

A STUDY OF COMMUNICATION MISCARRIAGE IN NEWS TRANSLATION

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Abstract: Translation of messages from one language to another has been a daunting task to translators. There has been observed problems in communicating messages through translation especially from English to Hausa on the broadcast media in Sokoto, Nigeria where the electronic media (radio and television) mostly use the two languages to transmit messages to diverse audiences. Such audiences rely heavily on the translated news messages to respond to certain issues contained in the messages. The aim of this paper is to study some English-Hausa news translations on the Rima Radio Sokoto medium. The objectives are to: determine whether or not there is communication miscarriage in news translation in the radio medium, examine the nature of the translation in the medium, and determine how translation errors if any, can be addressed. Qualitative research method was employed via identification, description and interpretation of ten (10) extracts of news translation from English into Hausa, which form the data for the study. Among the findings of the study were that: there were numerous errors in the translation as identified in the data analysed and that, the errors identified were those of misrepresentation of forms, poor vocabulary and use of direct translation method where it was inappropriate. From the findings, it was recommended that the errors of communication miscarriage can be addressed through training and retraining of translators. It can therefore, be concluded that application of various theoretical concepts to the study of translation appears relevant in assessing translation as well as in carrying out better translation of messages to avoid communication miscarriage.

Keywords: translation of messages, communication miscarriage, English-Hausa news, distortion of meaning

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1. Introduction

Translation of messages from one language to another is very vital in order to achieve effective communication to people of diverse cultures. Media translation especially, facilitates spreading of information to the audiences to break communication barriers and make the audiences to appropriately respond to the messages. To achieve accuracy and efficiency in media translation, a translator should be competent enough in the understanding of the two languages of translation - the departing language (DL), source language (SL) and the receptor language (RL) otherwise known as the arriving language (AL) or target language (TL). This is because, translation is more than just transforming the words from one language to another, it builds connections between cultures as well as allows one to experience cultural phenomena that would else be too distant and isolated to grasp (Simurka 2020). A translator is also regarded as a gap-filler in bridging the communication barriers between the form of messages in the departing language and corresponding messages in the arriving language (Zaki et al. 2021).

This work seeks to study translation on the electronic media, specifically the radio to investigate communication miscarriage and ways of arresting the problem. The paper highlights ten approaches to translation and employs the *Libre*/interpretative approach as a framework for effective translation to interpret messages from the departing language (English) to the arriving language (Hausa) which are used in the Rima Radio Sokoto medium which was selected as a case study.

2. Literature Review

The central focus on translation is the message which is being communicated between two languages. English and Hausa are the languages in focus in this study. There are different approaches to translation. Translation is viewed by Abdullahi (1997) as a means of transforming a message from one language to another. Sajo (2010) suggests that translation is a transfer of the meaning of a text from the departing language to the arriving language. For Bunza (2006), translation is the method of transmitting meaning from one language to another in either written or spoken form. He further explained that there are three fundamental types of translation as follows:

- i) Word-to-word translation (*Fassarar kalma-da-kalma*)
- ii) Instant translation (*Fassarar nan-take*)
- iii) *Libre* or explanatory translation (*Fassara mai 'yanci*)

In word-to-word translation, a translator lays weight on the semantic explanation of the word or sentence elements of an expression to be transformed. Examples of instant translation can be viewed in court sessions when one of the parties to the court litigation does not comprehend the language of the session hence, services of an interpreter should be hired. In *Libre* or explanatory translation, a translator hires the ideologies of creativity by considering the linguistic culture and socio-cultural contexts of the dual languages

involved to discover the closest equivalence of the arrangements from the departing language to the arriving language.

There are several theories making way for sounding and meaningful approaches to translation considering the languages involved. Nida (2006: 11-14) cited in Sajo (2022) argues that there are six modern theories on translation. The six theories will be discussed accordingly, thus:

