



Audio-Visual Translation and Promotion of Positive Multiculturalism: Students' Perspectives

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Abstract: Multiculturalism describes the existence, acceptance, and/or promotion of multiple cultural traditions within a single jurisdiction, usually considered in terms of the language or culture associated with interaction between ethnic groups. Audio-visual translation (AVT) is a specialized branch of translation which deals with the transfer of multimodal and multimedial texts into another language and/or culture. In Cameroon today, the principles of multiculturalism are not respected, thereby creating misunderstandings and sometimes conflicts between the users of the different cultures and languages of the country. Despite the many measures taken by the Government so far to palliate these problems, they have persisted. The present study aims at explaining how audio-visual translation can be used to solve the problems inherent in multicultural contexts through the use of subtitling to facilitate and ease understanding among the people from different cultures. Data was collected through questionnaires from two hundred students of the University of Buea coming from nine regions of the country and international students from 9 countries in Africa. Analysis of the results revealed that 1) Multiculturalism-related laws are only on paper and thus, are not effectively implemented, 2) AVT can effectively promote multiculturalism, peace and unity but not justice. and 3) AVT can solve these conflicts if and only if the government adopts it as one of the teaching and learning tools.

Keywords: Audio-visual translation, positive multiculturalism, peace, unity, justice.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Cameroon is a multilingual country with about 286 indigenous languages, one major lingua franca (Cameroon Pidgin English) and two official languages (English and French) (Ekanjume-Ilongo, 2016). Other (minor) lingua francas include *Ewondo* (Centre, South and East), *Fulfude* (North, Adamawa and Far North), *Hausa* (North-West, West), *Duala* (Littoral), and *Arab and Choa* (limited use in the Far North). Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) remains the only non-ethnic lingua franca used in most of the regions and has both the heaviest functional load and the highest number of users (Wanchia, 2010). Inter-ethnic and intercultural linguistic communication among people in a country with such a diversity of languages is, accordingly, a problem. Audio-visual translation (AVT) which is the translation of any material into audio, visual or audio-visual format such as subtitling can be used to bridge this communication gap between people with diverse languages and cultures.

With an estimated population of 23,924,000 inhabitants as of January 2018 (Ethnologue, 2018) and a surface area of 475,442 km², Cameroon is bounded to the west by Nigeria, to the northeast by Chad, to the east by Central African Republic and to the south by Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Republic of Congo. There are ten administrative regions, two of which are English-speaking and eight French-speaking. The literacy rate is 71% (Ethnologue, 2018). The fact that Cameroon has 286 indigenous languages means that there are also 286 cultures. Furthermore, the six African countries that surround Cameroon expose it to interaction between different languages and cultures and thus, multiculturalism. Multiculturalism, in turn, makes it a fertile ground for translation as well as highlights the necessity to use translation, more specifically audio-visual translation to promote positive multiculturalism (peace, unity and justice that will last out). The already cumbersome multilingual and multicultural situation in Cameroon requires the implementation of precise tools to curb misunderstandings and conflicts among people from these neighbouring countries and it is against this backdrop that this study was carried out.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Apart from its primarily intended role, namely to provide access to audio-visual texts where such access is prevented because of an inability to hear the soundtrack, or an inability to understand the language of the original dialogue, subtitling can also be used for teaching and learning languages and thus reducing misunderstandings that occur when people from different cultures and backgrounds live together.

Mbele (2010) focused on the role of subtitling in local language learning. Her work was guided by the hypothesis that subtitling was crucial for language learning and the promotion of Cameroonian languages. She used a sample population of Bamoun-speakers to confirm her hypothesis. She concluded that AV programmes should be produced in local languages, subtitled in official languages and broadcast in the country. Disseminating knowledge via TV in one language, and adding subtitles translated into other languages e. g. a local language or a lingua franca, can go a long way to ease conflicting situations.

