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SEMANTIC, STYLISTIC AND LANGUAGE VARIETY CHALLENGES IN TRANSLATION FIDELITY: A CASE STUDY OF THE FRENCH RENDERING OF KEN SARO-WIWA'S *SOZABOY*

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Abstract: This study examines translation fidelity in *Pétit Minitaire*, the French version of Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy* as rendered by Samuel Millogo and Amadou Missiri. The mixture of Nigerian pidgin, broken English, standard, and idiomatic English in which the original text is written is the key point that prompted my scientific interest. In the quest of checking the level of fidelity observed in rendering this "rotten English", [as the author claims] into French, Vinay and Darbelnet's theory on comparative stylistics in general and more specifically the concept of translation units has been applied along with mixed method technique. For research purposes, the extract selected from the English version of the novel was segmented into 68 sentences and then distributed into 95 (43%) semantic units, 61 (27%) functional units, 41 (18.6%) dialectic units, 11 (5%) unified groups, 8 (3.6%) affinity groups, and 5 (2.3%) simple units. The results show that the translated version achieved through borrowing, adaptation, transposition, amplification, graphological deviation, and grammatical rephrasing, as well as some innovative linguistic patterns is mostly faithful to the source text, notwithstanding some rare cases of untranslated stylistic features and mistranslation.

Keywords: Translation fidelity, Comparative stylistics, Units of translation, *Sozaboy*, *Pétit Minitaire*.

DÉFIS SÉMANTIQUES, STYLISTIQUES ET DE VARIÉTÉ DE LANGUE DANS LA FIDÉLITÉ DE TRADUCTION : UNE ÉTUDE DE CAS DU RENDU FRANÇAIS DE *SOZABOY* DE KEN SARO-WIWA

Résumé : Cette étude examine la fidélité de la traduction dans *Pétit Minitaire*, la version française de *Sozaboy* de Ken Saro-Wiwa, traduite par Samuel Millogo et Amadou Missiri. Le mélange de pidgin nigérian, d'anglais approximatif, d'anglais standard et idiomatique dans lequel le texte original est rédigé constitue le point central ayant suscité mon intérêt scientifique. Dans la quête de vérifier le niveau de fidélité observé dans le rendu en français de cet « anglais pourri » [comme le revendique l'auteur], la théorie de Vinay et Darbelnet sur la stylistique comparée en général, et plus spécifiquement le concept d'unités de traduction, a été appliquée conjointement avec une technique à méthode mixte. Dans le cadre de cette recherche, l'extrait sélectionné de la version anglaise du roman a été segmenté en 68 phrases, puis réparti en 95 (43 %) unités sémantiques, 61 (27 %) unités fonctionnelles, 41 (18,6 %) unités dialectiques, 11 (5 %) groupes unifiés, 8 (3,6 %) groupes d'affinité, et 5 (2,3 %) unités simples. Les résultats obtenus montrent que la version traduite, réalisée par le biais de l'emprunt, de l'adaptation, de la transposition, de l'étoffement, de la déviation graphologique, de la reformulation grammaticale ainsi que de certains styles linguistiques innovants, demeure remarquablement fidèle au texte source, nonobstant de rares cas de traits stylistiques non traduits et de contresens.

Mots-clés : Fidélité de traduction, Stylistique comparée, Unités de traduction, *Sozaboy*, *Pétit Minitaire*.

Introduction

Multilingualism is a pervasive feature of human communities due to linguistic diversity, colonialism, business, and migration. The invisible hand in language (Keller, 1994; Algeo, 2010) represents a key player in framing the coexistence and interactions between distinctive linguistic communities. In this context, and for the social and professional need to bridge multilingual communities, translation appears both as a historical necessity and a contemporary imperative for education, science, and social inclusion (Antony-Newman, 2026; Brashi, 2025). With the tremendous development of Information and Communication Technologies, the world has become a global village, which allows professionals in business, legal, medical, and diplomatic fields to offer their services across various linguistic communities, which amplifies the significance of accurate translation (Chan, 2023; Chuanmao and Juntao, 2024).

This scientific study seeks to examine translation in its general border-crossing facility status and, more specifically, in the ability of translators to remain faithful to cultural and language variation features. Indeed, translators are constantly confronted with the task of mediating between multiple codes, identities, and communicative norms to bridge one linguistically coded message across communities while keeping the message unaltered. To accurately explore and analyse translation fidelity, this study first focuses on how translation negotiates the grammatical mismatches of syntactic complexity between languages, cultural linguistic patterns, and the stylistic representations of identity, class, and context in relation to the social varieties of language.

