

**A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF SOME LEXICAL ITEMS IN MEDIA
TRANSLATION**

By

Halima Umar Sani

Department of Linguistics and Foreign Languages

Bayero University Kano, Nigeria

sanihalimaumar@yahoo.com; husani.lin@buk.edu.ng

Abstract

Pragmatics is the study of how people use language in real communication. Very often we communicate more than the literal meaning of the words we used. In trying to determine what someone actually meant to say, people regularly go beyond the conventional meaning of the word by taking into account conversational behaviour, an intended audience, an actual reader and functions of the text. Translation however, is regarded as a process where by some parts of language are not only given a new shape in the target language, but they are also taken out of their original context and placed in a new one, with different values assigned to communicative conventions, readers' expectation and norms. Basically, the translator's intentions must agree with the receiver's expectations. The paper aims to examine English to Hausa translation from the pragmatic dimension. In the quest to achieving this goal, news and report texts were randomly selected from BBC Hausa Service and pragmatic model of Gutt (1991/2000) was applied to analyse them.

Keywords: Context, relevance, source language, target language.

Introduction

Pragmatics is the study of meaning as determined, not only by linguistics factors, but by extra linguistics ones such as setting, motive, context, topic etc. it is a shift from strict grammatical rules to a situational language use. Pragmatics studies meaning from the perspective of language users, communication code and socio-cultural conventions. Yule (1996:4) stated that "Pragmatics is the study of relationship between linguistics forms and the users of these forms". According to Crystal (2005), Pragmatics is the study of the choices you make when you use language. The reason for those choices and the effect of those choices conveyed. It was established that context plays a vital role in communication. This paper revealed the misuse of some lexical items in English - Hausa translation and the relevance of pragmatics in translation was also unveiled.

Different scholars have defined context based on their own field as well as their ideas and theories. Yule (1996:128) mentioned that “context is the linguistics environment in which a word is used”. Context is any background knowledge assumed to be shared by speaker and hearer and which contributes to hearer’s interpretation of what the speaker means by a given utterance (Leech 1983:13).

Furthermore, Grice (1975) in his theory of implicature in language use talked on the conversational maxims that guide the way we talk. These maxims specify how interlocutors have to behave to converse in a co-operative way. Based on these definition and ideas, context can be seen from linguistics point of view as something which entails what has been said before in the conversation.

This include sentence fragment that cannot be interpreted in isolation, but only meaningful in conversational context. Then, discourse topic which is the form of knowledge that influences the way participants interpret the meaning of what they subsequently hear. It does also involve encyclopaedic knowledge which is associated with a word that is not immediately relevant to linguistics structure. There is also mutual knowledge which is reflexivity of belief and intention, where speaker and hearer interpret intention through regressive judgement as a mutual knowledge.

More so, another dimension is non-linguistics context (the situation in a physical sense). What is physically present around the speaker and hearer at the time of communication? That is, where the communication is taking place, what objects are visible and what is going on. Additionally, there is also a social situation which includes the social relationship of the people involved in the communication. That is, the culture and the situation in which it appears. Background knowledge of the participants and channel or medium of communication are also an important issue in determining context.

In a nutshell, context can be understood when we determine the actual discourse event and the verbal exchange. Then the linguistics context of the verbal exchange, which is what is actually said; and the structure of the information that is convey by the interlocutors in an exchange. This paper aims to study some lexical items used in media translation

Theoretical Framework

Relevance theory treats utterance comprehension as an inferential process which takes as input the production of an utterance by a speaker together with contextual information, and yields as output an interpretation of the speaker's meaning. Understanding utterance is essentially an exercise in mind-reading, and the challenge for relevance theorists attempting to build a psychologically plausible, empirically testable pragmatic theory is precisely to explain how the closed formal system of language provides effective pieces of evidence which, combined with contextual information, enable successful comprehension to take place. Furthermore, the relevance theory-based model of communication is capable of representing the interpretation of figurative language (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 122)

In his model of communication, Gutt (1990) opined that the act of translation or interpreting is just another act of communication i.e. secondary communication, and as such it can be easily be fitted into the relevance Theory framework. Gutt sees translation as an action based on the interpretative use of language. Hence, claims that the only difference between translations and other types of communications is that the original text and the translated text are in two different languages. However, from the perspective of relevance theory the study of the process of translation focuses on the comparison of interpretations not on the reproduction of words, linguistic construction or textual features (Gutt 1991/2000: 233).

Methodology

The paper adopts qualitative research which involves collecting and analysing the data to get an insight into pragmatics issues in translation. The data collection procedures for this study include observation, recording, and interview. About ten (10) people have been interviewed including staff of BBC Hausa services and Hausa native speakers, and the interviews are recorded and later transcribed. In the observation method, the researcher observed events where relevant information was deduced from the news. The researcher also listened to and records the daily BBC Hausa news with a view to extracting relevant data for the study. About forty (40) news bulletins were selected from *Labaran safe* (morning news), *Labaran rana* (Afternoon news) and *Labaran dare* (Evening news). Purposive sampling was used in selecting items that help in achieving the objectives of this study.