Ayonghe (2009a) for instance, carried out a study with 400 students from different localities of the country and different academic disciplines at the University of Buea and demonstrated that by exposing these students to subtitled programmes as part of the university curriculum will improve their levels of academic literacy and hence their overall performance. This study highlights the fact that using subtitling in the class room gives positives results, which in turn can bring people of different cultures and languages closer to each other and thus reducing misunderstanding among them. In the same vein, Ntowa (2013) centered on using subtitling to teach English language to French speaking students in Cameroon and concluded that subtitling could boost the French speaking student's level of English language and thus clarifying any misunderstanding among them.

According to Hawkins (2010), the Australian TV (SBS TV) used subtitling to provide multilingual and multicultural TV services that informed, educated, entertained all Australians and, in doing so, reflected Australia's multicultural society and met the communication needs of Australia's multicultural society, including ethnic, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, increased awareness of the contribution of a diversity of cultures to the continuing development of Australian society, and promoted understanding and acceptance of the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of the Australian people. He added that SBS TV brought into a singular multicultural public sphere a multiplicity of languages that are generally foreign to each other, and made them mutually understandable through their translation into the national lingua franca, English (Hawkins, 2010). This same scenario could also be used in Cameroon with English, French or CPE as a lingua franca. As a translation practice, subtitling is much more culturally democratic than dubbing or dual sound transmission (which gives audiences the choice of listening to the original language or to the English/French/CPE language dub) because it forces all audiences to hear the original language, and thus familiarises them at the very least with the sound of other languages (Hawkins, 2010).

Research had confirmed that subtitling may be used to increase literacy, to assist children learning to read, and to help in the process of second and third language acquisition. It can also make programming accessible to the Deaf and hard of hearing and it can be a powerful tool in conveying "difficult" learning contents in education. Furthermore, subtitling may be an effective and economically viable way to address issues of language policy, language rights, and cultural diversity particularly in multilingual countries (Kruger & Rafapa, 2002).

In Cameroon, Ayonghe (2009b) postulated that, given the multilingual and multicultural nature of Cameroon, and the potential of subtitling for fostering multilingualism and thus multiculturalism, for language teaching, acquisition, literacy training and academic literacy, this AVT mode was the most appropriate choice for the country. Furthermore, AVT played an important role in the implementation of language policies, and in the enhancement and promotion of the English language in Cameroon respectively (Ayonghe, 2014a & 2014b).

Ellender(2015) conducted research on the Subtitling of Linguistic Variation in Films (Films that feature non-standard pronunciation, dialects or other varieties of language, especially when juxtaposed with more standard uses) and found that, with insight and skill, linguistic variation can be preserved in film subtitles. According to her, language use being central to characters' identities and to a film plot, it is essential to retain the source language specificity as fully as possible in the target

language subtitles in order for the target audience to experience the film as authentically as possible. This therefore means that the subtitling of multilingual and multicultural films and or programmes to facilitate better understanding among different people with different languages and cultures will be an easy task for the subtitlers.

Other studies have demonstrated the positive effects of captioning on productive skills such as verbatim recall and retention, reuse of vocabulary in the proper context as well as communicative performance in specific oral and written communication tasks (Ayonghe & Gumuh, 2013, Ntowa & Ayonghe, 2015, Ayonghe & Mbele, 2015).

These studies have provided substantial evidence that subtitling has the potential for enhancing language acquisition (be it foreign or not). Indeed, these are all teaching/learning tools or aids needed for the improvement and promotion of multilingualism and multiculturalism, particularly in the context of Cameroon where students (Anglophones and Francophones) study through a medium other than their first language. From all the studies discussed above, it is clear that subtitling is indeed an educational instrument that contains immense potential to achieve a number of goals in the educational sphere and therefore in multilingualism and multiculturalism.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is a close link between language and culture. Therefore, any improvement on languages will promote positive changes and transformation on the related cultures and the people concerned. It is obvious that in Cameroon people live in multicultural contexts. To begin with, the 286 indigenous languages (Ekanjume-Ilongo, 2016) that exist in Cameroon imply that i) there are also 286 cultures, and ii) Cameroonians live side by side (wherever they find themselves in the country) with and sharing different cultural and language diversities. Since this scenario sometimes attracts misunderstanding on the one hand, and conflicts on the other hand, some coping measures such as language learning, communication and translation tools may prove to be useful in palliating conflicts among people. There is therefore need to investigate other ways or better ways of managing, solving and promoting multiculturalism in order to alleviate this difficult linguistic situation in the country (and promote unity, peace and possibly justice). AVT in general and subtitling in particular seems to be the answer here. Thus, the following questions are raised: despite all the measures put in place by the Government (i) Why is multiculturalism not being properly practiced? (ii) Can AVT promote positive multiculturalism? (iii) How can AVT help in promoting positive multiculturalism in Cameroon? (iv) What is the state of promotion of multiculturalism in Cameroon? The answers to these questions may constitute a starting point towards solving some of these linguistic problems and conflicts. This study focuses only on subtitling as the AVT mode. In other words, AVT in this study means subtitling.

4. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are to (i) identify and describe Cameroonian multiculturalism and determine the difficulties (if any) faced by the government with multiculturalism, (ii) evaluate the government's efforts at promoting multiculturalism, and (iii) assess the role of AVT in promoting positive multiculturalism. (iv) appraise the state of promoting multiculturalism in Cameroon.

5. METHODOLOGY

Literature was used to describe multiculturalism in Cameroon, establish the difficulties faced by the government with multiculturalism, evaluate the government's efforts at promoting multiculturalism, show the role of AVT in promoting positive multiculturalism and assess the state of promoting multiculturalism in Cameroon.

Two Hundred and Fifty (250) questionnaires (see appendix) were served to current and past students of the Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters (ASTI), University of Buea. Two Hundred and Ten (210) students responded and 200 questionnaires were considered. Out of these 200 respondents, 47 (23.68%) were international students from 9 African countries (Chad, Burkina Faso, Benin, Malawi, Nigeria, Togo, Senegal, Tanzania and Congo). These questionnaires were served in order to get other people's views or perspectives on i) multiculturalism and its ability to promote unity, peace and justice, and ii) AVT and its use to promote positive multiculturalism.

Data obtained from the questionnaires was analysed through the use of percentages and presented through tables. The tables below show the region of the respondents, their nationality, level of education, language combination, age range and gender.

Table1. Table showing the regions of the respondents

Region	Numbers out of 200	Percentage (%)
Adamaoua	5	2.6
Center	32	15.8
Center South	5	2.6
Far North	5	2.6
East		
Littoral	5	2.6
North	5	2.6
North West	11	5.3
South West	16	7.9
West	68	34.2
International	47	23.7
Total----->	200	100.0

Table2. Table showing respondents' level of education, together with their language and gender

General Information		Numbers out of 200	Percentage (%)
Level of Education or Qualification	BA	32	15.79
	MA	95	47.37
	Year 1 of MA	74	36.84
		200	100.00
Language	French	121	60.53
	English	79	39.47
		200	100.00
Gender	F	121	60.53
	M	79	39.47
		200	100.00

6. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Information extracted from the questionnaires assisted in clarifying two issues:

- i. What people really think about multiculturalism and its ability to bring about or to promote unity, peace and justice.
- ii. What people think about AVT and more specifically subtitling and its ability to assist in the promotion of multiculturalism, unity, peace and justice.

6.1. It was Discovered that

- All (100%) the respondents have a good knowledge of multilingualism and multiculturalism.
- 81.6% of the respondents actually know what AVT (subtitling, dubbing, and voice-over) is all about and can actually define it.
- 71.1% of the respondents believe AVT can promote multilingualism and multiculturalism in Cameroon and 28.9% believe the contrary.
- 68.4% of the respondents believe AVT can promote unity and 31.6 believe the contrary.
- 52.6% of the respondents believe AVT can promote peace today and 47.4% believe the contrary.
- 84.2% of the respondents say AVT cannot promote justice today and 15.8% say the contrary. This is a cause for concern. The respondents gave many reasons why justice cannot be promoted by AVT: i) There is no equality in the 2 languages (English and French); ii) There is no equality in the treatment of Anglophones and Francophones; iii) Both Anglophones and Francophones no longer see themselves as brothers and sisters; iv) There is no forgiveness among Anglophones and Francophones; v) There is tribalism and favouritism on the part of the government; vi) The 1996 constitution does not treat the two languages and Anglophones and Francophones equally as stipulated in the law, therefore justice cannot prevail.

