

Travelling stories: Selling translation rights of Afrikaans fiction to Dutch publishers

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Abstract

Publications in minority languages have a very limited audience. Their reach can be extended through the sales of translation rights. This article reports on the results of an exploratory study conducted on the selling of translation rights of Afrikaans fiction to Dutch publishers. Using case studies of two bestselling Afrikaans authors, we identified a set of non-literary factors influencing the selling of translation rights from a South African trade publisher's perspective. Attention is paid to the criteria for selecting books with translation rights potential. This area of publishing is still in its development stage in South Africa, and a lack of human resources, financial resources and support infrastructure are evident. These factors inhibit the visibility of Afrikaans literature world-wide. However, it is argued that awareness and training in this field, as well as revised strategies, could extend the reading and buying market of Afrikaans popular fiction authors over time.

Introduction

Afrikaans is a small language, considered peripheral in global terms, with limited scope for diffusion. Because of this limitation, Afrikaans authors have a better chance of success through translation which widens the reader base. Translation facilitates movement between languages in a dynamic global literary polysystem. However, most translations flow from dominant languages like English, which is regarded as the 'hypercentral' language and thus centrally placed in this polysystem (see De Swaan 2002:228; Casanova, 2010; Haroon, 2001 for applications of Even-Zohar's polysystem theory to other minority language areas). In contrast, this study examines the other direction: how small language authors can be translated into more widely spoken languages. The proportion of titles being translated into Afrikaans is of course much higher than those being translated from Afrikaans.

South Africa does not have a strong book buying and reading culture, especially if compared to the European publishing industries. The majority of the industry is focused on educational books, rather than leisure reading. Some argue that post-apartheid South Africa still has a long way to go in terms of social and economic transformation; inequalities remain high, with more than 20% of people living in extreme poverty (Nicolson, 2015). Literacy rates are high overall, but functional literacy remains problematic for many children and adults, and books are often seen as a tool rather than a form of entertainment. Furthermore, there is huge linguistic diversity, with eleven official languages, although the vast majority of books published are still in English or Afrikaans (PASA 2015; Buitendach & Möller 2016). This is in part a lingering effect of the apartheid education and cultural systems, which promoted Afrikaans, in particular. In this context, books are regarded as discretionary purchases - luxuries, rather than necessities. The high percentage of VAT (14%, which may soon rise to 15%) charged on books in South Africa limits consumer spending on books as well. This results in a limited local market for trade books.

One way in which authors working in a minority language like Afrikaans can expand their reach, is to publish in European languages and thus reach an extended market outside South African borders. This process involves selling the subsidiary rights of a book (translation rights) to a foreign publisher. The selling of subsidiary rights, rights additional to the primary rights enabling a publisher to publish books in a certain territory and format, could be initiated via a literary agent or via a local publisher directly. The team consisting of the author, local and foreign publisher and literary agent need to manage the publication process that involves acquiring the translation rights, translation and production, marketing and distribution of the title in a foreign language market.

Afrikaans authors who have become successful both locally and internationally include Deon Meyer, Irma Joubert, Etienne van Heerden, Maritha van der Vyver, and Karen Brynard, and this shows that South Africa has quality authors and products of a high standard that are well received by the international market. Their sales records and favourable publicity, as well as the fact that publishers are constantly acquiring their backlist and frontlist titles to translate, demonstrate their popularity in the international market. However, rights selling is still not a common activity in South Africa. Very few local literary agents exist, and those that do work in this area mostly focus on selling English titles and literary titles. Moreover, many South African publishers do not regard the selling of rights as part of their core business strategy. In terms of rights selling, these publishers mostly acquire rights from publishers in Europe and do not necessarily sell rights, at least not proactively. However, few figures exist to corroborate this impression, and even the annual Publishers' Association (PASA) survey has been unable to gather sufficient evidence of rights sold for progress to be tracked (see e.g. Le Roux & Cassells 2016).

Without a more detailed base of evidence, this study was conducted to provide exploratory, qualitative insights into rights trading from South Africa. Because of cultural and historical links, given the fact that Afrikaans originated from Dutch (as well as other languages), this study examines the relationship between Afrikaans and Dutch. By focusing on the links between Afrikaans and just one European language, we hoped to provide an idea of the flows from this country towards Europe. Semi-structured interviews were held with key informants in the South African and Dutch publishing industry, two case studies were developed, and observation was conducted at the Frankfurt Book Fair over two consecutive years.