Pragmatics and Translation

This study examines issues of pragmatics in News and reports of BBC Hausa service, to find out how pragmatics plays a vital role in conveying messages or information to target audience. Translators especially in the media organizations normally choose words that they feel are more closer to the target language word. In most instances, some words are used in places where they do not belong hence, leading to misinterpretation and miscommunication in the news bulletins and reports. This study analyses some news and report of BBC Hausa service using Gutt's 1991/2000 Theory as follows:

- 1(a) "The Czech President Milos Zeman has said NATO forces *should stand ready* to get involved if Russia intervened militarily in eastern Ukraine".
- 1(b) "Shugaban qasar jamhuriyar Czech Milos Zeman ya ce ya kamata dakarun NATO su *shiga xamara* domin kai dauki idan sojin Rasha suka kai farmaki yankin" (BBC Hausa 07/04/14).

The above example has to do with the call made by President Milos Zeman of Czech Republic to NATO forces, regarding the crisis that escalates in Ukraine at that time. In the source language text (1a), '*should get ready*' was translated to '*shiga xamara*' in (1b). This translation can be misleading because '*shiga xamara*' is not supposed to be used in this context. As we all know, a news/report is always expected to be explicit and comprehensible to the target audience; and these target audiences comprises people of different age and social background. The speaker and the receiver are in focus of all pragmatics analyses.

Hence, pragmatics takes into account conversational behavior an intended audience, an actual reader and functions of text, which does not exist as a theoretical construct without its "users", that is the author and the receiver (Piotrowska 1997:88). By using '*shiga xamara*', many will be confused as the statement is implicit and can only be infer by somebody with military background. Therefore in this regard, '*zama cikin shiri*' will be more appropriate than '*shiga xamara*', and the translated text will be:

"Shugaban qasar jamhuriyar Czech Milos Zeman ya ce ya kamata dakarun NATO su ***zama cikin shiri***, domin kai xauki idan sojojin Rasha sun kai farmaki yankin"

- 2(a) "The rebels argue that the oil sector is *corrupt* and demand a greater share of Libya's oil wealth".

- 2(b) “Yan tawayen na zargin cewa *cuwa –cuwa* ta mamaye harkar fetur a kasa, inda suke neman a basu karin kaso cikin arzakin man fetur na kasar” (BBC Hausa 07/04/14)

In this example like the previous one, a word that is peculiar to a specific register was used to convey an important information in the news. The English word ‘*corrupt*’ was translated into ‘*cuwa-cuwa*’. The word ‘*cuwa-cuwa*’ is a new coinage used by youth in Hausa society, which means doing something that is against the rule. Therefore, it is inappropriate to use the word in this context; and it is also ambiguous. It can be used to indicate gathering of many people, and also to show that something was not done in a right way. The fact that News is for the general public, a recognized translation of the English word ‘*corrupt*’ ought to be used in this context as follows:

“Yan tawayen na zargin cewa *cin hanci* ya mamaye harkar fetur a qasar, inda suke neman a ba su qarin kaso cikin arziqin man fetur na qasar”

- 3(a) “French troops are engaged in a *ground battle* against Islamist militants in Mali”.
- 3(b) “Dakarun Faransa sun fara gwabzawa ta *qasa* da ‘yan tawaye masu kaifin kishin Islam a Mali” (BBC Hausa 17/01/13).

However, in example (3b), there is addition of the word *gwabzawa* in the translated text, which is not required in this particular context. More so, using this word would make it very hard for the target audience to easily comprehend the actual message. It will be more appropriate to use words that can be easily understood by the general public. For example:]

“Dakarun Faransa sun fara *yaqi* ta *qasa* da ‘yan tawaye masu kishin Islam a Mali”

- 4(a) “The Algerian army is still surrounding a natural gas complex deep in the eastern desert, where *Islamic militants* are holding a number of foreigners hostage”.
- 4(b) “Har yanzu sojojin Algeria na cigaba da yi wa wata ma’aitar samar da iskar gas da ke cikin sahara a gabashin qasar, inda wasu masu *kaifin kishin islam* ke garkuwa da ‘yan qasashe waje qawanya” (BBC 17/01/13).

In the instance mentioned (4b) earlier, the Hausa term '*kaifi*,' meaning 'sharpness,' was employed unnecessarily. The term '*kishi*' is ample and aptly conveys the condition of individuals who defend and uphold their religion. Nothing is sharper or more fervent in the hearts of the people than the weight and significance of their faith. The Hausa individual embodies the principles of both culture and religion, with the latter holding profound value. Attempting to quantify the value of one's religion might be perceived as derogatory, aligning with the perspective of the Department of Hausa BBC, which deems the use of proverbs such as '*gurguwa da auren nesa*' as abusive.