I was prompted to carry out this study following the linguistic dissonance I encountered upon reading Ken Saro-Wiwa's Sozaboy, a novel written in rotten English. The author's deliberate choice to craft his literary writing in a non-standard, hybrid variety of English that combines Nigerian Pidgin, local idioms, and simplified English grammar led me to wonder how a translated version could remain faithful in all regards. Language responds to and reproduces the context in which it is used, and the socio-political, cultural, cognitive, and physical contexts strongly influence the messages and style of written literary works (Uwasomba, 2010). This study thus carries out a lexical, syntactic, semantic shift, and language variety on the French translated version *Pétit Minitaire* to shed light on the comparative stylistics operations undertaken by the translators and check its level of fidelity to the original text. The translators themselves are aware of the peculiar translation particularity of this novel, as they indicate:

> The essential problem confronting the translators of *Sozaboy* has been that of reconciling two contradictory demands: how to render this language, which Ken Saro-Wiwa himself claims is "rotten", accessible to the widest possible readership without betraying the author's evident stylistic choice. …If one chooses to simplify — and to what extent? — in order to render the language immediately comprehensible to the entire French-speaking community, does one not run the risk of alienating the African readership, who is familiar with and speaks the variety of French adopted, and who rightly expects fidelity of tone? (p. 19) [My translation]

Thus, the main research question in this study is: What are the linguistic styles and language varieties deployed by the author in *Sozaboy* for meaning construction and the translation techniques applied in its French version *Pétit Minitaire* to remain faithful to the source text. In this perspective, this study aims to answer the following two specific research questions: first, what are the types of units of thought and deviant language patterns

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assembled by Ken Saro-Wiwa to construe meaning in Sozaboy? Second, what are the specific translation methods used to render it into French?

Through the answers to these main and specific research questions, this paper intends to set the overall direction and scope of the study which consists, in broad terms, in analysing, describing and assessing the way the translators managed to successfully bridge the marked and idiosyncratic language pattern used by Saro-Wiwa in his novel *Sozaboy* into French. This general objective branches into two specific components: first, the identification of the language techniques and meaning construction devices used by the author in his novel, and second, the identification, analysis, description, and assessment of the specific translation methods used to achieve its French version. To offer a preview of the anticipated outcomes of this research, the study hypothesises that the author used a deliberate authorial iconoclastic blend of linguistic features that have been rendered into French while considering the whole style, message, and sociolinguistic mind of the writer and not the lexemes taken individually.

2.The context surrounding the writing of Sozaboy

Context plays a significant role whenever language is used to share meaning within a specific geographical, sociolinguistic, and sociopolitical setting. This becomes even more significant and critical when a specific corpus of meaning intentionally produced and shared with such intra-community-colouring factors has to be transferred to another community for which it was not necessarily intended. Highlighting this aspect of language in this study is key, as it deliberately sets translation fidelity under the spotlight. Uwasomba's (2010) insights are relevant here as he contends that

> "Language remains one of the most potent sites for the expression of an individual's identity. It is also one of the strongest tools for the definition of the self, its consciousness as well as awareness of the perimeters of its own vision, that of its community, and of the world. Since it does not exist in a vacuum, it is always contextualised and situated within a given socio-cultural setting or community." (p. 19)

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Saro-Wiwa's Sozaboy is written in a sociolinguistic context that is fundamentally characterised by Nigeria's multilingual environment, with more than 500 indigenous languages. Local languages such as Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo come first, with English inherited from colonisation holding official and prestigious status. Within this linguistic melting-pot context, Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE), a localised or "nativised" form of English, has developed as a widely spoken lingua franca across diverse ethnic and socio-cultural groups. This coexistence and daily use of several languages creates an asymmetrical multilingualism ecology where Standard English ranks at the top, Pidgin English in the middle, and indigenous languages in the third place. Historically and socially, NPE is commonly associated with semi-literate and urban poor people. By crafting what he calls "rotten English" (a mixture of Nigerian pidgin, broken English, and occasional flashes of good, even idiomatic English) Saro-Wiwa deliberately makes his novel available to the largest possible grassroots readership. In the novel, Mene, the narrator-protagonist of *Sozaboy*, is a semi-literate village youth conscripted into the Nigerian Civil War. This justifies his linguistic register which is authentic to his social class and educational level. Furthermore, from the perspective of representing language as a social mirror, the author intentionally constructs a language variety that is distorted and vulgar to narrate the story of

the Nigerian/Biafran war. This creates a mixture of grammatical English, ungrammatical English, and other linguistic patterns that capture the context of the social upheaval generated by war.

From a sociopolitical perspective, Sozaboy was written in the context of the Nigerian Biafra War (1967–70), a conflict rooted in ethnic and regional tensions following independence. As a leading voice of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Saro-Wiwa was well known as a minority activist and defender of environmental rights in the Niger Delta. In parallel with his dissidence with the established political authorities, he uses language in a stylistic pattern that subverts the established norms. Symbolically, he stripped the narrative authority away from the elite register and handed it over to ordinary, uneducated voices. Considering the translation fidelity focus of this study, the explored sociolinguistic and sociopolitical contexts of the novel under study all converge to confirm that the linguistic choice was deliberate and intentional. This sets the duty high for the translators who are expected to place particular emphasis on compliance with this specific linguistic pattern of the author.