Case studies

To illustrate the process of rights trading from the South African perspective, two case studies will be used, of the authors Deon Meyer and Irma Joubert. While other cases could also be examined, these examples are of particular relevance and interest. They were selected because they are both South African authors who write popular fiction in Afrikaans, and they have both been translated into several languages, one of which is Dutch. Moreover, both of these authors have achieved bestseller status locally and internationally. These authors' Dutch novels sell an average of 40,000+ copies in the foreign market, which is far above the average print run of 2,000-3,000 copies in South Africa (Van Rooyen, 2005). Both Meyer and Joubert continue to write in their mother tongue, Afrikaans, and both they and their publishers feel this has contributed to their success internationally – which is contrary to the perception that writing in such a minority language could have prevented them from being translated or gaining success as translated authors in the international market. There is still a feeling among many South African writers that they need to move away from their Afrikaans roots to attain international success, but these case studies provide evidence that this is not true. As Minter (2013:56) explains, “there is no reason for authors to feel that the essence of their mother tongue is lost in translation, or that English ... is a trampling giant that obliterates the artistic creation in its path. It should rather be viewed as a door opening up new markets and broadening the circle of acceptance and acknowledgement.”

Irma Joubert has been writing historical romance novels in Afrikaans since 2004. She has published one trilogy with a niche Afrikaans publisher, LAPA (*Ver wink die suiderkruis, Tussen stasies* and *Tolbos*), and another with the very large South African media company, NB Publishers (*Anderkant Pontenilo, Persomi: Kind van die brakrant*, and *Kronkelpad*). Two books in the third trilogy have been published (*Immer wes* and *Mentje: Kind van Pas-opkamp*). Interestingly, in South Africa she is seen as a historical romance writer, while in Europe she is categorised as a Christian author. Joubert has won both local and international prizes for her books. Internationally she was awarded the Dutch BCB Publiekprijs, a Christian book prize for translated fiction, for *Kronkelpad* (2014) and the English translation of *Tussen stasies* (*Girl from the train*, 2015) has been nominated for the American Christy Award in the category of Historical Romance. Her work was first translated into Dutch in 2011 by a Christian imprint, Uitgeverij Mozaïek. The sales of her first translation, *Tussen Stasies* (which was translated as *Het meisje uit de trein*), were higher than expected and the novel was soon appearing on bestseller lists, selling close to 40,000 copies in the Netherlands in the first two years. With the success of *Het meisje uit de trein* the Dutch acquisitions editor optioned the rest of the series from the South African publisher, and was appointed as Joubert's literary agent by her local publisher. Translation rights to most of her books have since been sold to German and English Christian publishers.

Deon Meyer is well known internationally for his crime fiction, but he continues to write in Afrikaans and to publish in South Africa first. Between 1994 and 2016, he published a total of 12 thrillers and a few short story collections, many featuring the characters of Benny Griessel, Mat Joubert and Thobela Mpayipheli. Some of his short stories and novels have been developed into feature film screenplays, and two local television series have also been aired, namely *Orion* (2007) and *Transito* (2008). In 2016 a German production company produced a TV series based on his book *Dead before dying*, titled 'Cape Town.' Meyer managed to secure an international literary agent with his second book, *Feniks* (translated as *Dead before Dying*). Isobel Dixon, a well-known representative for South African fiction writers in London, was able to sell the English translation rights to *Dead before Dying* (1999), as well as Dutch and French rights, after which his career took off internationally. Meyer's books have since been translated into 27+ languages, and he has won local and international literary prizes for his work, such as the Barry Award for Best Thriller (2011, USA) and the best translated thriller by ThrillZone Awards 2017 for *Koorts*.

Based on these case studies, a set of criteria was developed, to assist South African publishers when evaluating whether a particular author or title would be suitable for translation. These criteria may also be of use to publishers of other minority languages. The criteria confirm many of the factors raised in the international literature on rights selling, using South African examples, but they also bring together criteria raised by a number of different studies into a single, more comprehensive list.

