

# **THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATING POETIC TEXT**

**The Case of Paul Sozigwa's Wimbo wa Lawino**

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the challenges of translating poetic text using *Wimbo wa Lawino* as a case study.

The researcher first read the texts thoroughly and then identified twenty-one stanzas, which in the researcher's perception exhibited "marked" translation. The researcher subsequently employed correlation qualitative design to characterize the texts as cases of overtranslation, undertranslation and mistranslation. She then presented the stanzas to different categories of respondents to judge and classify the texts along three criteria namely: overtranslation, undertranslation and mistranslation. Respondents were also asked to comment on the structure of target language text (TLT) and identify the causes of "marked-ness" of the translation along three criteria namely: linguistic, cultural and aesthetic value.

The findings showed that respondents judged seventeen stanzas as "marked" translation while four stanzas were judged as "unmarked" translation. The researcher then selected thirteen stanzas that had been agreed upon by at least eight five percent of respondents to be involved in the analysis of the study. The findings also revealed that the translator had succeeded to maintain the structures of the source language text (SLT) to some extent especially in terms of chapters and subchapters. The translator however failed to maintain the structure of stanzas, verses and the number of words within stanzas and verses due to a number of factors including variation between English and Kiswahili, overtranslation, undertranslation and mistranslation.

The study therefore concludes that *Wimbo wa Lawino* sounds more like a prose text than a poem due to failure to maintain the poetic features of the SLT such as verses and the number of words within stanzas and verses. It recommends that the translator of poetry should be well equipped with poetic forms of both SLT and TLT before embarking on poetry translation.