3. Theoretical framework

To apply a rigorous scientific research process and achieve effective results, this study is grounded in a theoretical foundation that combines various complementary definitional approaches to translation and focuses on the units of translation. First, basing this study on several definitions from scholars such as Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), Catford (1965), Nida (1945, 1947), and Newmark (1988) steps beyond mere eclecticism to serve as theoretical triangulation for more effective results. Second, the reference to the units of translation represents the major building block of this research. Actually, cogently identifying the units of meaning and feeling in the source language text represents the best scientific prerequisite for the achievement of translation fidelity.

3.1 Definitional approaches to translation

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) in their Comparative Stylistics work on French and English view translation as a process that replicates the same meaning as produced in the original language through various stylistic patterns. They distinguish between literal and oblique translation and identify seven methods of translation: borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. On his part, Newmark (1988) approaches translation as the process of rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way the author intended the text in the source language. Nida (1964) specifies that a well-translated text should combine fidelity to both the message and the author style.

Taking a deeper tide, the Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics (Bussmann, 1996) is much distinctive by identifying translation as the "fifth skill", next to speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This classification of translation as a fifth competence, subsequent to the four primary ones that are fundamental to language learning is particularly noteworthy. This approach first upgrades the capacity to translate to the full range of a distinctive skill in its own right and sets it in a range where it comes after the first four are already in place as prerequisites. Bussmann (1996) moves further in his high esteem of the activity of translation by specifying that:

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> Studies in translation focus on linguistic, psychological, aesthetic, pedagogical, and professional aspects. ... Some important issues in translation include: (a) the typology of translation, which differentiates between the translation of literary vs. scientific or professional texts, and between human vs. machine-aided translation ; philological translation, which is concerned with the process of communication in the source language and culture ; and pragmatically based simultaneous translation ; (b) the format of equivalent units (sounds, words, phrases, etc.). An equivalent communicative effect is all the more difficult to attain (p. 1222).

This deep digging of translation uncovers several aspects on its constitutive pattern that sets the qualities of a piece of translated text far beyond a common linguistic transfer from one language into another.

3.2 Translation units

Language displays a compositional structure through which larger units are made up of the combinations of smaller ones (Hallyday and Matthiessen, 2014). Thus, when we see a text paragraph, we are actually observing a blend of graphemes, phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases, clauses and sentences. This is where the concept of translation units comes to the fore. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) define this construct as the 'predominant element of thought within a segment. For the purpose, first, of specifying the connectedness of the elements within that unit and its semantics-oriented feature, these authors furthered their definition by indicating that:

> "We could define the unit of translation as the smallest segment of the utterance whose signs are linked in such a way that they should not be translated individually. …..Given that translators have to be concerned more with semantics than structure, it is obviously preferable to have a unit whose definition originates in a distinction of meaning rather than in syntactic functions."

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) have identified three major types of translation units.

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The translation units within the first category are classified based on their function, according to their roles in the message. Within this category, three subtypes are commonly distinguished. The first is the functional unit, which is defined by the syntactic role it plays: it is a group of lexical items that occupy a single grammatical slot in a sentence, and this unifying bond makes them function together, for example, as one subject, verb phrase, or adverbial. The translation of this group of lexical items is achieved as a single unit of meaning. The second is the semantic unit which is made up of units that are held together because their constituent parts jointly construe one specific idea, concept, or situation. Thus, the binding link in this case is ideological or conceptual. In Saussurian terms, such a semantic unit represents a signifier that refers to a well-identified signified. The third is the dialectic unit, which is composed of units identified in the message by their role as a piece of reasoning, the binding link being related to the argumentative or discursive structure of the source text. Dialectic units are typically built around a logical marker (in other words, in short, that is to say, first, second), a conjunction (unless, provided that, since, because), or a

connector (moreover, therefore, as a result, admittedly) that helps to identify a shift in the flow of thought within the text.

Translation units pertaining to the second category are identified by focusing on words through the meaning load they feed into the message. Two subtypes of units are singled out in this study: simple and fractional units. Simple units correspond to words taken individually, especially when a specific word can be replaced without changing the structure of a sentence, specifically because it functions in isolation from all other words (*He has a car* / *il a une voiture*). In contrast, fractional units function at a lower level than full words. They are identified through the meaning of the distinctive parts in the internal structure of a word from a morphological analysis perspective (*un_do*, *out_class*).

Finally, the third classification principle functions along the cohesion continuum, beyond the single-word level. These units of translation are distributed from the most tightly joined words to the most loosely assembled ones. Two broad types of units are identified in this study: unified groups and affinity groups. The units of the first set are the most cohesively tied. They function in such an idiomatic way that their meaning cannot be retrieved in a word-to-word compositional manner ("*to stand someone up*" / *poser un lapin à quelqu'un*, "*it's raining cats and dogs*" / *il pleut des cordes*). Affinity groups, on the other hand, are groups of words that function together but have less cohesive links. Consequently, this loose feature makes their components less readily identifiable than those of unified groups.

