ignore l’anglais, mais lorsque j’entends. ‘Attrapez-le’,  
Personne n’a besoin de me dire de décamper (LTS, 151)

In a gathering, the elders of Abazon celebrate the fact that one of their “son”, Ikem, is the chief editor of the National Gazette in the following words:

I had never read what they say he writes because I do  
Not know ABC. But I have heard all the fight he has  
fought for people in this land (AOS, p.122).

Here, Achebe blends form with functions as he successfully conveys the ideas and experiences of the non-English speaking population of Abazon. He, therefore, gives voice to a native African experience throughout the English-speaking world. This attitude was also accurately conveyed in Etienne Galle’s French translation thus:

Je n'ai jamais lu ce qu'il écrit, car je ne sais pas lire.  
Mais j'ai entendu parler du combat qu'il mène en  
faveur des pauvres du pays (LTS, p.146).

From the above translation, it is evident that the translator is conversant with Igbo and in fact African speech patterns; hence, it will be appropriate to say that Etienne Galle's translation even elucidates the needed meaning of the speech patterns in his French translation . For instance:

When you hear Ikem Osodi everywhere you think his head will be touching the ceiling. But look at him, how simple he is. I am even taller than himself, a dunce like (AOS, p.121).

Lorsque vous entendez partout le nom d'Ikem Osodi vous croyez que sa tête touche le plafond. Mais regardez comme il est simple! Moi, cancre que je suis, je suis plus grand que lui (LTS, p.144).

Language and words are major subjects of *Anthills of the Savannah*. Achebe has a mastery of the English language, which makes his novel very lucid. In the text, Ikem Osodi, a firebrand oppositionist and editor of the state-owned newspaper makes words his tools. He is a character that is obviously the voice of Achebe in the novel.

One outstanding contribution of contemporary African writers to African literature is their adaptive use of the English language, which has been demonstrated to be an effective linguistic style. The ability of the translator to capture the meaning of the twisted English used is an added advantage in his task. Let us consider an example extracted from the speech of one old man who is a member of the Abazon delegation at Harmoney Hotel:

I have heard what you said about this young man, Oshodi, whose doings are known everywhere and fill our hearts with pride. Going to meetings and weddings and naming ceremonies of one's people is good. But don't forget that our wise men have said also that a man who answers every summons by the town crier will not plant corn in his fields. So my advice to you is this. Go on with your meetings and marriages and naming ceremonies because it is good to do so. But leave this young man alone to do what he is doing for Abazon and for the people of Kangan; the cock that crows in the morning belongs to one household but his voice is the property of the neighbourhood. You should be proud that this bright cockerel that wakes the whole village comes from your compound (AOS, p.122).

And thus goes the translation:

J'ai entendu ce que vous avez dit de ce jeune homme, Osodi, dont les actions sont connues partout et remplissent nos cœurs de fierté. C'est une bonne chose que de se rendre aux réunions, aux mariages et aux cérémonies du nom des gens de son peuple. Mais n'oubliez pas que nos sages pensaient aussi que celui qui répond à tous les appels du crieur public n'a pas le temps de semer du maïs dans son champ. Voici donc le conseil que je vous donne. Continuez vos réunions, vos mariages et vos cérémonies du mon, car ce sont de bonnes choses. Mais laissez ce jeune homme continuer à agir comme il fait pour l'Abazon, et pour l'ensemble du Kangan; le coq qui chante le matin appartient à une maison, mais sa voix est la propriété du voisinage. (LTS, p.145).

The old man's English in the above quotation is meant to be Achebe's rendering of the Igbo, which he would have spoken but because Chinua Achebe is a talented writer, he has succeeded in twisting the English Language so as to suit his own purpose. A problem of translation arises here if the translator is not skilful since the French language does not easily yield itself to being so twisted and this in itself constitutes a serious challenge. According to Jacquin (in Bariki 2000:53),

La rigidité de la syntaxe français bonde la liberté du traducteur ...Pas de déclinaison, le français étant une langue analytique, les morphèmes lexicaux vont s'enchaîner à l'aide de morphèmes grammaticaux souvent mono-syllabiques. Ces contraintes pèsent lourdement sur le texte qui ne peut évidemment calquer les structures et les rythmes d'un texte source- synthétique.

One major style employed by Achebe, which adds colour to his writing is the use of allusion. He alludes profusely to the Holy Bible, and to other writers such as David Diop, Ali Mazrui, Buchi Emecheta, Okigbo etc. In his translation, Etienne Galle did not only skillfully render them, he also translates and highlights others in the explanatory footnotes as in the following examples:

"Louons maintenant les grands hommes"

1. Citation d'un poème de Rudyard Kipling (N. du T.) (LTS, p.48).

'Une sorte de Henderson indigène!'