Author's track record

If an author has published a few titles, it proves that the author has a track record and an existing following, produces books regularly and has credibility as a writer. This makes them less of a risk for a new publishing market. In addition, rights may be acquired to a whole series, which is more attractive for a publisher aiming at repeat sales to a mass market. Joubert had published only a few titles in Afrikaans before *Tussen Stasies* was acquired for Dutch translation, while Meyer had only published one other title before *Feniks* was translated into English. Various translations followed and new releases by these authors triggered subsequent translations into other languages. Interviews with industry participants indicated that it is uncommon for rights to be sold this quickly, at least for South African authors. This shows that the development of a list of titles is not the only factor to take into account when considering an author's track record. As Curtis notes, "If I had room on my list for only one more writer, and had to choose between one who's had a dozen solid but unspectacular genre paperback originals published and one whose first novel was a best seller, I

would be all but paralyzed with indecision, having seen so many of the former kind soar to wealth and glory, and so many of the latter fall ignominiously on their rear ends” (1982:180).

A related factor that publishers consider is book sales in the author’s home country. In South Africa, average print runs are not high, at around 2,000-3,000 books for popular fiction, and around 1,000 for literary fiction. This context is not always easy to explain to foreign publishers who may be more accustomed to catering for larger book reading and buying cultures. The Dutch trade publishers interviewed for this study all asked specifically about the sales records of potential books, the marketability of the proposed author as well as the number of titles published. In the case of Meyer and Joubert, we see initially conservative sales in their home country, followed by a slow rise in sales as they produced more books and developed a loyal following.

Apart from sales, the author’s track record can also be boosted by awards. Both Meyer and Joubert have won prizes for their work, which contributes to the likelihood of their being selected for translation. In this way, prizes are seen as a proxy for quality. Foreign publishers may view translating a prize-winning title as lower risk, because the title has already proved its worth in the local market.

All of these factors relate to the lowering of risk and the possibility of recurring sales (Van Es & Heilbron, 2015). The possibility of acquiring more titles by a specific author, or publishing a series by the same author, is an important consideration when selecting texts for translation. The decision to translate more titles by these authors had been considered based on the sales record of the first titles translated, as well as the fact that the reception of the work was favourable in the Dutch market. Once Meyer’s books became bestsellers in the foreign market, other publishers began noticing other books available for translation by the same author. These publishers also discovered other books published by the same Afrikaans publishers, which led to the potential publication of more translations of different authors.

Genre

Based on the commercial nature of trade publishing, it makes sense that publishers would seek to publish a popular and profitable genre such as romance or crime novels. Publishers operate in a system whose aim is to sell large amounts of books: “...to outsell other fictions, it is necessary to have a large market and in order to have that kind of audience books must be distributed, advertised and sold in a system that is both commercial and economic” (Botting in Glover & McCracken, 2012:161). The genre of the book is an important consideration with regard to making a translation decision because “genre, amongst other things, functions as a commercial device” (Palmer, 1992:116). The romance and crime fiction genres have established themselves as popular amongst readers worldwide. Thus if a new author writes in these particular bestselling genres, the possibility of a foreign publisher acquiring translation rights, especially if it is the foreign publisher’s field of expertise and resonates with their brand and list, is increased (Franssen, 2015; Kleyn, 2013). Genre is thus an important consideration when evaluating a work for possible translation.

Irma Joubert writes in the historical romance genre and manages to fuse different histories and cultures – giving her work a broad reader appeal. Some sources, like Loots (2011:75 & 94) in Taljaard-Gilson (2013), argue that historical romance has an important function of acting as a ‘memory bank’ for South African culture and traditions. But it is also, perennially, one of the most popular genres on the global market. Therefore, this genre stays popular and relevant both locally and internationally. The decision to translate Joubert’s first work, *Tussen Stasies*, was first attributed to the fact that the title falls within the popular romance genre and secondly that the content suited the Christian character of the publishing list of Dutch publisher Uitgeverij Mozaïek. The South African Afrikaner traditional context that the book encapsulates also motivated the Dutch publisher to translate the title. Indeed, some would argue that it is the South African context that adds to the international appeal as publishers sometimes seek out books with a locale considered “exotic”.