- 78.9% of the respondents believe multiculturalism can promote unity. 21.1% do not believe in that.
- 60.5% of the respondents believe multiculturalism can promote peace today. 39.5% do not believe in that.
- 68.4% of the respondents do not believe multiculturalism can promote justice today. 31.6% believe the contrary. Again, this is a cause for concern. The respondents here gave the same reasons as in section 6.1 above.

7. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section involves analysis and discussion on: the description of the Cameroonian multiculturalism, showing the difficulties faced by the government in implementing multiculturalism, the government's efforts at promoting multiculturalism, the role of AVT in promoting positive multiculturalism and an appraisal of the state of promoting multiculturalism.

7.1. Government Policy on Reducing Multiculturalism-Related Problems

The Government of Cameroon has made commendable constitutional efforts to improve the linguistic situation. Alidou (2006: 4) in a critical review of available studies related to language use and literacy in sub-Saharan Africa, asserts that:

In order to assess the situation and determine the conditions, factors and processes that affect the development of literacy in sub-Saharan Africa, studies related to both Anglophone (Cameroon, Tanzania and Zambia), and to Francophone countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali and Niger) were reviewed, which is by no means an exhaustive analysis of the situation. There is, therefore, a need to conduct country by country research in order to clearly assess the situation.

What can be deduced from Alidou's study is that sub-Saharan African countries are still not making language issues a top priority, the result being the scantiness of published studies in that area. Although Cameroon does not implement the laws it has enacted on language issues, it however encourages private initiative in this domain. This explains why experimental projects in the area of teaching languages and researching have long been carried out through private initiative with the silent approval of the Government. Such initiatives as observed through the action of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in Cameroon, the Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL), the Operational Research Programme for Language Education in Cameroon (PROPELCA), the National Association for Language Committee (NACALCO), and so forth, constitute the way forward since national languages are promoted through standardisation, teaching and research, as well as their effective use at the socio-cultural level. Alidou (2006: 13) also makes the following remarks in her review:

If language promotion were strictly only a matter of legislation or constitutional reforms, then Cameroon would be among the champions of local language promotion in literacy on the African continent. The legal and constitutional reforms she has put in place in favour of the development of these local languages are as numerous and varied as her languages and cultures. Yet, Cameroon has made very little concrete input into the process of fostering the effective use of these languages in literacy. Nonetheless, certain actions have been taken that indicate the Government's awareness of the crucial importance of developing and improving languages and cultures in Cameroon (Alidou, 2006). These actions are:

a) The creation of the Ministries of Scientific Research and Innovation (MINRESI), Youth Affairs and Civic Education (MINJEC), Basic Education (MINEDUB), Arts and Culture (MINAC) and Women Empowerment and the Family Center (MINPROFF). The duties of these ministries are to supervise and ensure the smooth implementation and running of aspects or projects related to language research, development and promotion, including areas of academic literacy (AL), culture and social and gender issues.

b) The creation of strict rules and regulations that call for the respect of the revised constitution of 1996 that highlights the need for the promotion of national languages as part of national cultures.

c) The application of the laws relating to the general orientation for education in Cameroon that provide for, among other things, the training of citizens rooted in their cultures, the promotion of national languages, mother tongues, and the eradication of illiteracy (Alidou, 2006).

d) The application of laws that empower regions to carry out education and literacy activities, as well as assist in the elaboration and implementation of regional literacy programmes, the training of trainers, material production, the realisation of a linguistic map of the region and the promotion of written audio-visual press in national languages (Alidou, 2006), as well as the installation of infrastructure and equipment.

e) The Translation of the OHADA Laws from French into English Language in 2019.

f) The recently enacted decree on National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (2017).