4 . Methodology of the study

This section of the research provides insight into the methods and processes applied through its various parts for the purpose of scientific accuracy and replicability (Neuman, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This paper adopts a descriptive and analytical perspective in its conceptual typology. This choice is justified by the necessity of identifying and describing the distinctive semantic, functional, and cohesive units, as well as the stylistic patterns that have been used by the author of Sozaboy to convey meaning to his readership. Once this first step was achieved, a crosscheck and a contrastive analytical scrutiny were carried out with the French translated version (*Pétit Minitaire*) to bridge the source linguistic production to a French-speaking audience while remaining faithful to the source text.

To achieve the most accurate results, a mixed method, combining both quantitative and qualitative research techniques was selected for data collection, analysis, and the discussion of the findings. While the quantitative method has been instrumental in contrasting the typological variables between the target and source language versions, the qualitative method has been used to gain insight into the plausible motivations for the translators' choices. Thus, data collection was conducted from an extract selected from the source text, based on the concept of units of translation. The selected text from the English version of the novel is a part of the seventh chapter entitled "Lomber seven" from pages 55 to 57. This corresponds to the seventh chapter in the French version entitled "Niméro sept", from pages 104 to 106. In this research focused on translation fidelity, the key data identified are composed of functional, semantic, dialectic, simple, and fractional units, as well as unified and affinity groups. The selected extract was proofread repeatedly, leading to its segmentation into its component translation unit. The identified units were labelled alphanumerically and consecutively within each type by means of an acronym representing

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each unit and a cardinal number. The keys to the distinctive units are as follows: functional units (FU) semantic units (SU) dialectic units (DU) simple units (SIU) fractional units (FIU) unified groups (UG) affinity groups (AG). Two other acronyms are used in this study, "EV" and "FV" which read respectively as "English version" and "French version".

For the purpose of scientific cogency, it is worth specifying that functional units that stretch beyond two words, have been simultaneously counted as semantic units. Indeed, as Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) contend, 'unless they are very short, functional units may contain more than a single unit of thought…. and translators have to be concerned more with semantics than structure.' The analysis of the findings first targeted the identification of the types of units used to render the source text into French. Second, it has focused on qualitatively assessing how far the rendered text is faithful to the meaning, intention, and style of the author in the original text. The scientific process of this research work closes with a discussion which interprets and sheds light on the significance of the findings.

5. Translation fidelity analysis in *Pétit Minitaire*

The interest in analysing translation fidelity in the French version of Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy* was prompted first by the atypical linguistic pattern in which it is written. As the author himself indicates, the linguistic style displays an idiosyncratic type of English which is a mixture of Nigerian Pidgin, broken English, and some instances of standard and idiomatic English. This form of language is achieved through various types of deviations on the graphological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic aspects, when one considers the standard version of the English language as the reference. In addition to this distinctive feature of the novel, and from a theoretical basis, a faithful translation is one that relies on some well-identified lexicographic units, also known as units of thought that carry the message, feeling, and style of the original text. These translation units served as the basis for data collection in this study. To ensure accuracy in the findings of this research, these two major anchor points in the writing of *Sozaboy* have been set as the constant reference gauge.

5.1 Sentences and translation units segmentation of the source text

The segmentation of the selected extract into sentences and units of translation displays as follows:

Lomber seven_UG-1//

[S_1] When I reached home that night_**FU-1/SU-1**//, I cannot sleep_**FU-2/SU-2**// because of_**DU-1**// thinking_**SIU-1**// how I will get_**SIU-2**// the money_**FU-3**// to give that Mr. Okpara_**FU-4/SU-3**// so that_**DU-2**// he can take me as soza_**SIU-3**//.

[S_2] Then before daybreak_DU-3// I said_FU-5// I must tell my mother about it_SU-4//.

[S_3] As you know_DU-4//, my mother loves me_FU-6/SU-5// very much-$^{SU-6}$//.

[S_4] Since I began this apprentice work_DU-5//, she is the one_FU-7/SU-7// who is always telling me_FU-8/SU-8// what to do and what not to do_SU-9//.

[S_5] Even_DU-6// she is the porson who is paying my master_FU-9/SU-10// to teach me_SIU-4// .

[S_6] Sol know_FU-10// that if I tell her_DU-7// that I want to be soza_SU-11// and I must pay this money to be soza_SU-12// she will do everything_SU-13// , even to sell her cloth and her farm_AG-1// , so I can be that soza_DU-8//.

[S_7] This mother is both father and mother to me_UG-2//.

[S_8] Every time_FU-11// I will be thinking_FU-12/SU-14// of how when I am big man_FU-13/SU-15// I must give her everything she wants_SU-16// because_DU-9// she is helping me too much_DIU-1//.

[S_9] So, that morning before she woke up from bed_FU-14/SU-17//, I called her_FU-15/SU-18// and told her_FU-16// I want to be soza_SU-19// and to be soza_SU-20// I must pay money to one Mr. Okpara_FU-17/SU-21// .

[S_10] Look my trouble, oh_UG-3// .

[S_11] My mother did not even allow me to finish what I was saying_SU-22// .

[S_12] She said_FU-18// , 'Chiei! My son, God protect you from bad thing!'_UG-4//

[S_13] And small time_FU-19// , she begin to cry_FU-20/SU-23// .