Meyer uses crime as a central theme in his novels. One of his main characters, Benny Griessel, is a white detective who is struggling to adapt to a new political dispensation in the police service. The setting may be specific to South Africa, but the concept of a detective struggling with his demons is a common one in the genre of crime fiction (Naidu & Le Roux, 2017). Both Meyer and his agent feel that the inclusion of the political South African context created a unique selling proposition for his work in the late 1990s. In the Dutch market, Meyer's works were at first not specifically published for this market, but rather as general fiction. This may be part of the reason that Meyer only found success with his third Dutch publisher, A.W. Bruna, which is a well-known publisher of crime fiction and thrillers. Meyer's literary agent noted in an interview that Meyer understands his genre well and is always "keen to push the boundaries, to experiment, while staying true to his characters, an array of them that readers have come to love" (Dixon, 2013).

Linking to the genres the books are categorised as, the publisher brand also plays a role in positioning the translations in the foreign market. Although Joubert's books are classified as genre fiction in South Africa, the Dutch translation of her work with Christian imprint Uitgeverij Mozaïek led to translations by German and English Christian imprints. One could speculate whether the translations would have fared as well, if they had been published by a general trade publisher. The titles would then have had to compete with all genre fiction English titles available. It should be noted, however, that the Christian market is a strong market.

Literary agents

Margie Orford, a successful South African crime fiction author, stresses the importance of reaching a larger reading audience: "The South African reading public is small, so for a professional writer international sales are essential" (in Warnes 2012). She goes on to say that a literary agent is essential to raise an author's international profile. Authors do not necessarily have access to international publishers or to the business relationships that agents have been cultivating over many years. Meyer's and Joubert's agents are situated in Europe, which gives them easy access to the European market regarding translation opportunities. But South Africa has few literary agents within the country, and is thus reliant on external links when selling subsidiary rights more broadly. South African publishers mostly liaise with foreign publishers directly, whereas foreign publishers are familiar with conducting business via literary agents.

Joubert does not retain her subsidiary rights and her Dutch acquisitions editor was appointed to act as literary agent for the author, representing her work in the European market, after the translated editions' success. Meyer, however, retains his subsidiary rights and therefore the South African publisher is not responsible for exploiting these rights. With Meyer's first translation of *Feniks*, his literary agent played a role in selling translation rights. In both cases, an effective team contributed to the success of these authors locally and internationally. Joubert's original South African publisher admits that assigning Joubert's Dutch acquisitions editor as a literary agent has been beneficial for expanding their rights-selling business in general, not just for this author. Since then the rights to not only Joubert's titles, but other Afrikaans authors' books, have been successfully negotiated by this publisher.

It is also argued that a literary agent that is familiar with the South African environment, culture and language is an advantage, in contrast to utilising the services of a foreign rights agency. Collaborating with sub-agents in foreign markets where the language could pose a communication challenge can be strategically advantageous.

Existing translations

If a book has been translated into another language, a foreign publisher is more inclined to consider a new translation in a different language. Venuti (2008: 40) suggests that "the very fact of translation not only implies that the text has been judged valuable enough to bring into another culture, but

also increases the value by generating such promotional devices as jacket copy, endorsements, and advertisements and by enabling such diverse modes of reception as reviews, course adoptions, and scholarly research.” The perception therefore exists that a previous publisher found the book to be worthy or of high enough quality to be translated. “It may be assumed that there are certain conventions specific to a given period and a given community which govern those judgements” (Hooran, 2011: 69). The idea of peers evaluating texts resonates with the concept of “industrial isomorphism” (Franssen, 2015).

Sources have also confirmed that the translation into a European language makes the specific title more accessible, as the original language may not have been accessible (such as Afrikaans) to a wider audience (Chick & Seneque 1987:130; Kleyn, 2013; Ndiki 2002:17). The possibility of doing another translation is thus more probable. Some authors regard London as the European centre of publishing, but argue that South African authors can find an alternative window of opportunity via the Netherlands for international translation into, for example, German and the Scandinavian languages (Etienne van Heerden quoted in Moodie, 2001:2).

