



Translation of Sri Lankan Literature into French: A Case Study;

Romesh Gunsekera's *Reef*

H. S. M. M. Jayawardena

Abstract

In 1994, British Sri Lankan writer Romesh Gunsekera's debut novel *Reef*, was short listed for the Booker Prize. The novel was later translated into many languages including French. *Reef* was translated into French as *Récifs* (Serpent à plumes, Paris) by Marie-Odile Fortier Masek in 1995. The present paper examines the French translation and the strategies used by the translator.

Product-oriented Descriptive Translation Studies are an important area of academic research in Translation Studies. The translated text is the starting point for this kind of a study. The text chosen for the present study *Récifs* is set in Sri Lanka. The influence of the Sri Lankan culture, Buddhism and the Sinhala language is noteworthy. Sinhala terms are often used by the author in the original: exclamations, terms of address, swear words, food items, religious terms, species of flora and fauna and also terms such as 'menø' and 'no?' the popular question tag used in Sri Lankan English.

The object of this study will be whether the translator preserves the Sinhala terms and/or the English terms typical of Sri Lankan people in the French translation. *Récifs*, similar to the original, does not offer footnotes or a glossary to explain Sinhala terms. Respecting the culture represented by the source text, Fortier Masek does not attempt to translate Sinhala words into French. However, it is interesting to note that certain expressions in English are translated. The translation of the question tag 'no?' by using different expressions raises concerns and is discussed in detail. This paper points out that such strategies, along with clarifications and added information found in the translated work, could prevent the reader from receiving the foreign as foreign.

Key words – *Récifs*, expressions, Sinhala and English