[S_14] Wonderful!_UG-5//

[S_15] What is wrong with my mother?_SU-24//
[S_16] How can she cry for something like this?_SU-25//
[S_17] Or have I said some bad word?_SU-26//
[S_18] I begin to beg her_FU-21/SU-27// not to cry_SU-28// .
[S_19] I begged her_FU-22/SU-29// for long time_FU-23/SU-30// .
[S_20] Then_DU-10// before she can stop_FU-24/SU-31// she told me_FU-25/SU-32// to promise that I will not ask her_FU-26/SU-33// that type of thing again_SU-34// .
[S_21] She wanted to give me_FU-27/SU-35// juju_SU-36// .
[S_22] But_DU-11// I told her_FU-28/SU-37// that juju is not necessary_SU-38// .
[S_23] So_DU-12// she went inside_FU-29/SU-39// and draw water from the pot_FU-30/SU-40// and give me_FU-31// to drink that early morning_FU-32/SU-41// .
[S_24] I drank it all_SU-42// .
[S_25] Then_DU-13// she told me_FU-33/SU-43// certain words_FU-34// .
[S_26] This is what she said:_FU-35/SU-44//
[S_27] 'Look, Mene, you are my only son_SU-45// .
[S_28] Even_DU-14// I suffered plenty before I born you_SU-46// .
[S_29] I have born six of you_FU-36/SU-47// , and_DU-15// you are the only one still alive_SU-48// .
[S_30] I want you to live and bury me_FU-37/SU-49// when I die_SU-50// .
[S_31] I don't want to die like chicken, no burial_UG-6// .
[S_32] I have no father, no mother, no brother, no sister_SU-51// .
[S_33] You are my father, my mother, my brother and my sister_UG-7// .
[S_34] Do you hear me?_FU-38/SU-52//
[S_35] Don't go and think of foolish thing_AG-2// .
[S_36] Go and think how you will marry_FU-39/SU-53// and get picken who will be my proper son_SU-54// .
[S_37] You hear?_DU-16//
[S_38] If you want to marry now_FU-40/SU-55// , I will pay the money_SIU-5// .
[S_39] Today_FU-41// .
[S_40] I don't mind to sell my cloth and my farm_AG-3// to give you a wife_FU-42/SU-56// .
[S_41] But_DU-17// this soza business is foolish nonsense.'_AG-4// [S_42] That is what my mother said_FU-43/SU-57// . [S_43] Then_DU-18// she went away_FU-44/SU-58// .
[S_44] Imagine!_UG-8//I want to be soza_SU-59// my mother say I must marry_SU-60// .
[S_46] And no soza_DU-19// .
[S_47] So_DU-20// every day_FU-45// if I want to go to Pitakwa_FU-46/SU-61// those girls on the road_FU-47/SU-62// will always stop me_FU-48/SU-63// , search my shirt_FU-49/SU-64// , making their Simple Defence for me_UG-9// .
[S_48] Is it?_DU-21//
[S_49] So_DU-22// does my mother want me to be_FU-50/SU-65// woman-man?_FIU-1//
[S_50] So_DU-23// I am not like all those young boys_SU-66// who are playing up and down_AG-5// , marching_FU-51// , singing_FU-52// , chopping better chop_AG-6// and wearing fine uniform with badge?_AG-7//
[S_51] Is it?_DU-24//
[S_52] So_DU-25// I will stay in this Dukana like Bom and Zaza?_SU-67//
[S_53] Even_DU-26// Zaza is better sef_SU-68// because_DU-27// he have gone to Burma_FU-53/SU-69// .
[S_54] And_DU-28// he will always be giving me assault_SU-70// because_DU-29// I cannot go to soza as all my friends are doing_SU-71// .
[S_55] And_DU-30// I will just stay in Dukana_FU-54/SU-72// without reaching Pitakwa_FU-55/SU-73// , just borning children like rabbit_UG-10// .
[S_56] Is it?_DU-31//
[S_57] But_DU-32// can I disobey this my mother?_SU-74//
[S_58] Especially as na me be the only picken_SU-75// and_DU-33// already she is saying that I am her husband and brother and mother and father and sister and son?_UG-11//
[S_59] Me alone_SU-76// .
[S_60] So_DU-34// if I disobey her_FU-56/SU-77// and run away_SU-78// , she will vex with me_SU-79// .
[S_61] And_DU-35// as she used to take care of me_SU-80// , true true_AG-8// , it is not good make I do something which will make her to vex with me_SU-81// , you know_DU-36// .
[S_62] And even sef_DU-37// , this marriage that she is asking me to marry_FU-57/SU-82// , is it bad thing?_SU-83//
[S_63] If na Agnes that I will marry_FU-58/SU-84// , it is not bad thing_SU-85// .
[S_64] But_DU-38// as Agnes have gone to Lagos_FU-59/SU-86// , her people will be asking plenty money from anybody who want to marry her_SU-87// .
[S_65] Then_DU-39// where can we get the money_FU-60/SU-88// to give to Agnes him people_FU-61/SU-89// so that they will 'gree to make her to marry me?_SU-90//
[S_66] And_DU-40// how will I go and begin to say I want to borrow money to marry wife?_SU-91//

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[S_67] I think the whole of Dukana will be laughing at me_SU-92// , if they hear that I am going to borrow money to marry wife_SU-93// .