Writing in a small language like Afrikaans did not pose a problem, as was anticipated before the study was conducted. Afrikaans is not widely spoken outside South Africa, although there are specialised courses available. However, this was not a stumbling block in these cases, as both Joubert’s Dutch acquisitions editor and Meyer’s agent are proficient in Afrikaans and are able to evaluate these manuscripts in their original language. However, in both cases an English translation was found to be important for further translations, in particular with Meyer’s books. His agent does not believe he would have gained access to the European market without an English translation. Today, Meyer has been published in an estimated 27 languages, which may not have been possible without the initial English translation. However, while the literature, and Meyer’s case study, emphasise the importance of English translations, Irma Joubert’s books did not follow this route. The first translation of her Afrikaans work was into Dutch, and there was no English translation available at the time. The German translation followed from the Dutch, with the English translation only being published by Thomas Nelson Publishers in 2015. A translation in Dutch can thus also provide access to certain European languages such as French and German, as is clear from Joubert’s translation agreements. It is an advantage that Afrikaans and Dutch could be read and understood by some publishers and literary agents, considering that there are similarities in these two languages because of their colonial history. This ‘complementarity’ of the language limits the barrier to access to the language (Van Kranenburg, Cloodt & Hagedoorn, 2001). If the literary agent, foreign publisher or editor is fluent in Afrikaans, publishing opportunities may still exist.

Author branding

Another common theme that emerged from the study was that, rather than individual titles being marketed, authors tend to be marketed as brands, especially those that have achieved bestseller status. The brands of the authors are carefully managed locally and internationally, all the while considering the target audience, as well as investing in comprehensive promotional drives and tours locally and internationally. The publishers interviewed indicated that the marketability of the author, in terms of public speaking, attending book signings, and interacting with the press and readers, is an important consideration. “Consequently, they [editors] will only take on authors who have already established considerable reputations in their own country and, preferably, have already been translated into English” (Hoorda, 2011: 191-192).

When positioning a foreign author in a new reading market, readers need to become acquainted with the author. Brand awareness needs to be created, so that brand loyalty can develop from “awareness of the brand name and attributes and benefits associated with the recall of the name that become entrenched in consumer’s memories ... [which is] then used to guide purchasing decisions”. Moreover, “Effective branding spills over to new and other products, leading to faster

consumer acceptance” (Lamb et al. 2006:231–232). Meyer and Joubert have both been commended by the media and their publishers for their charisma, willingness to interact with their readers and their availability to regularly appear at book-related events. Meyer’s previous experience in public relations has certainly assisted him in this regard (see Le Roux and Buitendach, 2014, for a more detailed discussion of this aspect). Moreover, for Meyer, having endorsements from fellow bestselling authors like Michael Connelly and Henning Mankell creates a favourable position in the foreign market. In addition, Meyer’s Dutch publisher is not only translating existing Afrikaans titles, but is also commissioning new works directly. An example of this is a gift book by Meyer for a retail chain store (Meyer, 2017). This book was later published in Afrikaans, as *Die vrou met die blou mantel*.

It does, however, seem that international publishers have a more aggressive marketing strategy than is common in South Africa. They value interaction with fans and boosting media coverage. This was found to be particularly important in the US market when selling Irma Joubert’s titles in English. This interaction could include activities like adding extra explanatory chapters or word lists, creating additional letters between characters, writing pre-reviews for social media sites like Goodreads, actively nominating books for prizes, and so on. Meyer supports the art of packaging and repackaging content for different audiences and markets, for example the short stories for magazines, feature films, TV series and books he has been involved in. He continually extends the brand into different mediums and through this possibly grows his brand awareness and acceptance amongst readers in foreign markets. But this kind of aggressive author branding is still unusual in the South African context, where the resources for marketing are often limited.

Positioning

Publishers strategically plan the paratext of books, such as cover design, and the inclusion of straplines and endorsements. Publishers are proactive in tailoring readers’ perceptions and expectations of translation, but it should be remembered that “...the most extravagant marketing budget and glorious cover design cannot compensate for a core story if it does not speak to the people the publisher is trying to reach internationally” (Noorda, 2012: 360).

Our analysis of epitext, including cover design and book reviews of both authors’ titles, shows that what keeps their books popular, is what readers perceive as an “authentic” Afrikaans and South African culture, referring to the landscapes, political commentary, traditions, and creating a social consciousness through the portrayal of gripping storylines and characters. Botting (in Glover & McCracken, 2012:164) refers to this as a differentiating factor, describing it as “something [added] to stimulate the desire of (a sufficient number of) reader-consumers, that catches the imagination and ...public eye; something perhaps that is not – or not merely – provided by clever marketing and publicity, or topicality and extensive media coverage.” Not all Afrikaans titles that have been translated reach the bestselling status or the high sales volumes as Joubert and Meyer’s work. These authors’ work thus must contain something special that a foreign audience resonates with, which implies that these authors manage to write books for both their local and international audiences.