- 1. Allusion au roman de Saul Bellow, Henderson, Le Faiseur de pluie. (N. du T.) (LTS, p.70).

'Il arrive accompagné de nuages d'immortalité'

- 1. Allusion à un poème de Wordsworth (N. du T.) (LTS, p.120).

'Les porcs des Gadareniens'

- 2. Allusion à un passage du Nouveau Testament (Matthieu, Viii, 28) (N. du T.) (LTS, p.120)

'Mais ce ne sera pas dans la caverne de Mère Idoto'

- 1. Allusion littéraire au poete Igbo Okigbo (N. de l'A.) (LTS, p. 121).

Etienne Galle must be commended for his effective use of explanatory footnotes in his translation where he accounts

for Achebe's use of Igbo words and phrases. If the translator had not glossed such words and expressions, there would have been a very serious semantic gap. However, since this has been meticulously done, a French reader coming across the word "Ogili" or answering "Ise" after prayers for the first time will definitely have an idea of the Igbo concepts involved. In the same vein, a French reader coming across Igbo childish rain song such as "Ogwogwo mmili takumei ayolo" will definitely understand the Igbo perception involved from the translator's glossary.

Another area worth considering in Etienne Galle's translation is his rendering of syntax and modifiers. In the first place, as Virginia Azohu (1996:411) asserts, there is abundant evidence of Achebe's mastery of English and its varieties, which fall within the verbal repertoire of his novels. In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe's practice bears out his precepts. Nowhere is this better appreciated than in his manipulation of syntax and idioms of English to produce that "syntax" variety of English, which simulates oral patterns. It is also evident even in his use of English for the more conventional novelistic tasks such as characterization.

Just as Achebe uses words, so also Etienne Galle uses them as a major technique in his translation. Consider for instance, the rendition of the following passage where Achebe defines Beatrice through the words and perceptions of another character:

Chris saw the quiet demure damsel whose still waters nonetheless could conceal deep over-powering eddies of passion that always almost sucked him into fatal depths. Perhaps Ikem alone came close to sensing the village priestess who will prophesy when her divinity rides her abandoning, if need be her soup – pot on the fire, but returning again when the god departs to the domesticity of kitchen or the bargaining market-stool behind her little display of peppers and dry fish and

green vegetables. He knows it better than Beatrice herself (AOS, p.105)

Etienne Galle's translation:

Chris voyait en elle la demoiselle silencieuse et réservée, dont les eaux tranquilles pouvaient cependant cacher les tourbillons irresistibles d'une passion qui menaçait toujours de l'entraîner vers de fatales profondeurs. Seul Ikem, peut-être, n'était pas loin de deviner en elle la prêtresse de village qui se met à prophétiser lorsque la divinité vient la chevaucher, qui abandonne s'il le faut sa marmite sur le feu, mais s'en revient, après le départ du dieu, aux travaux domestiques, à la cuisine, au tabouret du marché ou elle se remet à discuter du prix des piments, du poisson sèche et des légumes de son petit étal. Ikem le savait mieux que Béatrice (LTS, p.126).

Our interest in Achebe's linguistic performance leads us further to an examination of his use of evaluative adjectives and their translation by Etienne Galle. In *Anthills of the Savannah*, there is a high occurrence of modification, which serves as adjectives. A consideration of these evaluative adjectives reveals that both the authorial and the first-person narrators employ these adjectives. Such structures are employed both as pre-modifiers and post-modifiers. The result of this generous use of structures of modification is that characters, emotions, situations and actions are much more delineated. Examples of such structures and their translations include,

“mouse-ridden cartons” (AOS, p.29)

-cartons infestés de souris (LTS, p.39)

‘hydra-headed bronze statute so ancient....’

(AOS, p.31).

- en statue de bronze a tête d'hydre si antique...

(LTS, p.41)

‘eye-watering laughter’ (AOS, p.42)

- de rire a en avoir les larmes aux yeux (LTS, p.53)  
'Sharp-pointed shapes of aggressiveness' (AOS, p.155)
- en formes aggressives, coupantes et pointues  
(LTS, p.182)  
'Star-crossed lover' (AOS, p.196)
- amoureuse marquée par le destin (LTS, p.228)

Etienne Galle uses essentially the same stylistic and syntactic devices as they are used in the original English text. There is absolute unity and coherence in the translation in relation to the lexis and structures, scenes, story telling and even in the character description. What may appear to be a structural difference is attributable to the inherent structures of the two languages. It will be observed that the English examples – “hydra-headed ..., eye-watering ..., sharp-pointed and star-crossed” – show the synthetical nature of the language. The equivalent translations are all analytic in line with French syntactic behavior. As regards character description, it is difficult to ignore, for instance, the tone of joy and satisfaction found in the President in the description of the brutal Director of the State Research Council, which Etienne Galle equally captures adequately:

- “this bright young man” (AOS, p.14)
- ce jeune home remarquable (LTS, p.22).