[S_68] But_DU-41// sometime my mother fit find the money_SU-94// as she used to do her own thing_SU-95//

A recapitulative account of the segmentation applied exudes that the extract under study contains 68 sentences, which are distributed into 95 (43%) semantic units, 61 (27%) functional units, 41 (18.6%) dialectic units, 11 (5%) unified groups, 8 (3.6%) affinity groups, and 5 (2.3%) simple units, which represents a cumulated number of 221 units of translation.

5.2 - A descriptive and analytic crosscheck of translation from the English and French versions

From the title of the extract, the unified group "***Lomber seven***–$^{UG-1}$, is rendered literally as "***Niméro sept***" through the transfer of the graphological deviation of the first syllable of the English deviated lexis "***lumber***" on its translated version "***niméro***". The same fidelity in the translation of unified groups is noticed as presented in Table 1 below. However, the translated version provided amplifications such as "***sur la tête de l'homme***" and "***n'a qu'à faire ...va partir loin***" to ensure meaning clarity. The translation of Unified group 4 in sentence [12] is also achieved through the borrowing of the English pidgin exclamation "***Chiei***!" into the French language.

Table 1 : Translated version of Unified groups

[S-10] Look my trouble, oh–$^{E-UG-3}$	Voilà problème sur la tête de l'homme–$^{F-UG-4}$
[S-12] 'Chiei! My son, God protect you from bad thing!'–$^{UG-4}$	"Chei! Mon enfant, Dieu n'a qu'à faire mauvaise chose va partir loin de toi !"–$^{F-UG-5}$

A step further to the multi-unit sentence [S_1], the translation of the identified units displays as follows:

Table 2 : Translated version of sentence one.

When I reached home that night–$^{SU-1}$	Quand je suis arrivé à la maison cette nuit-là–$^{SU-1}$
I cannot sleep–$^{SU-2}$	je peux pas dormir–$^{SU-2}$
because of_$^{DU-1}$	parce que–$^{DU-1}$
thinking–$^{SIU-1}$	je suis là penser–$^{DIU-1}$
how I will get_SIU-2 + the money–$^{FU-3}$	comment je vais faire pour gagner l'argent–$^{SU-3}$
to give that Mr. Okpara–$^{/SU-3}$	pour donner ce M. Okpara-là–$^{SU-4}$
so that–$^{DU-2}$	pour que–$^{DU-2}$
he can take me as soza_$^{SIU-3}$	il va me prendre pour faire minitaire_$^{SU-5}$

In the English semantic unit SU-1, the subject and verb portion "***I reached***" is translated as "***je suis arrivé***". For a full account of the preterit tense context provided by the Noun Phrase [+NP] "that night" which functions here as a temporal adverbial, a better tense-for-tense French equivalent could have been "***j'arrivai***". The dialectic units "***because of_***$^{DU-1}$" and "so that–$^{DU-2}$" are literally rendered by the same type of unit with the same meanings as "***parce que–***$^{DU-1}$" and "***pour que–***$^{DU-2}$" respectively.

Table 3 : Comments on the translation processes of some semantic units

[S_n]	English version	French Version	Comments on translation processes
[S_23]	she went inside–SU-39	elle est entrée au fond de maison–FU-27/SU-31	Amplification applied through the addition of "***de maison***" which is absent from the EV
[S_24]	I drank it all–SU-42	J'ai bu tout–SU-33	Language variety creation through non-standard placement of the quantifier "tout" as a **register-indicating device**
[S_15]	What is wrong with my mother?_SU-24	Qu'est-ce qui ne va pas chez ma mère ?_SU-21	Standard variety of the EV maintained in the FV.
[S_16]	How can she cry for something like this? _SU-25	Comment elle peut pleurer pour quelque chose comme ça ? _SU-22	Standard variety of the EV maintained in the FV.

Table 4: Comments on the translation processes of some dialectic units

[S_n]	English version	French Version	Comments on translation processes
[S_2]	Then before daybreak–DU-3	Mais_DU-3 + avant matin–FU-6	The temporal sequential connector "**Then**" is rendered by the adversative connector "**Mais**", which displays a case of **mistranslation**
[S_3]	As you know–DU-4	Comme tu sais–DU-4	Literal translation
[S_4]	Since I began _DU-5	Dépuis que j'ai commencé _DU-5	Graphological deviation in « Dépuis" whereas the EV is fully standard.
[S_5]	Even–DU-6	Et même–DU-6	Addition of « et » as an amplification
[S_6]	that if I tell her–DU-7	que si je lui dis–DU-9	Standard language EV translate into standard language FV
[S_6]	so I can be that soza–DU-8	pour me permettre de devenir minitaire–SU-13	The EV display an adaptation by way of dilution through "*permettre de devenir*"
[S_20]	Then–DU-10	Puis–DU-13	Literal translation
[S_22]	But–DU-11	Mais–DU-14	Literal translation
[S_25]	Then–DU-13	Et puis–DU-16	Addition of the conjunction "et" as an amplification
[S_37]	You hear?_DU-16	Tu entends ?_DU-20	Literal translation