- i. Sociolinguistic approach to translation is based on the intention that social context explains what will be translated, and what is acceptable or not in translation through selection, sorting, and censorship. In this approach, socio-cultural norms and values of a language are considered in the translation process.
- ii. Communicative approach is almost the same as the interpretative method of translation as pointed out by Bunza (2006). It is also referred to as “theory of sense” or “*théorie du sens*” in French which is considered the sense of reasoning and interpretation being exploited by a translator in translation tasks. The leading advocates of the theory, Seleskovitch and Lederer (1989) argue that meaning is translated not language. Their proposition proposes that language conveys the message and sometimes can be an obstacle to understanding. In this regard, verbal elements are not only regarded in translation. This concept has a certain relation with the previous, i.e. the sociolinguistic theory.
- iii. Hermeneutic approach is based principally on Steiner’s (1998) argument that translation is “exact art” not really science. He highlights that a translator should be a proficient writer so that they can understand the message and intention of the author of the original text in communication. For Steiner, translation is any human communication.
- iv. Linguistic approach emphasises mainly on meaning and in search for equivalence (i.e. the same meaning carried out by different appearances). In this, linguistics attempts to explore the meaning of equivalence in terms of “what” the departing language really means to transfer the same into the arriving language. The theory seems to be distinct sharply from the three earlier deliberated because relying on the linguistic mechanisms of an utterance can scarcely bring out meaning. This happens when handling certain texts and languages that have some socio-cultural distinctiveness whose explanation goes beyond the sentence components.
- v. Literary approach does not see translation as a linguistic endeavor but a literary one. The theory emphasises that language has an “energy” that is established through words which are the outcome of cultural experience. Cultural experience is the energy that provides strength to language and eventually meaning which the translator translates (or interprets). This concept also relates to the others that provide room for interpreting texts beyond clauses.
- vi. Semiotic theory of translation emphasises the science of comprehending signs and significance. There must be an agreement between a sign, an object, and an interpreter to efficiently decrypt a message. In this, the sign plays a significant role which uncovers the numerous contextual variables of the languages involved in translating.

From an overview of the six theoretical concepts, the review also looks at Yakasai (2011) in his proposition about the need for a correlation between the arrangement of the message in the departing language and the message in the arriving language. Yakasai (2011, p.1) stresses that another problem in English-to-Hausa translation is the lack of adjustment between the source language and the target language. Citing Nida and Taber (1974) as well as Yakasai (1990) who argued on the role of adjustment in literal and scientific translations, Yakasai opines that “transfer aims at transforming the arrangement of departing language by restructuring the message into the arriving or receptor language. This explains that each language has its unique features. Transfer of the message without transforming the arrangement may result in a translation being impossible or difficult to comprehend” (Yakasai 2011: 1).

From the above proposition, Yakasai contends that restructuring covers the necessary adjustments to be made by a translator at the syntactic and semantic levels from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL) to achieve effective communication of messages.

Having explored the various theoretical concepts of translation, including the three types enumerated in Bunza (2006), it is relevant to see translation from the perspective of a free or interpretative approach as cited in Bunza (2006) because this type of translation covers almost all aspects of the six theories discussed. The theories appear to be in tandem with the fact that meaning in language is seen as an interchange between social, cultural and context of practice which are the hallmarks of the interpretative method of translation as they give the translator options of exploiting various contexts when interpreting messages from the departing language to the arriving language. This is also in agreement with Yakasai’s (2011) proposition on the necessity for syntactic and semantic adjustments in translation. This is in order to effectively change the arrangement of the message in the departing language to fit into the arriving or receptor language for the correct meaning to be actualised.

From the foregoing review, therefore, the following data will avail this work with information about instances of correct or faulty translation of news messages from English to Hausa.

3. Data Presentation and Analysis

In the following analysis, ten (10) news items are extracted from the Rima Radio news medium as data for the study. The extracts will be presented in two columns: the English version first, followed by the Hausa version and interpretation will follow. The news items in English are collected with their corresponding translated Hausa versions for necessary illustration to explore possible message miscarriages or correctness in the translation tasks.

Extract One

English	“Special Adviser to the Governor on Scholarship and Students Matters said, another batch of Sokoto State indigenes had been sponsored to study medicine abroad.”
Hausa	<i>Mai ba Gwamna shawara a fannin bada tallafin karatu da lamuran dalibbai ya ce an kuma dauki nauyin wasu ‘yan jihar Sakkwato don su karanto ilmin harhadā magunguna a kasar waje.</i>

Source: Rima Radio, 8th November, 2003

In extract one above, the word ‘medicine’ was misrepresented as ‘pharmacy.’ The actual meaning of the word ‘medicine’ in the context it was used is *likitanci* (medical doctor). This is a serious distortion of meaning.

Extract Two

English	‘Two car bombs have exploded in a synagogue in the Turkish city of Istanbul.
Hausa	<i>Wasu bama-bamai biyu sun tashi a garin Synagogue ta birnin Istanbul a Jasar Turkiyya.</i>

Source: Rima Radio, 8th November, 2003

The translation in extract two contains serious errors of distortion because the word ‘synagogue’ is a noun referring to a building where Jews meet for religious worship and teaching. In Hausa it means *Mujami’a* or *wurin ibadar Yahudawa*.