The President’s (Sam’s) description of his feeling of triumph over his real and imaginary enemies was also skillful rendered.

- “this wonderful sense of achievement” (AOS, p.22)
- ce merveilleux sentiment de réussite (LTS, p.31)

One major device, which adds beauty to Chinua Achebe’s work, is the use of Pidgin English. He could have written the whole novel in Standard English, but since he has decided to introduce a different register it must be for a purpose. Victor Aire

(1996: 460) posits that Achebe makes use of Pidgin English for at least three specific reasons.

Firstly, to effect a realistic portrayal of the linguistic competence of some of his characters. Second, as a device for characterization and thirdly, as a representation of an unofficial lingua franca, often used by characters who ordinarily use “proper” English.

The use of more than one language within a single piece of literature is called code-mixing or code-switching. In *Anthills of Savannah*, Achebe has not used this technique just to show-off his erudition or familiarity with more than one language but because such a switch is a part of the expression devices employed by the members of the class under reference in their everyday conversation.

Perhaps one of the most challenging tasks faced by Etienne Galle is the translation of the passages, which the writer elected to render in Pidgin English. In his translation, Etienne Galle engages in the modification and “purification” of the passage appearing in the pidgin register as if pidgin does not exist in the French Language. Again, Victor Aire (1996:462), explains that as far as 1956, Ferdinand Oyono in his novel, *Une Vie de Boy*, had mentioned pidgin French called “le petit nègre” and that pidgin French also exists in cities like Abidjan in Côte d’Ivoire. It is therefore a great shortcoming on the part of Etienne Galle to modify and purify the pidgin in his translation as it distorts the local flavour evoked in the original. Some of these modifications and purifications are shown below:

1. The woman dem massacre for Motor Park last week na you killam? (AOS, p. 35)  
La femme qui s’est fait étriper à la gare routière la semaine dernière, c’est toi qui l’as tuée ? (LTS, p.46).

This sentence has been rendered in proper French contrary to the pidgin original.

2. Na goat go born you next time, no to woman  
(AOS, p.42)  
C'est la chèvre qui va être ta mère la prochaine fois,  
pas la femme (LTS, p.43)

This sentence is also rendered in proper French.

3. Why I go tell you? And if I tell you wetin you go  
do with am? Illiteracy de read paper for your country?  
(AOS, p.137).  
Pourquoi je te le dirais? Et si je te l'avais dit,  
qu'est-ce que ça t'aurait apporté ? Les analphabètes,  
ils lisent le journal dans ton pays ? (LTS, p.163).

Etienne Galle's modification of pidgin English in his translation does not negate Chinua Achebe's intension of producing both verisimilitude and comic effect in the dialogue since "le petit nègre is not a strict equivalent of pidgin English. As noted earlier, the French language does not easily yield itself to be twisted as the English language. Nevertheless, Etienne Galle does make some serious efforts in this direction. Whenever possible, he uses "argot" instead of standard French words. For instance, in example (1) above, he used the word "étriper" instead of "tuer". We therefore commend Etienne Galle in his ability to twist the French syntax (of example 3) above. Moreover, a few miscellaneous errors involving inconsistencies and omissions exist in Etienne Galle's translation. An example of such inconsistency is that the translator at times renders some proper nouns as they appear in the original and at other times he changes them. For instance, fou-fou (LTS, p.148) and foofoo (LTS, p.263) and "kolanut" rendered differently (LTS,

p.253) as kola and noix. For the omissions, here are some examples:

You called me a priestess. No, a prophestess, I think  
I mind only the Cherubim and Seraphim part of it  
(AOS, p. 114).  
Tu m'as appelé prêtresse. Non, prophetese, je crois  
(LTS, p. 136).

In the above quotation, the last colourful sentence of the original, 'I mind only the Cherubim and Seraphim, part of it' is not translated.

One day the local chief paid him a visit and as they sat in the long outer room we called the piazza eating kolanut with alligator pepper (AOS, p.85)

Un jour, le chef de village lui rendit visite et, pendant qu'ils étaient assis dans la longue antichambre que nous appelions la piazza, mangeant de la kola avec du piment (LTS, p.104).

