



E-Interviews by Ngozi Obiajulum Iloh with Tunde Fatunde, author of *La Calebasse cassée*, and Jamary Matlaselo Molumeli, translator of the English version

NGOZI OBIAJULUM ILOH

Résumé :

Cette contribution comporte deux e-entretiens menés par Ngozi O. Iloh avec Tunde Fatunde, l'auteur de *La Calebasse cassée* (2002), et Jamary M. Molumeli qui a traduit l'œuvre littéraire en anglais sous le titre *Shattered Calabash* (2005). Bien que les deux entretiens aient été menés séparément, ils ont été utiles dans l'évaluation critique de la traduction anglaise de la pièce. Il est donc pertinent de rendre disponibles ces entretiens comme une contribution au concept du lien auteur-traducteur en traductologie. S'il est pertinent d'analyser une œuvre littéraire sans recourir à la fois à l'auteur et au traducteur, les entretiens sont aussi des éléments efficaces pour valoriser la pièce littéraire en raison des informations métalinguistiques acquises lors de l'exercice.

Abstract :

This contribution contains two e-interviews conducted by Ngozi O. Iloh with Tunde Fatunde, author of *La Calebasse cassée* (2002), and Jarmy M. Molumeli who translated the literary work into English as *Shattered Calabash* (2005). Though the two interviews were conducted separately, they were useful in the critical evaluation of the English translation of the play. It is therefore pertinent to make these interviews available as a contribution to the concept of author-translator bonding in translation studies. Though it is pertinent to analyze a literary work without necessary recourse to both author and translator, the interviews were effective agents in enhancing the evaluation of the literary piece because of the metalinguistic information acquired during the exercise.

Résumé (igbo) :

dị a bụ ajuju ọnụ elektrōnik abụọ nke Ngozi O. Iloh duziri Tunde Fatunde, onye edemede *La Calebasse cassée* (2002), na onye ntugharị okwu, Jarmy M. Molumeli dika *Shattered Calabash* (2005). Ọ bụ ezie na a gbara ajuju ọnụ ndị ahụ iche, ha bara uru na nyocha dị oke mkpa nke nsugharị Bekee nke egwuregwu ahụ. Ya mere, ọ dị mkpa ịjẹwepụta ajuju ọnụ ndị a dị ka onyinye na njikọta onye ntugharị-ntugharị na ọmụmụ ntugharị. Ọ bụ ezie na ọ dị mkpa inyocha akwụkwọ ọgụgụ na-enweghị mkpa dị mkpa maka onye edemede na onye ntugharị okwu, ajuju ọnụ ndị ahụ bụ ndị nnọchi anya dị irè n'ikwalite nyocha nke mpempe akwụkwọ n'ihia ozī ịkọwapụta enwetara n'oge a gbara ajuju ọnụ.

Mots-clés (igbo) : Calabash agbaji, Fatunde, Iloh, Molumeli, Shattered Calabash

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Introduction

The bedrock of translation is the comprehensible transmission of the message of the original author to a linguistically disconnected audience without losing the key information. What makes this task testing for the translator is human's inability to accurately read the minds of others, in this case, of the original author. To this end, this paper focuses on the empirical approach of using interviews of both the translator and the author of a literary work as a means of evaluating a qualitative translated text. The case study of the translation of Tunde Fatunde's *La Calebasse cassée* (2002) by Jamary Molumeli as *Shattered Calabash* (2005) was enhanced by conducting separate interviews with both the author and the translator.

These interviews were compared and deductions were made in the course of evaluating specifically the translation of the title of the book. In the course of the interview, an allusion was made to the issue of performative translation. This is to say for instance that the play was performed by students studying French at the Nigerian French Village, Badagry while the translated version in English was equally performed by students in the English Department of Lesotho University.

Summary of the Play

La Calebasse cassée is an international play written in French by Tunde Fatunde from Nigeria. The play was translated into English as *Shattered Calabash* by Jamary Molumeli from Lesotho. The play portrays mainly the socio-economic and political rottenness of the political leaders of an unnamed and unknown African country, representative of all African and third world countries. Fatunde portrays how the political leaders siphon money to European countries, hence their collaboration in corruption is

bedeviled by moral ineptitude of some religious leaders, who are involved in sending young girls abroad for prostitution. The solution proposed by the author looks utopic in the sense that the younger generation is ready to denounce their parents at a Sovereign National Conference, which the older men ensure does not take place. The younger generation is supported by the women folks like Sabine Eteki and her daughter-in-law, Salimatou, because of Sabine Eteki's betrayal by her unfaithful husband.