Extract Three

English	“The Sokoto State Commissioner for Education Alhaji Arzika Tureta says education is the <u>backbone</u> for meaningful development.”
Hausa	<i>Kwamishinan Ilmi na Jihar Sakkwato Alhaji Arzika Tureta ya bayyana ilmi a matsayin kashin bayan kawo cigaba mai ma’ana.</i>

Source: Rima Radio, 18th February, 2008

The figurative term ‘backbone’ in extract three above was translated as *kashin baya*, a direct or word-to-word translation. The word was therefore translated literally without considering its inner linguistic meaning or without changing its form as highlighted in Yakasai (2011). However, during a repeat broadcast of the news at 5:30 pm same day, another translator corrected the translation as can be seen below:

English	“The Sokoto State Commissioner for Education Alhaji Arzika Tureta says education is the <u>backbone</u> for meaningful development.”
Hausa	<i>Kwamishinan Ilmi na Jihar Sakkwato Alhaji Arzika Tureta ya bayyana ilmi a matsayin jigon kawo cigaba mai ma’ana.</i>

Extract Four

English	“Seven staff of the Ministry of the Federal Capital Territory were yesterday paraded before the Minister Malam Nasir El-Rufai and newsmen for their alleged involvement in the thirty-three million naira fraud.”
Hausa	<i>Jiya ne aka yi faretin wasu ma'aikata bakwai na Ma'aikatar Birnin Tarayya a gaban Minista Malam Nasiru El-Rufa'i da 'yan sanda a kan hannun da suke da shi a wata damfara ta naira milyan 33.</i>

Source: Rima Radio, 21st February, 2004

Extract Five

English	On a visit to the isolation camp at Asarara village, our reporter met neither patients nor health personnel there.
Hausa	<i>Sa'ilin da wakilinmu ya ziyarci sansanin da aka kebe a kauyen Asarara, ya tarar da marasa lafiya amma babu jami'an lafiya a wurin.</i>

Source: Rima Radio, 27th February, 2004

The translated version contains serious communication miscarriage as the translator is unable to determine the correct interpretation in the use of the correlative conjunctions ‘neither’ and ‘nor’ which work in pairs in a context. The sentence would have been put this way:

Sa'ilin da wakilinmu ya ziyarci sansanin da aka kebe a kauyen Asarara, bai tarar da marasa lafiya ba balle jami'an lafiya a wurin.

Extract Six

English	Three policemen dismissed from the service have been arraigned before the Sokoto State High Court for alleged torture to death of a twenty-five-year-old man.
Hausa	<i>An gurfanar da wasu 'yan sanda uku da aka kora daga aiki a gaban Babbar Kotun Jihar Sakkwato akan sun kashe wani mai shekara 25.</i>

Source: Rima Radio, February, 2004

In extract six, the translator omitted the translation of the term ‘alleged’ as a vital component in interpreting the message. His translation would have indicated that the persons arraigned were alleged to have committed the offence until proved guilty by court. That was the reason that the English version of the report used the term ‘allege’ which in Hausa means *zargi* in the context it was used. The translation would have been:

An gurfanar da wasu 'yan sanda uku da aka kora daga aiki a gaban Babbar Kotun Jihar Sakkwato akan zargin sun kashe wani mai shekara 25.

Extract Seven

English	Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria
Hausa	<i>Kungiyar Ma'aikatan Gidajen Rediyo da Talabijin ta Najeriya</i>

Source: Rima Radio, 7th March, 2004

The translated version in extract seven is wrongly rendered because, the organisation is not for staff of the media organisations but rather, it serves as an umbrella body for such organisations. It should have been translated as:

Kungiyar Kafafen Yada Labarai ta Najeriya.

Extract Eight

English	Modern European Languages and Literary Students Association.
Hausa	<i>Kungiyar Dalibbai masu Nazarin Harsunan Turawa na Zamani</i>

Source: Rima Radio, 8th November, 2004

In extract eight, literal or direct translation is wrongly applied without semantic adjustment when conveying the message to the receptor language Hausa. This results in confusing the listener of the Hausa version. The item should have been translated as: *Kungiyar Dalibbai masu Nazarin Harsuna da Adabin Turawa.*

Extract Nine

English	She died in her matrimonial home.
Hausa	<i>Ta rasu a kan gadonta na haifuwa.</i>

Source: Rima Radio, 18th December, 2003

The sentence is translated as “*She died in her bed in labour.*” Whereas the text should have been translated as “*Ta rasu a gidan da take aure* or *Ta rasu a gidan mijinta.*”

Extract Ten

English	“The management of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto will tomorrow organise a one-day workshop on intellectual property. A statement signed by Bello Jabo on behalf of the Chairman, local organising committee says the workshop is aimed at sensitising the public on the significance of intellectual property on institutional and individual research and development. The statement says the theme of the workshop is ‘Intellectual property protection, ownership and transfer.’”
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Hausa	<i>Hukumar Jami'ar Usmanu Danfodiyo da ke nan Sakkwato a gobe idan Allah Ya kai mu, za ta gudanar da taron kara ma juna sani akan <u>basira</u>. Wata sanarwa mai dauke da sa hannun Bello Jabo a madadin Shugaban Kwamitin shirya taron ta ce taron na da manufar fadakar da jama'a a kan muhimmancin <u>basira da nazarin halayya da kuma ci gaba</u>. Sanarwar ta ce taken wannan taron shi ne muhimmancin inganta <u>basira</u>.</i>
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Source: Rima Radio, 14th November, 2021

Extract 10 contains serious distortion of messages in the news translation. The forms of the messages in the sentences were misrepresented. For instance, the term “intellectual property” was misrepresented as *basira* meaning “intelligence.”