Here, the word "alligator" in the original, which distinguishes this peppery seed from the ordinary pepper, is omitted in Etienne Galle's translation.

#### **4. CULTURAL EVALUATION OF ETIENNE GALLE'S TRANSLATION**

Cultural meanings are intricately woven into the texture of the language. The creative writer's ability to capture and project them is of primary importance and should be reflected in the translated work.

Entangled between the need to capture the local flavour and the need to be understood by an audience outside the original cultural and linguistic situation, a translator must be

aware of both cultures. One of the main goals of literary translation is to initiate the target language reader into the sensibilities of the source language culture. However, it is not an easy task to transplant a text steeped in one culture into another.

The process of transmitting cultural elements through literary translation is a complicated and vital task. Culture is a complex collection of experiences, which condition daily life – history, social structure, religion, food, traditional customs and everyday usage. Culture is quite difficult to comprehend completely.

Some of the cultural problems that confronted Etienne Galle in his translation of Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* into French as *Les termitières de la savane* include the translation of proverbs, idioms and idiomatic expressions, metaphors, similes, food and food items, allusions, etc.

Several texts of modern African writers in European languages, according to Herbert Igboanusi (2004:217) are typical adoptions of the oral styles of the written tradition. There is a preponderance of proverbs, figures of speech and idioms in direct transposition from the indigenous African languages. In order to reflect the African world-view in a Western language, the language is often twisted and fashioned to suit the African experience. Many African writers, particularly Chinua Achebe, have achieved their adaptive use of English with vigour and freshness, keeping within the English language while capturing the idioms and nuances of their own indigenous languages.

The traditional African (or Nigerian) society, which Achebe depicts in his *Anthills of the savannah*, is a society known for its excessive use of proverbs as part of its daily communication. Achebe makes a profuse use of proverbs, metaphors and similes that

describe the cultural atmosphere in which actions unfold and the cultural milieu in which characters evolve. In fact, as Achebe himself tells us in *Things Fall Apart*, the frequent use of proverbs is highly prized in the Igbo society.

Having spoken plainly so far, Okoye said the next half a dozen sentences in proverbs. Among the Ibo, the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are palm oil with which words are eaten (p. 5)

Proverbs and idiomatic expressions are more culture bound and are therefore more difficult to translate. In his French translation, Etienne Galle can be said to have paid special attention to proverbs and idioms and has translated them with appropriate equivalents. Consider the following for instance:

1. The editor who I hear is a Marxist of sorts appears to imagine he can eat his cake as well as have it. (AOS, p.78)
  - Le rédacteur, une espèce de marxiste, m'a-t-on dit, semble s'imaginer qu'on peut avoir le beurre et l'argent du beurre (LTS, p.96)
2. Cleanliness is next to godliness (AOS, p.109)
  - La propreté est la soeur de la sainteté (LTS, p.130)
3. No condition is permanent (AOS, p.193)
  - La vie, ça change (LTS, p.225)
4. Don't give up, whatever is hot will become cold (AOS, p.199)
  - Tenez bon, tout ce qui est chaud finit par refroidir (LTS, p.231)
5. Charity begins at home (AOS, p.156)
  - Charité bien ordonnée commence par soi-même (LTS, p.183)

In the sentences quoted above, we have idiomatic expressions as in numbers 2, 3 & 5, which have equivalent standard expressions or near equivalent meaning in the French

language. In this respect, the translator's task becomes less difficult as he naturally transfers them to the target language.

Sometimes, however, proverbs are used in an esoteric manner and since they are sets of fixed, non-divisible groups of words, their meaning is not the sum-total of the meaning of their individual components. It is, therefore, a real problem for a translator to find an equivalent or near equivalent proverb or idiom which defies semantic or communicative miscarriage in the target language. In the absence of such an equivalent, Harish Narang (1996:472) posits that:

a translator may have to take the help of the tedious and lengthy process of paraphrasing, which may also adversely affect the impact intended by the author through the use of such expressions.

To avoid the betrayal of the author's intent, Etienne Galle translates the following potent idioms and proverbs into French in the same esoteric manner as they are presented in the original text.