Objective, Method and Results of the Interviews

The objective of the interviews was mainly to examine the choice of the title of the play in the English translation, which the translator had changed because the author did not want to use the same title in English with an existing title by another Nigerian author. The analysis is given in the cause of evaluating the translation.

It is obvious that the method used is that of e-interviews as the interviewer, the author and translator are poles apart, so the interviewer resulted to using e-interviews thus making the questions directly linked to only the title of the book.

The results of the interviews were equally direct in searching mainly for the choice of the translation of the title and these was achieved. The analysis of the translation of Yoruba proverbs and some other items came as a further scrutiny of the book after the interviews on the title had been concluded. A more comprehensive interview could be carried out on the entire translation of the play.

Below is a verbatim reproduction of both interviews.

E-Interview with Tunde Fatunde, author of *La Calebasse Cassée*

Ngozi O. ILOH (NOI)¹: Good day Prof. Tunde Fatunde². I am carrying out a research and a critical evaluation of the translation³ of your French play titled *La Calebasse cassée*⁴ published in 2002 by Bookcraft at Ibadan, Nigeria. I learnt that Chris Dunton⁵ linked you up with the translator Jamary M. Molumeli⁶ from Lesotho. Please, could you tell me more about Prof. Chris Dunton and the translation connection?

Tunde Fatunde (TF): Chris Dunton is a British and a Professor of Dramatic Arts at the University of Lesotho. I met him when he came visiting University of Ibadan in the early 90s. Since then, we have been in touch. I sent him a copy of the above play (*La Calebasse cassée*). He then suggested that it could be translated into English in collaboration with JAMARY M. MOLUMELI. I gave him a go-ahead. I have never met the translator.

NOI: I had wondered why the English title reads as *Shattered Calabash*⁷ and not 'Broken Calabash'. I had earlier on taken you to task on that too, but I was not satisfied with the explanation given. Could you tell me more about that now?

1. Ngozi Obiajulum ILOH is the author of this interview with subsequent abbreviation as NOI.
2. Prof. Tunde Fatunde is the author of *La Calebasse cassée*.
3. "Critical Evaluation of the English Translation of Fatunde's *La Calebasse cassée* as *Shattered Calabash* by Jamary Molumeli" is an article written by Ngozi Obiajulum Iloh and was published in *ASUU Journal of Humanities*, Abuja, Vol.4, No. 2, 2017, p. 139-156.
4. *La Calebasse cassée* is a play written in French by Tunde Fatunde and published in 2002 by Bookcraft, Ibadan, Nigeria.
5. Prof. Christopher Dunton is a writer and Professor of Dramatic Arts at the National University of Lesotho. He wrote the introduction of the English translation *Shattered Calabash*.
6. Dr. Jamary Matlaselo Molumeli is the translator of Tunde Fatunde's play, *La Calebasse cassée* into English as *Shattered Calabash*.
7. *Shattered Calabash* is a 48-page English Translation of Tunde Fatunde's *La Calebasse cassée* by Jamary M. Molumeli published by the Institute of Southern African Studies in 2005.

TF: In the problematic of translation, I must confess that I did not train in translation techniques. I am not a professional translator. In fact, I have refused to get into the mainstream of translation. I tried it a couple of times, I burnt my fingers. I gave up. My area of interests, apart from mainstream literary criticism, is French journalism, I think, I speak, and I write in French. This is my training.

NOI: I was rubbing mind with Prof. Union Edebiri⁸ on this research and he feels it would amount to plagiarism if the translator had retained the title 'Broken Calabash'. Do you feel the same way because I don't feel that way? The explanation given in the book is because of Tess Onwueme's *Broken Calabash*⁹. What do you have to say?