Having a solid marketing and public relations strategy for the translated author could aid sales and acceptance in the foreign market, and therefore promotion and marketing are key. Several Dutch cultural organisations, book festivals and campaigns exist that could assist in gaining exposure for the translated author, in both Belgium and the Netherlands. This could boost the sales of the author in both the local and international market. The case studies indicate that when an author’s international profile grows, sales in the home market also increase. The promotional campaign celebrating Afrikaans translated fiction across Belgium and the Netherlands – ‘Week van de Afrikaanse roman’ – poses many promotional opportunities. New authors are suggested for participation in the programme, and ample advertising space on the website, social media and at the events is provided. Irma Joubert participated in the programme in 2014, and found it heightened

awareness of her books and profile. In both case studies, the authors were granted an international tour, attending press meetings and book launches, backed up by social media aimed at the Dutch reading markets. This is indicative of Dutch publishers welcoming the translation of Afrikaans books.

Publishers perceive the publishing of new authors in a foreign market as risky. They realise that once publishers acquire an author they have a long-term commitment that will take some time to achieve return on investment. According to Curtis, because of the time it takes to achieve a return on investment, most publishers cannot subsidise new books with bestselling books until profit is realised: "Whatever else your book may be, it must be profitable. And books that have little else to recommend them beyond being good are all too often marginally profitable, or not profitable at all" (Curtis, 1982:175).

It is therefore important for a publishing house to consider all of the factors mentioned before approaching subsidiary rights agreements with foreign publishers. The list of criteria could be used to aid publishers' decision-making in acquiring a title when considering the translation rights sales potential of a title, and to guide publishers that are looking to sell their titles' rights to a foreign publisher of a different language. Publishers could also consider the list of criteria at commissioning phase, to increase the probability of translation and subsidiary rights sales. In addition to these criteria, certain key issues were identified to assist publishers in selling rights to titles in small languages.

Recommendations for publishers

Two key issues can be identified as crucial for successful rights negotiations: international visibility or discoverability, and the availability or allocation of resources, both financial and human.

International visibility

To sell rights, a publisher must be active in the global publishing environment - and visible on that stage. There are a number of strategies available to boost international visibility, the most significant of which are book fairs and websites. Book fairs pose many opportunities for publishers who would like to sell or acquire rights. Publishers can network, benchmark best practices, conduct market research on trends, build relationships and build a reputation in this field. In order to capitalise on this platform, a publisher needs to be proactive in arranging meetings with prospective clients, have an attractive stand, and make supporting marketing material available in an accessible language like English. Establishing relationships is also important and it is imperative that these relationships are maintained, as this could be a long-term investment. A great deal of trust is required when pursuing business endeavours.

However, interviews conducted with South African trade publishers and observation at the Frankfurt Book Fair show that many local publishers do not regard book fairs as essential to their business. Observation indicated that some South African publishers do not make an effort to brand their exhibition stands effectively, and do not always have the skills or experience to capitalise on the platform presented by a major book fair. Being absent from the book fair catalogue or making little effort to distribute rights catalogues to other interested parties could lead to lost opportunities. This could be considered a limitation to their expanding their international market reach, especially where the publication of fiction in a minority language like Afrikaans, or any other African language, is concerned. Interestingly, though, the case studies show that there is more than one route to success: while Meyer's work was touted by his agent at the Frankfurt Book fair, Joubert's work was discovered by a Dutch publisher via the Internet, which then took steps to contact the South African publisher and secure translation rights.

Some South African publishers find the expense of attending international book fairs prohibitive. This is exacerbated by the absence of much support from government. While the Department of Trade and Industry does provide some funding for small publishers, the logistics are extremely complicated and inefficient, and there is more that could be done to assist inexperienced publishers in developing a subsidiary rights trading strategy before attending a book fair. A positive image of the South African publishing industry should be encouraged in order to initiate translation agreements or collaborative projects. It is thus argued that while attending a book fair could be promoting the selling of rights, if not utilised properly, it could also have little impact on the selling of rights.