4. Discussion of Findings

In extract one (1), there was a miscarriage of message when the term ‘medicine’ was translated as ‘pharmacy’ instead of expressing it as a medical profession (for doctors) i.e., medicine in the context of usage should have been translated as *likitanci*. This portrays a clear miscarriage of the message. It also portrays a lack of competence by the translator of the message.

In extract two (2), ‘synagogue’ which actually means *wurin ibadar Yahudawa*, was translated as a geographical entity signifying a town or city. This indicates poor vocabulary by the translator.

In extract three (3), ‘backbone’ was translated directly using word-to-word translation which should not apply if accurate interpretation is to be achieved. The figurative term should have been interpreted with a corresponding term as *jigo* in the context of usage.

Communicative approach should have been used as submitted by Seleskovitch and Lederer (1989) which states that meaning must be transmitted, not language; same as well as Yakasai’s (2011) concept of semantic adjustment.

The word ‘paraded’ was wrongly translated in extract four (4) as *fareti* which is a corresponding loan word. This was done without semantic adjustment considering the inner meaning of the word ‘parade’ as used in context. It should have been translated as *gabatar da*. The translation indicates a distortion of meaning.

Also in extract five (5), the translation was faulty in the wrongful interpretation of the two correlative conjunctions often used in pairs ‘neither’ and ‘nor.’ The message was completely distorted because the actual message in English indicated that “... neither the patients nor the health personnel were met at the place” but the translated version in Hausa showed that “... the patients were met but the health personnel were absent.”

Extract six (6) contains omission of a vital term ‘alleged’ in the source language. Such omission also has legal implications in the translated version because, it is said in law that a person is presumed innocent until proved guilty by a court of law. The word ‘alleged’ should have been translated as *zargi* in the context it was used in English.

Extract seven (7) contains a distorted translation of “Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria” which was interpreted as *Kungiyar Ma'aikatan Gidajen Rediyo da Talabijin ta Najeriya* meaning “Radio and Television Staff Association of Nigeria” instead of *Kungiyar Kafafen Yada Labarai ta Najeriya*.

Extract eight (8) was also translated wrongly by using the direct translation method. The method appears faulty as it gives a wrong interpretation of the message in the source language English because, the word ‘modern’ as used in the expression should not be translated as *na zamani*. It should have been *Kungiyar dalibbai Masu Nazarin Harsuna da Adabin Turawa*. The term *na zamani* ought to be elided as it will confuse the speaker of the receptor language (Hausa). This is another problem of semantic adjustment as argued in Yakasai (2011).

The term ‘matrimonial home’ was wrongly interpreted as *gadonta na haifuwa* in extract nine (9). The translator of the news item was not familiar with the term “matrimonial” as one having to do with marriage. This is a clear indication of poor vocabulary from the translator. The message should simply be *Ta rasu a gidan da take aure*. In other words, it should be *ta rasu a gidan mijinta*.

Extract ten (10) shows how the term ‘copyright’ was translated as *basira* instead of *hakkin mallaka* (right of ownership). Also, the phrase ‘intellectual property protection, ownership and transfer’ was wrongly interpreted as *muhimmancin inganta basira* instead of *kare martabar kayan da aka samar dasu ta hanyar kirkire-kirkire da yadda za a sauya hakkin mallakar su*. This flaw shows a clear instance of communication miscarriage.

5. Conclusion

From the foregoing therefore, it can be concluded that there are many errors of translation referred to as communication miscarriage in the news translations of the selected news bulletins of the medium. On the first objective of the study, which is to determine whether or not there is communication miscarriage in news translations in the radio medium, the study established that there are such errors in the translations as enumerated in the data and the analysis carried out. On the second objective of the study, which is to examine the nature of the translations in the medium, it was gathered that the nature of the translation is that with errors of misrepresentation of forms, poor vocabulary and wrongful use of direct translation method which all together lead to the actual communication miscarriage. On the third objective of the research which is to determine how translation errors if any, can be avoided, the study recommends that translators of the medium should undergo training and retraining on the rudiments of translation techniques covering various approaches to translations as well as drills on comprehension and vocabulary development. Such training and retraining would address the problem of errors in news translations. It can also be said that application of the various theoretical concepts in the study of translation is vital in assessing translation as well as in carrying out better translation of messages to avoid communication miscarriage.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical Standards

The authors affirm this research did not involve human subjects.