TF: Dr. Iloh, I wish I could give a professional answer. I can't. In the literary world, the flexible at times could be contradictory in the use of words, it is allowed. This is one of the ingredients in literary freedom; some would call it literary rascality. Don't forget creative writing was developed, continues to grow outside the four walls of the classrooms. Come to think of it, I should have titled the play in many ways: *Calebasse déchiquetée*, *Calebasse pulvérisée*, *Calebasse défoncée*, etc.

NOI: Most of your works are plays written in Pidgin English. *La Calebasse cassée* is the only one in French. As a French lecturer, playwright and interpreter at international conference, why did you not translate your play from French to English yourself?

TF: I am not a professional translator. In the knowledge industry, especially in this vast and expanding information age, I would sound ridiculous and arrogant if I now assume the role of a translator. One should know his/her limits. Nobody knows it all. I cannot even call myself an interpreter. I am one of the few French journalists in Nigeria.

8. Prof. Unionmwan Edebiri is a Professor of French with specialization in Theatre originally from the University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria and later with the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

9. *The Broken Calabash* is a play by Tess Onwueme, a Nigerian playwright, published by Totan Publishers Ltd in Owerri, Nigeria in 1984.

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NOI: A critic dwelt extensively on the use of Yoruba proverbs in the play¹⁰. Would you say that the translator did justice to that in particular especially as he is not a Yoruba man?

TF: Dr. Iloh, my objective and restricted field of study and interests would not allow me to answer this question.

NOI: Now, what is your view on performative translation or rather the translation of performance in theatre?

TF: Here again, I don't know the difference between performative translation and translation of performance. Ngozi, you know my intellectual background when I was a teacher and activist at UNIBEN. These concepts I don't know O! I bi olodo¹¹!

NOI: Specialists in theatre translation have been going back and forth on the issue of performance and translation and the issue of equivalence? What is your view, given your personal experience as a successful interpreter¹²?

TF: Ngozi I no be interpreter¹³. Let alone talk about being a successful one.

NOI: Do you think the translation may need a new edition by now, and why if yes or no?

TF: No response.

10. 'The use of Yoruba proverbs in the play', see Atilade, Kayode (2014) "Aspects of Yoruba Discourse Features in Tunde Fatunde's *La Calebasse Cassée*" in *The African Symposium: An online Journal of the African Educational Research Network*, 3 Volume 14, No. 1-2, p. 1-10.

11. 'I bi olodo!' is a Pidgin phrase with a loan word 'olodo' from Yoruba meaning 'I am a novice'.

12. Tunde Fatunde is a well know interpreter (English – French) in Nigeria among the academia as he has often served as one in International conferences. I have personally worked with him, that is why I had insisted but I must say that he is not a 'professional' or 'trained' interpreter.

13. 'Ngozi, I no be interpreter' is a Pidgin phrase meaning 'Ngozi, I am not an interpreter'.

NOI: I am really very sorry for taking you to task; it is not really to condemn the translation because I personally appreciate and appraise it. As a good consecutive interpreter, you should be able to judge the translation. What exactly is your opinion generally of the translated text?

TF: No response.

NOI: I am of the opinion that translators are not well treated and recognized in the translated texts. Their names are faintly written in one obscure corner of the book. What could be done to enhance their recognition?

TF: No response.

NOI: Finally sir, I sincerely wish to thank you immensely for obliging me this interview. Please, feel free to add any useful information on your personal experience as a lecturer, writer, critic, activist, journalist and interpreter.

TF: GENERAL COMMENTS on the questions without direct answers or responses.

Let me freely make these comments.

I must congratulate you for your efforts in professional translation and professional interpreting. As one of your modest teachers, your search of, and for knowledge, in these two intellectual areas are highly infectious and good. I am proud of you.

Like I said earlier, I am neither a translator nor an interpreter. I am not ashamed to confess my limited knowledge.

Apart from the broad spectrum of literary studies, I rebelliously delved into play writing in English, French and Pidgin English as a creative writer and not as a specialist in creative writing. I love 'belles lettres' and social realism via creative writings. Just like late Festus Iyayi, I added to this interest of activist journalism in French and English, I write and work for international news organs in English and French. Thus, I have never moved close to translation and interpreting. You can see how my intellectual weakness in these two areas has exposed me.

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Best Regards.