1. Why will a man mounting a widow listen for footsteps outside her hut when he knows how far her man has travelled? (AOS, p.104)
  - Pourquoi l'homme qui chevauche une veuve prêterait-il attention aux bruits de pas devant sa porte, quand il sait que son mari s'en est allé pour un si long voyage (LTS, p.125)
2. It is no longer a dance you can dance carrying your snuff in one cupped hand (AOS, p.115)
  - Ce n'est plus désormais une danse qu'on peut danser avec du tabac à priser dans le creux de la main (LTS, p.136)

3. Our people say that an animal whose name is famous does not always fill a hunter's basket (AOS, p.121)
  - Nos gens disent qu'un animal dont le nom est célèbre ne remplit pas toujours la gibecière du chasseur (LTS, p.145)
  
4. If you want to get at the root of murder, they said, you have to look for the blacksmith who made the matchet (AOS, p.159)
  - Si vous voulez remonter à la source du crime, disaient-ils, cherchez le forgeron qui a fabriqué le coupe-coupe (LTS, p.187)
  
5. But age gives to a man some things with the right hand even as it takes away other with the left (AOS, p.124)
  - Mais la vieillesse donne à l'homme de la main droite alors même qu'elle lui retire de la main gauche (LTS, p. 147).
  
6. A man whose horse is missing will look everywhere even in the roof (AOS, p.177)
  - Celui qui a perdu son cheval regarde partout, même dans la toiture (LTS, 208)

The source language proverbs quoted above have no natural equivalent in the target language. That is to say that the source language lexical items are semantically unrelated to the target language lexical items. In the light of the above, the only alternative is to transliterate as Etienne Galle has done. The target language proverbs may seem somewhat obscure to the source language native speaker, but the best the translator can do in this circumstance is to resort to transliteration in order not to harm the local colour and the intent of the author.

Another source of challenge for the translator is the rendering of loanwords, that is, words borrowed from African indigenous languages. There is such an impressive number of loanwords from the Igbo language in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* that calls for further consideration and analysis in Etienne Galle's translation. These loanwords in the novel reflect mostly titles, food and clothing. Chinua Achebe in his novel presents these words in italics making them distinct and easy to locate. In *Les termitières de la savane*, Etienne Galle did not see the need for translating them, but rather retained them as they appear in the original text since these words do not have natural equivalents in the target language (French). Such words include, Danshiki, garri ube, ozo, adire, chi, lappa, etc. These words are, however, adequately explained in the footnote provided by the translator, thereby giving a non-native reader an idea of the concept used.

In addition, while some words were successfully rendered, there are some others that are mistranslated or completely omitted. For instance, Etienne Galle was definite in his rendition of cocoyam (AOS, p.83) as igname coco (LTS, p.101); coconut (AOS, p.94) as noix de coco (LTS, p.114); palm-wine (AOS, p.125) as vin de palme (LTS, p.149); Egusi soup (AOS, p. 207) as sauce à l'éguossi (LTS, p. 241) and pounded yam (AOS, p. 207) as igname pilée (LTS, p. 241).

However, some cases of cultural mistranslation and omission are found in the following examples:

1. Breakfast of fried plantain and corn pap (AOS, p.189)  
- Petit déjeuner de bananas frites et de bouillie de maïs (LTS, p. 220).
2. My wife here was breaking her head looking for kolanuts, for alligator pepper, for honey and for bitter-leaf (AOS, p. 227).

- Ma femme se cassait la tête pour savoir comment elle allait trouver de la kola, du piment, du miel et des condiments (LTS, p. 262)

These two quotations above reveal Etienne Galle's insufficient familiarity with the African cultural background as he mistranslates "plantain" as "banane" in the first sentence whereas plantain and banana (banane) are two different species of the plant in question. In the second sentence, when Achebe talks of "alligator pepper" and bitter-leaf" in *Anthills of the Savannah*, Etienne Galle's French version talks of just "condiment" omitting completely the colourful "alligator" attached to the condiment and the important Igbo vegetable (bitter-leaf) used in making soup. Etienne Galle is no doubt unable to understand what the Igbo call "Olugbu" which translates into English as "bitter-leaf", neither was he knowledgeable enough to differentiate the ordinary pepper from the special peppery seed (alligator pepper) used for eating kolanut in most parts of Africa.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Chinua Achebe is an accomplished and successful African writer whose language does not pose any difficulty in its translation. His language is rather simple, direct and accessible. The translation of *Anthills of the Savannah* does not present much ambiguity to Etienne Galle. Notwithstanding his purification and modification of Achebe's pidgin English and the lexical, semantic and stylistic losses in the omissions, he has been able to present the author's style and idea satisfactorily. In the same manner, the cultural traits and references have not posed an insurmountable problem for the translator, who is a Frenchman.

Though not many translations are completely free of oversights, it might perhaps be pertinent to emphasize that the errors and shortcomings observed have not been pointed out merely out of the gratuitous need to vitiate Etienne Galle's *Les termitières de la savane* which is generally very successful, reliable and adequate as he has been able to capture the tone and intentions of Chinua Achebe.

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