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Table 4 presents the source and target languages version of dialectic translation units which are used in text to construe instances of reasoning. As the comments in the most right column exudes, the translation processes carried out exemplify cases of literal translation, graphological deviation, adaptation through amplification, a case of lexical item loss in [S_62] and a case of mistranslation in [S_2] where the temporal sequential connector "**then**" is rendered by the adversative connector "**mais**".

Table 5: Comments on the translation processes of some semantic units

[S_n]	English version	French Version	Comments on translation processes
[S_55]	just borning children like rabbit–UG-10	pour ner* nenfant seulement comme lapin–UG-10	Pidgin EV rendered by coining "ner" for "borning" and "nenfant" for the standard English lexis "children"
[S_58]	Especially as na me be the only picken–SU-75	Surtout que c'est moi seul son enfant–SU-59	Use of full **standard** French to render EV containing **pidgin** words "na" and "picken"
[S_60]	she will vex with me–SU-79	elle va fâcher avec moi–SU-62	Pidgin style of EV rendered by omitting the pronominal "se" of "fâcher"
[S_64]	as Agnes have gone to Lagos–SU-86	comme Agnès a parti Lagos avant–SU-69	Auxiliary shift and inflection omitted to render EV pidgin style

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[S_5]	she is the porson who is paying my master–SU-10	c'est elle qui paie mon patron–SU-9	Standard FV used to render pidgin style EV
[S_22]	that I want to be soza–SU-11	que je veux devenir minitaire–SU-10	Graphological deviation of the EV maintained in the FV
[S_22]	that juju is not necessary–SU-38	que on n'a pas besoin gris-gris–SU-30	Pidgin lexis "juju" translated by "gris-gris and pidgin style applied through prepositional ellipsis, a simplification used as a **register-marking device**

Table 5 contains English version portions of sentences that have been rendered into French in many different ways as explained through the comments on the translation processes applied. To keep meaning unaltered and maintain the language style true to the source text, the translators have applied various methods such as coinage, pronominal device and inflection omission, grammatical adaptation, syntactic contraction, auxiliary shift, graphological deviation, and prepositional ellipsis.

The following two tables show comments on the translation processes of reduplication, emphasis particles, and graphological deviations.

Table 6 : Comments on translation processes of reduplication and emphasis particles

[S_n]	English version	French Version	Comments on translation processes
[S_53]	Zaza is better **sef**–SU-68	pour Zaza c'est mieux–SU-52	The pidgin emphatic marker "sef" remains **untranslated twice**
[S_62]	And even **sef**–DU-37	Et même–DU-43	
[S_50]	I am not like all those ***young young*** boys–SU-66	je suis pas comme ces ***jeunes jeunes*** garçons–SU-50	The reduplications in the English versions are maintained in the French versions
[S_50]	and wearing ***fine fine*** uniform with badge?–AG-7	et porter ***joli joli*** uniforme avec insigne ?–AG-9	
[S_61]	***true true***–AG-8	***vrai vrai***–AG-10	

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Table 7 : Comments on translation processes of graphological deviations

[S_n]	English version	French Version	Comments on translation processes
Title	Lumber (Number)	Niméro (Numéro	Graphologically deviant EV rendered with the same deviance in the FV
[S_1]	Soza (soldier)	Minitaire (militaire)	
[S_36]	Picken (Child/children	Nenfant (un enfant)	
[S_55]	Borning (bearing)	Ner (naître)	
[S_5]	Porson (person)	Elle	Pidgin EV rendered in standard FV
[S_49]	does my mother want me to be ***woman-man?***–FIU-1	est-ce que ma mère veut que je sois femme-garçon ?–FIU-1	Fractional EV unit rendered alike in the FV
[S_6]	Sol (graphemic merger of "So I"	Donc je sais	Pidgin EV rendered in standard FV
[S_65]	"gree"	Accepter	Rendered in standard language

6. Discussion of the findings

This study began with observing the peculiar English language used by Ken Saro-Wiwa in his novel *Sozaboy* and the linguistic interest in checking how the translators managed to bridge it into French. From the outset of the selected extract, the translators demonstrated an obvious commitment to fidelity to the source text. This is noticed right from

the graphological deviation displayed in the pidgin lexis "***lum***ber" that was transposed in the French version as "***ni***méro". The same trend of keeping the translated version almost literally true to the original text is noticed throughout the text under study with "Soza" **[S_1]** (Minitaire), "picken" **[S_36]** (***nen***fant), and "borning" **[S_55]** (Ner). Apart from these graphologically deviant words, the translators also transposed in a literal way the emphatic linguistic style deployed in the Pidgin source language through lexical items such as "***young young*** boys" **[S_50] (jeunes jeunes** garçons), "**fine fine** uniform" **[S_50] (*joli joli*** uniforme), "***true true*"** **[S_61] (vrai vrai).** However, in many instances, while still managing to keep meaning safe, the translators managed through a variety of innovative oblique translation techniques in their endeavour to bridge the English source text to the largest possible French-speaking community. This is noticed in translation cases such as "she is the porson" [S_5] where Standard French Version (c'est elle) is used to render pidgin style source English version, "***that juju is not necessary*"** [S_22] (***que on n'a pas besoin gris-gris***) with the application of prepositional ellipsis, a simplification used as a register-marking device.