E-Interview with Jamary Matlaselo Molumeli, translator of Tunde Fatunde's *La Calebasse cassée* as *Shattered Calabash*

Ngozi O. ILOH (NOI): Good day Dr J. M. MOLUMELI. I am carrying out a research and a critical evaluation of the translation of Professor Tunde Fatunde's play titled *La Calebasse cassée* published in 2002 by Bookcraft at Ibadan, Nigeria. I learnt that Chris Dunton linked you up for the translation. How did you find the translation experience of the said book?

Jamary M. MOLUMELI (JMM): First of all, allow me to react to your observation that Prof Chris Dunton linked me up for the translation. Yes, he did. Chris is actually very fond of Nigerian literature and I suspect he knows Prof Fatunde. I learnt from him that he worked in Nigeria some years ago.

Coming back to the translation, this was not the first work Chris gave me a copy of to read: earlier on, in 1993 or so, he lent me his copy of *Comme ton père* by Gillaume le Touze and other works originally written in French, which I enjoyed very much. Lately, he lent me his copy of *Chuchote pas trop* by Frieda Ekotto.

Again, he would have liked me to do an English translation of Thomas Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela*. All in all, Chris seemingly liked to work with me, probably because he had noted my interest in African literatures and their translations. You will understand why he passed to me the French texts: I am in French and Francophone literatures and have some previous translations into English.

As for the translation experience, I can say, very challenging and yet fascinating. You might know how one proceeds in the task: reading the original version from start to finish, trying to fully understand the theme, the plot, characterization and language wield in their fullest dimensions. Then I began to make preliminary drafts of the play.

NOI: I had wondered why the English title reads as *Shattered Calabash* and not *Broken Calabash*. I had earlier on taken the author to task on that too, but I am not satisfied with the explanation given. What do you think?

JMM: *Broken Calabash* did surface in my very first draft. But as I had to pass my draft to Chris for editing, he sent it back to me with the suggestion of *Shattered Calabash*. To me, the suggestion was even more appropriate, more expressive in the context of the story in that it reflected the desperation of the main actor, Sabine, and her shattered hopes and expectations which she had harboured at the beginning when she got married to Eteki. So, I accepted Chris's suggestion. It was the best in my view.

I should point out that, from the start, Chris had proposed and I had agreed that we would work as a team, the author, Chris and myself: that I would work out an English version and pass it on to him; he would, to some extent, assess the translation quality by comparing the two versions and, where controversial between him and me, he would propose the English version to the author, and eventually get back to me.

This is exactly what happened at the very beginning of the translation, because when he got back to me with *Shattered...* instead of "broken", I looked at him in the face and he quickly explained that he had consulted with the author and this one was agreed. I then applied my mind much more firmly and reached the understanding that I am putting forward. This probably explains how and why Chris eventually prepared the introduction to the play and, in some marketing scripts, figures as the editor of the book.

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I for one was not in contact with the author; but I suspect Prof Fatunde was following every progress we made on the translation through to publication because shortly after the play was published by the local Institute of Southern African Studies, I was made aware of its reprint in a three-fold volume by Tunde Fatunde titled *No More Oil Boom and Other Plays*¹⁴, Ibadan (Nigeria): Bookcraft, p. 367-421.

NOI: In Translation Studies, is there any difference between 'Theatrical Translation' and 'Translation of theatre'?

JMM: I am not, by training, a translator. I ventured into the field by way of research. However, I would say that I understand the first concept as referring to the translation of works in theatre/drama, and the second could read, to me, as 'drama on stage', in which case I could not, I suppose, translate the work behind words like *décor*, *mise en scène* and all it would require. I want to believe that there is big difference...

NOI: Since your translation, has the translated play been performed on stage perhaps in South Africa? If yes, did the performance affect your translation in any way even though the play had already been translated?

JMM: I am not aware. All I know is that it was picked up by a colleague of mine at the National University of Lesotho, Sam Akpan. He happens to be a Nigerian Lesotho teaching Theatre and Drama. He did tell me that he had chosen *Shattered Calabash* as his textbook. That was some two, three years back. And he gave me a brief and verbal feedback that it was wonderful. I did not ask him much. I think I was only complacent that I was read and appreciated somewhere. You know we write to be read, we speak to be heard, isn't? And it's always a great pleasure when it happens.