The second important element in creating visibility relates to discoverability: how are foreign publishers made aware of South African authors, their books and their publishers? The location at an international book fair, pre-marketing, setting up of meetings, listings in catalogues, positioning close to popular publishers, and seminars and networking all contribute to a publisher's discoverability. Other strategies to increase discoverability include appointing a literary agent that has a footprint in the foreign market, registering on rights selling platforms (such as Pubmatch.com) and proactively sending catalogues to prospective business partners.

Because access to Afrikaans is limited, marketing materials, websites, sample chapters of Afrikaans fiction and communication has to be in English to provide access to the international publishing market. An important marketing platform for trade publishers is a corporate website that is available in English. Furthermore, these websites need to contain contact details or information about the available rights for books in the publishers' catalogues - a factor that is definitely lacking on certain local publishers' websites. Access to language could be considered a barrier, but if managed would not be an issue in achieving success or gaining access to an international market.

Resources

When asked why they do not actively attempt to sell subsidiary rights to their works, many publishers point to a lack of resources - they claim they have insufficient funds, staff or time to dedicate to this role - which may in any case prove unprofitable. In the South African trade sector, where books are considered luxuries rather than necessities, publishers have fairly small print runs, leading to higher unit costs. Demand and supply thus need to be carefully considered. Investment in new business ventures, such as rights selling, could be viewed as risky and its success unpredictable: " ...the publisher will be seeking to recoup as much as possible of the initial investment through finding publishers elsewhere being willing both to share in the initial risk through advances and to provide ongoing revenue through royalties" (Bide, 1999). If no immediate return on investment is guaranteed, publishers may hesitate to pursue this venture. Nevertheless, some publishers are devising strategies to sell rights because they are aware of the potential benefits.

If a publisher aims to establish a rights division, they would need capital to invest, to acquire additional human resources, possibly adapt current operating procedures, all of which requires funding. Moreover, to attend international book fairs, additional funds for international travel are required and an unfavourable exchange rate must be considered. Limited sponsorship opportunities exist via the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), such as the SMME Emerging Exporters Scheme, but interviews with South African publishers indicate that they have had problems with regard to payments, customer service and non-transparent application processes. Sponsorship from a cultural organisation or a corporate sponsor could be explored, for instance from the Dagbreek Trust, the Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging (ATKV, the Afrikaans Language and Culture Association) or the Hiemstra Trust. The Frankfurt Book Fair invitational programme could also be considered, as the FBF organisers select a few publishers from so-called developing countries to exhibit their books each year. The aim is to set up network opportunities within this group of diverse foreign publishers in order to build relationships and their knowledge of this field.

Thus, although finances may limit rights selling, the research revealed several funding opportunities, which could be explored by South African publishers. The main factor inhibiting them was found to be a lack of awareness of the opportunities available.

Another concern in terms of funding is the cost of translation. Experienced translators are costly and scarce, and the page extent of a book can influence the translation costs. Translation costs could be covered in the following ways: 1) paid by the foreign publisher acquiring the rights to publication in the foreign language; 2) paid by a subsidy, often from a government agency; 3) paid by the author directly or subtracted from royalties; 4) external donors, cultural organisations or corporate sponsors could sponsor translations. In the case of Joubert and Meyer, the translation costs were covered by the foreign publishers or from author royalties. It could be argued that these authors are bestsellers, thus the publishers do not view the translation costs as an obstacle, as costs incurred will be recovered relatively quickly by selling high quantities. However, translation costs were raised by interviewees as a concern.

Translation subsidy organisations like the Flemish Literature Fund (FLF) and the Dutch Foundation for Literature (DFL) provide translation subsidies for works to be translated from or into Dutch. They also maintain a database of translators who are proficient in both Afrikaans and Dutch. The FLF and DFL also offer travel grants to support publishers, authors and translators, as well as writers' residences. An author stay in the country for a period of 30-60 days to conduct research, translate a book into or from Dutch, or write a book for a Dutch reading market. Although this could be seen as a funding opportunity, South African publishers interviewed reported that the applications were difficult. Similar support structures are rare in South Africa, although a new translation fund has very recently been established (late 2017). It will be interesting to track its success.