Among the translation methods used to preserve meaning is adaptation through amplification, graphological deviation, simplification, grammatical rephrasing, and some innovative creations of linguistic styles that are absent from the source text. In [S_4] for example, the dialectic unit "***Since I began***" is rendered as "***Depuis*** que j'ai commencé", which displays a case of graphological deviation in the preposition « ***Depuis***". In [S_39] there is a case of amplification in the translated version of the functional unit "***Today***" which is rendered as "***même*** aujourd'hui".

The analysis and interpretation carried out so far demonstrate the translators' real commitment to bridge *Sozaboy* into a likely *Pétit Minitaire*. However, in spite of their efforts, there are some instances where contributions can still be made to raise the level of faithfulness to the meaning and the feeling that were packed into the source text. First, as indicated in Table 6, the post-posed pidgin emphatic marker **"sef"** that was used twice in [S_53] and [S_62] remained untranslated. In the case of the semantic unit "**Zaza is better sef**", a marked French version like "***Et même pour Zaza c'est mieux***" would have given a better account of the emphatic focus particle "**sef**", "in fact," or "for that matter." Second, another focus-marking pidgin particle **"na"** used in **[S_58]** through the semantic unit "***na me be the only picken***" with the syntactic structure //**na** [FOCUS] + **me** [focused NP] + **be the only picken** [predicate]// remains untranslated in the simplified French version which reads as "***c'est moi seul son enfant***". This focus-fronting particle is rhetorically charged with a lamenting voice from the boy (the soza to be) who regrets the heavy responsibility loaded upon him when his mother declares in **[S_33]** "You are my father, my mother, my brother and my sister". An improved French version could have been "***c'est moi qui suis le seul enfant*"** for an emphasis-preserving purpose. Another instance of rendering that is worth analysing for fidelity check is that of the dialectic unit "Then" in [S_2], a temporal sequential connector which is translated by the adversative connector "Mais", which displays a case of mistranslation.

From a general standpoint, the contrastive analysis undertaken so far through pairing and comparing the original and translated versions has been indicative enough of the translators' consistent dedication to remain faithful to the source. A close comparative analysis of the original and translated texts leads to a twofold deduction: they have been watchful and proficient enough to first consider the source text as a whole as a unified social artefact and second in its linguistic compositional patterns. This awareness has allowed them

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to consider the distinctive units of translation contained in the source text, their meaning load, the language variety patterns as well as the narrator's stylistic ways of intruding in the original text. Despite of this general trend, some rather rare instances, such as the omission, simplified rendering and mistranslation of the particles **"sef"**, **"na"**, and "**then**" respectively suggest that there is still room for elaboration of the already achieved masterpiece.

Conclusion

This study was prompted on the premise of describing, analysing and assessing translation fidelity in *Pétit Minitaire*, the French version of Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy*. The general theoretical framework of comparative stylistic analysis, as developed by Vinay and Darbelnet has been selected to serve as the scientific backbone to this research. More specifically, the foundational concept of the units of translation has been pinpointed for a meticulous focus on how meaning was encoded in those units in the source text, and the way they were rendered in the target version. To achieve this goal, a quantitative-qualitative mixed method approach was applied for data collection, analysis, and the discussion of the findings. In this perspective, an excerpt was selected from the original version, then segmented and numbered into 68 sentences and 221 translation units. Among the identified and alphanumerically labelled units are 95 (43%) semantic units, 61 (27%) functional units, 41 (18.6%) dialectic units, 11 (5%) unified groups, 8 (3.6%) affinity groups, and 5 (2.3%) simple units. While the quantitative method has been forceful in assessing the units of thought in a concrete cardinal and proportional manner, the qualitative analysis has been useful in identifying, describing, analysing, and discussing both raw data and the findings of this study. The results exude that the translators used both literal and oblique translation techniques through borrowing, adaptation, transposition, amplification, graphological deviation, simplification, grammatical rephrasing as well as some innovative creation of standard or language to remain remarkably faithful to the source text. However, some rare cases of lack of fidelity in translation were identified, such as the flattened rendering of the focus-marking pidgin particle "*na*", the omission of "*sef*", and the mistranslation of the temporal sequential connector "*then*" by the adversative connector "*mais*". This study is significant in terms of the scientific accuracy in using the units of translation to assess meaning, style and feeling match between the source and target versions of the same text.

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