NOI: Now, what is your view on performative translation or rather the translation of performance in theatre?

JMM: It is demanding I can assure you. It requires a very good command of the spoken English, which Chris knew best and helped bring up where relevant. I can recall that at one point I had just uttered a

14. *No More Oil Boom and other Plays* is a collection of Tunde Fatunde's plays published in Ibadan by Bookcraft Ltd in which *Shattered Calabash* features on pages 361-421.

dry, narrative kind of talk, which seemingly did not interpret the emotion of the actor. I was corrected... One must keep in mind that the actors are in a “talking” and not a “discussion” situation, the context is a family one where there are no formalities, everyone being very casual in their approach to others, a context which determines the language they use towards each other.

NOI: Specialists in theatre translation have been going back and forth on the issue of performance and translation and the issue of equivalence? What is your view, given your personal experience as a successful translator?

JMM: Necessarily so. One must find a correct equivalence and observe the language level and context. Actually, one has to balance between formal talk and spoken language or slang, so to say.

NOI: Do you think your translation may need a new edition by now and why if yes or no?

JMM: I think it can still stand as it is, probably because the quality of English, in my view, is good, and the translation quality has not been tested...

NOI: I am really very sorry for taking you to task; it is not really to condemn your translation because I personally appreciate and appraise your translation positively. As a good simultaneous interpreter, don't you think that experience may have contributed immensely in your translation of the play in question?

JMM: Yes, it has, and a great deal. The starting point is to spontaneously come up with translation draft through the quick and steady feel of the running story. So, my experience and skill in

E-Interviews by Ngozi Obiajulum Iloh with Tunde Fatunde, author of *La Calebasse cassée*, and Jamarly Matlaselo Molumeli, simultaneous interpreting¹⁵ helped me to immediately give a version and thus flow with the story. When the idea has taken shape, I would come back to tidy up the translation.

NOI: Finally, sir, I sincerely wish to thank you immensely for obliging me this interview. Please, feel free to add any useful information on your personal experience as an interpreter/ translator in theatre translation.

JMM: I am delighted to be in touch with someone who is interested in my work and wants to take it to a further dimension. You deserve great encouragement in that regard. I would love to see the end product of your endeavour. Keep it up.

However, allow me to say that I still have my draft notes kept somewhere. I have always wanted to share my personal experiences during the translation of Prof Fatunde's play. I think you have rekindled that interest in me, and I hope to find some time soon to put words together and produce an article...

So long!

Conclusion

It is argued from these interviews that using a comparative and analytical interview approach in the evaluation of a translation adds impetus to translation analysis. Thus, arising from the interviews, a methodological approach of analytically evaluating translated works of literature is proposed. This approach termed "authlation"¹⁶ uses author/translator

15. Jamarly Molumeli is a renowned international interpreter and translator in South Africa and Southern Africa. He is a Simultaneous Conference Interpreter for several local, regional and international conferences (English – French; English – Sesotho). Apart from translating Tunde Fatunde's *La calebasse cassee*, he had translated Naindoubu's play, *The Student of Soweto* from French and published by Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1994, 48p.

16. "Authlation" is a neologism coined by me as a result of the interview merging the author's and translator's input to enhance the analysis of a given translation, especially where both the author and translator are still alive.

interviews as an extra-textual apparatus for engaging evaluative analysis of literary texts – an approach that can be developed into a full literary translation model. “Authlation” is a neologism coined as a result of the interviews merging the author’s and translator’s input to enhance the analysis of a given translation, especially where both the author and translator are still alive. Unlike traditional practices, the interviews project the translator and his significance in the scheme of literary translation, notably theatrical translation that hardly has any critical works to it. They further project modalities for author/translator comparative interviews, which will definitely bear on the successful critical evaluation of any literary translation evaluation. This was successfully utilized in the article “Critical Evaluation of the English Translation of Fatunde’s *La Calebasse cassée* as *Shattered Calabash* by Jamary Molumeli” published in *ASUU Journal of Humanities* (Iloh, 2017, p. 139-156). It may be pertinent to conduct an exhaustive interview based on the analysis arising from the explanation of the choice and the translation of the title of the play.

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