Although these reforms have been welcomed, admired and appreciated, they have, according to Alidou (2006) fallen short of producing any concrete results. But what cannot be ignored is the fact that they have provided the frameworks for reinforced research, language development and sensitisation in favour of national languages, multilingualism and thus multiculturalism, in education and literacy in the country (Alidou, 2006). Indeed, multicultural practices including inclusive language policies, increased minority rights, and multicultural education, are being exported worldwide (Kymlicka, 2009). International organizations (including aid agencies, non-governmental organizations, and multilateral organizations) encourage nations to use education as a mechanism for managing diverse populations and building national unity. For example, scholars document how international organizations have supported efforts to revise Rwandan history curriculum to be more egalitarian (Freedman et al., 2008), initiatives to build ethnically integrated schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and projects to teach conflict resolution strategies in Sierra Leone (Hromadzic, 2008).

7.2. Governments' Constraints to Implementing Multiculturalism

As earlier indicated in this study, conflicts arose from the fact that documents in French language are not always properly translated into English language (Mambuela, 2016). The President of the Republic has on several occasions issued instructions to State officials clearly indicating that official communication texts must be prepared, signed and published in both French and English. But most of the texts that the President signs himself are always in French. The constitution of Cameroon states that the State shall guarantee the promotion of bilingualism throughout the country. It does not say anything about its implementation and enforcement throughout the country (Mambuela, 2016). In other words, the constitution talks of the promotion of bilingualism, but is very silent on its practice and implementation. If the promotion of bilingualism is not guaranteed by the government, it is going to be difficult to guarantee, let alone promote multilingualism and multiculturalism. Another difficulty faced by the government in solving these problems is that it has not put in place a concrete multicultural policy (Ayonghe, 2014a) to support the implementation of the 1996 constitutional law (Article 1 (3) of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon).

7.3. Proposals on AVT Promoting Multiculturalism

AVT can promote multiculturalism in Cameroon since 71.1% of the respondents believe it can, and only 28.9% believe the contrary. Furthermore, many studies on AVT have confirmed this fact (see section 3 above).

The first thing is that the Cameroon government should adopt AVT as one of the teaching and learning tools or mode in Cameroon. The various uses of AVT in education and in other areas to promote language acquisition (local, national and foreign) and thus multilingualism and multiculturalism, have been described in detail and demonstrated by many researchers (see section 3 above). It is recommended that the government, the powers that be, the policy and law makers, and the stake holders should take all these proposals into consideration and properly implement them in the whole country.

7.4. AVT and the Promotion of Peace, Unity and Justice

A multicultural context means that there are multiple languages, cultures, backgrounds, etc. coming together. This scenario in turn engenders misunderstandings and sometimes conflicts. Therefore, solving the linguistic aspects among the people will eventually cut down misunderstandings, to an extent.

Subtitling can be introduced in classrooms for teaching and learning. This includes subtitling for the hearing-impaired. Subtitling can be introduced on TV programmes and News for the benefit of all types of viewers. In the case of Cameroon with its multilingual and multicultural contexts, three languages can be used at a time: i) the spoken language from the image and utterance from the TV, ii) the translated language written as the first subtitle on the screen, and iii) One of the indigenous languages or a lingua franca such as Cameroon Pidgin English also written as the second subtitle on the screen (see figure 1 below). This process will speed up language learning. Once many people can understand themselves, there will be peace, harmony and unity. Various studies on the language situation in Cameroon have shown the presence of loan words from CPE to the other languages, both in spoken and written forms. CPE is spoken in most parts of Cameroon by both the English-speaking and French-speaking Cameroonians (Ekajume-Ilongo, 2016).



Figure 1. An illustration of how AVT can be used to promote peace, unity and justice.

These are two cuts (examples) from a movie *Chosen Maid Part 1* (Ukeje, 2017) used here to illustrate how subtitling can be used to ease understanding among people with different languages and from different cultures and backgrounds and thus, promote peace, unity and justice. There are two lines of subtitles on the screen. The first line is in the French language. The second line is in the Cameroon Pidgin English. The spoken language heard from the utterance from the screen is the English language.