Subsidiary rights should be efficiently managed, with a proper system and qualified staff to manage these rights and ensure sustainable growth in this respect (Owen, 2014; Bides, 1999). According to Seeber and Balkwill (2008:55), "smaller publishers neglect this aspect of business, either because they are unaware of it or because they lack the skills to make the most of it." Meyer's local publisher has invested in and developed a business division that deals specifically with local and international rights management. This ensures a targeted strategy to achieve business objectives. Although small, the team is continually learning, building connections and improving the foreign rights list with the assistance of sub-agents in various foreign markets.

Depending on the financial resources and human resources available, as well as the nature of the product or service required, the publisher could utilise existing staff or make use of consultants or literary agents, with regards to rights selling. Because this is currently considered a developing area of specialisation in South Africa, there are few highly trained, skilled or experienced rights staff available. Existing staff are most likely to be asked to handle rights in addition to their workloads, but then they should be trained in order to meet the requirements of a new business division strategy: "The development of the organisation and the extension of competitive advantage require that employees must also develop accordingly" (Lazenby, 2014:155).

Many publishers learn from doing, learn from foreign publishers, or attend the FBF workshops and seminars in order to teach themselves the required skill set. Most of the publishers interviewed indicated that they do not feel they have the expertise to manage rights effectively. As a result, it seems that local publishers tend to be reactive, or accept a foreign publisher's lead regarding rights negotiations. It could be argued that with more skills and experience South African publishers could become proactive competitors in the rights selling market.

It should be mentioned that since the inception of this study, there have been improvements and changes in this regard. One publisher recently appointed a literary agent to attend international book fairs and handle administrative matters regarding rights management on their behalf. Another publisher interviewed has started a rights management division and is actively selling rights to

Afrikaans books. This publisher has done so in response to recording financial growth and profits in 2017 for the first time. Most of the South African publishers interviewed confirmed that the selling of rights is slowly becoming financially rewarding. Human resources, in terms of capacity and training, thus currently seems to be a challenge, but with an agency industry in its development stage, growth and progress are anticipated.

It is not only the larger publishing houses in South Africa that are selling and acquiring rights. Independent smaller publishing houses have realised that the selling of rights to their authors' work could be integral to their market expansion and growth. It is evident that success depends on the publisher's social and business objectives, whether the main motive is to increase revenue, build an impressive list or international reputation, create awareness or add to the cultural complement of another country's literary environment.

Conclusion

From this study, two main generic factors, namely international visibility and resources, were identified, which have particular relevance for publishers in small countries or publishing in minority languages. In some cases, the factor could either promote or limit the selling of translation rights depending on how it is applied in the publishing environment. A combination of local and foreign role players (publishers and sub-agents) are important, in order to promote and provide access to minority fiction, such as Afrikaans, in an international publishing environment. An initial success can lead to further success and investments: most of the publishers interviewed mentioned that once the publication of a translation was successful, more titles were optioned and translated. This could mean the translation of more of the same author's titles, or other titles by different authors on the publisher's list, ensuring recurring sales and increased revenue. However, local publishers must realise that rights selling is a long-term investment; therefore relationships need to be established and maintained with foreign publishers and literary agents.

A key area inhibiting the expansion of rights selling in South Africa is the lack of support from the government or other institutions. All of the publishers interviewed agreed that rights selling could expand and grow further if a South African translation fund existed, that could support both publishers and authors. A good example of such a translation fund is the FLF and DFL. One can learn from these organisations and investigate the possibility to adapt their business models to a unique South African environment. It could also be advisable to explore external funding options and sponsors for this area of publishing, as government interest and funding in this respect may be limited. To this end, PEN Afrikaans have recently launched a translation fund, funded by the Trust vir Afrikaanse Onderwys, for Afrikaans authors (PEN Afrikaans, 2017), and its progress will be interesting to monitor.

But the publishers themselves are often limiting their own success, by failing to realise the full potential of rights trading. Once South African publishers realise the importance and benefits of investing in a rights selling business division, this will give Afrikaans authors a larger reading market. It also adds to another country's cultural capital and may help to restore the balance in terms of cultural information exchange between the Northern and Southern hemispheres. African books are viewed only as the end of the 'long tail' for most of the world, but the longer the 'tail' becomes and grows, the more it becomes a real force to contend with.

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