Another example to emulate here is that of the Australian TV (see Hawkins, 2010). The advantages of AVT are numerous. In Cameroon for instance, it has been shown that AVT is used:

- i) In the classroom for teaching and learning; in the promotion and the implementation of multilingualism and thus, multiculturalism (Ayonghe, 2009a);
- ii) In the implementation of language policies and the promotion of Cameroonian national languages (Mbele, 2010);
- iii) To translate all forms – radio, television, internet – of audio-visual material.
- iv) With dubbing, viewers do not stress up when watching TV programmes or films since they will rarely be able to identify potential mistakes.
- v) Voice-over is popularly being used commercially, in television advertising since the beginning of radio broadcasting.

In Cameroon, research has shown that AVT, though still in its infancy, can be used to teach and learn programmes and languages both official and indigenous languages and thus multilingualism/multiculturalism as well as in the implementation of language policies (Mbele, 2010, Ayonghe, 2014a & 2014b). Voice-over is currently being used in CRTV for interviews and adverts (Ayonghe & Enow, 2013).

Subtitling can make television a very powerful tool in disseminating information in matters related not only to education, but also to politics, as well as health education on, for example, HIV/AIDS,

COVID-19, Climate Change, Conflicts resolution and general knowledge transfer. These studies have provided substantial evidence that subtitling has the potential for enhancing language acquisition (be it foreign or not). Indeed, these are all teaching/learning tools or aids needed for the improvement and the promotion of multiculturalism, particularly in the context of Cameroon where students (Anglophones, Francophones and foreigners of other linguistic backgrounds) live together. From all the studies discussed above, it is clear that subtitling is indeed an educational instrument that contains immense potential to achieve a number of goals in the educational sphere and therefore multiculturalism.

The advantages of multiculturalism are numerous, and Cameroon would gain a lot by tapping from them. For instance, multiculturalism also entails acknowledging the validity of the cultural expressions and contributions of the various groups. It thus means valuing what people have to offer, and not rejecting or belittling it simply because it differs from what the majority, or those in power, regard as important and of value. It will also encourage and enable the contribution of the various groups to society or an organization. Multiculturalism is therefore an inclusive process where no one is left out. Diversity, in its essence, then is a “safeguard against idolatry”, the making of one group as the norm for all groups (Rosado, 2006). Multiculturalism enriches people’s culture. It brings new traditions and new ideas. There are many advantages of living in a multicultural society. It makes one more open minded on other cultures. Children are educated about equality, and thus develop an attitude against racism. A mix of cultural experiences helps in problem-solving, and can create a strong team (Moral Education, 2018). A diverse population employed by multinational companies in different countries helps them capture global markets, increase customer base across nations, and earn profits easily. Multi-ethnic countries are home to majority of immigrants, a significant population of it being a highly educated skilled workforce.

Even though AVT can promote multiculturalism, peace and unity, unfortunately, it cannot promote justice except, as indicated in the study, that (i) language laws and policies between the English and French languages, between Anglophones and Francophones, and between local/national languages be implemented properly, with no bias or favouritism, as stipulated in the 1996 constitution; and (ii) AVT must be adopted as a teaching and learning tool/mode in Cameroon.

8. CONCLUSION

It can be seen that even with the ongoing conflict situation in Cameroon, Cameroonians (Anglophones and Francophones) still love the two languages. Furthermore, AVT can promote multiculturalism (71.1%), unity (68.4%), and peace (52.6%) in Cameroon but not justice (84.2%). It is equally clear that multiculturalism can promote unity (78.9%) and peace (60.5%) but not justice (68.4%). The fact that 84.2% of the respondents believe AVT cannot promote justice in Cameroon today and that 68.4% of the respondents believe multiculturalism cannot promote justice in Cameroon today is a cause for concern.

Although these respondents gave various reasons, further studies can be carried out in order to confirm these answers and therefore solve the related problems tactfully. This study therefore forms the basis for further studies in this domain, as well as for solving, to a certain extent, some related problems on the subject.

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Citation: Ayonghe Lum Suzanne, PhD. “Audio-Visual Translation and Promotion of Positive Multiculturalism: Students’ Perspectives” *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, vol 10, no. 4, 2022, pp. 1-10. doi: <https://doi.org/10.20431/2347-3134.1004001>.

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