Consequently, when translating English terms like 'Extremism' and 'Insurgency,' caution must be exercised to prevent any misinterpretation and to avoid misleading the audience. In this context, the use of a sharp word can be detrimental, implying that words have been squandered and potentially leading to a misunderstanding. Mitigation or euphemistic translation is vital here, to soften the force of the utterance and reduce the negativity or offence. The translation would be:

“Har yanzu sojojin Algeria na cigaba da yi wa wata ma’ aikatar samar da iskar gas da ke cikin sahara a gabashin qasar qawanya, inda wasu **masu kishin islam** ke garkuwa da ‘yan qasashen waje”

- 5(a) “Pakistani security forces have used *tear gas* and fired into the air to try to control thousands of anti – corruption demonstrators trying to approach the parliament building in Islamabad”
- 5(b) “Jami’an tsaro a Pakistan sun yi amfani da *hayaki mai sa hawaye* akan dubban masu zanga –zangar nuna kin amincewa da batun cin hanci da rashawa wadanda ke kokarin shiga ginin majalisar dokokin kasar da ke birnin Islamabad” (15/01/2013).

In this particular case, '*hayaki mai sa hawaye*' has been employed instead of '*tear gas*,' introducing a potential difference of opinion in its interpretation. It's essential to recognize that nearly every type of smoke can cause tears to the eyes. Therefore, the accurate interpretation should be utilized to distinguish between the specific kind of smoke mentioned in English texts and other types of smoke that humans may encounter. The translation should reflect this nuanced difference and be articulated as follows:

“Jami’an tsaro a Pakistan, sun yi amfani da **barkonon tsohuwa** a kan dubban masu zanga –zangar nuna qin amincewa da batun cin hanci da

rashawa, waxanda suke qoqarin shiga ginin
majalisar dokokin qasar da ke birnin Islamabad”

- 6(a) “The US Aviation authorities ordered a review of the plane last week after a series of incidents, including a fuel spill, an *electrical fire*, a cracked windscreen and a brake problem”.
- 6(b) “A makon da ya gabata ne Hukumomin kula da harkokin jiragen sama na Amurka suka bada umarnin a sake duba tsarin jirgin gaba dayansa, bayan matsaloli da ake samu tattare da shi da suka hadar da zubar mai da fashewar gilashin tagar sa da matsalar birki da kuma *tashin wuta*” (BBC Hausa 16/01/13).

In this instance, it can be argued that the connection between the interpretation of 'electric fire' and '*tashin wuta*' is not flawless, given the various factors that can initiate a fire. Examining the English text, an effort has been made to highlight the issues related to the ship. Hence, the interpreter should elucidate what triggered the fire, aiming to eliminate any ambiguity regarding its cause. In this context, an explanatory approach is employed to translate 'electric fire' into 'a combination of electric wires.' Therefore, it should be articulated as follows:

“A makon da ya gabata ne hukumomin kula da harkokin jiragen sama na Amurka suka ba da umarnin a sake duba tsarin jirgin gaba xayansa, sakamakon matsaloli da aka samu tattare da shi da suka haxar da zubar mai da fashewar gilashin tagarsa da matsalar birki da kuma ***haxuwar wayoyi lantarki***”.

- 7(a) “Boeing has committed much of its future to the seven–eight–seven, which incorporates large elements of *new technology* and new materials in its construction”.
- 7(b) “Kamfanin kera jirgin sama na VOING ya dora burinsa sosai a samfurin jirgin na 787, wanda ya ke tattare da nau’in *fasahohi daban – daban* da kuma kayan kira na zamani” (BBC Hausa 16/01/13)

It can be asserted that the correlation between 'new technology' and '*fasahohi daban–daban*', denoting various technologies, is somewhat restrictive. The term 'different technologies' might imply a blend of new and old technologies or a mix of scientific and non-scientific approaches to the listener. To avoid any potential confusion, the speaker should articulate:

“Kamfanin qera jirgin sama na voeing ya tattara tunaninsa a kan samfurin jirgin na 787, wanda aka yi amfani da ***sabuwar fasahar qere-qere*** wajen samar da shi tare da yi masa qyale-qyale na zamani”.

8(a) “Many Kurds gathered outside the building to show their *anger* at the killings”.

8(b) “Hayaniyar jama’ a kenan wanda suka taru a kofar ginin, suna nuna *fushin su* dangane da wannan kisa da aka yi wa matan” (BBC Hausa 10/01/13).

In this narrative, 'anger' is translated as '*fushi*,' a rendering that lacks consistency with the context used. Anger is a phenomenon identifiable by a person's emotional state, often reflected on their face. However, in the instance of (30b), where killings occurred and people took to the streets to express their dissatisfaction, the situation extends beyond mere anger. In this case, the individuals are not only angry but are also vocalizing their discontent. Consequently, it is imperative to employ a term that captures the situation depicted in the story. Thus, it is recommended to use a word that appropriately aligns with the intensity of the events, such as:

“Hayaniyar ‘yan qabilar qurdawa kenan, waxanda suka taru a qofar ginin, suna nuna ***vacin ransu*** dangane da wannan kisa da aka yi wa matan”

9(a) “Legislation against domestic violence was introduced in 2008, but campaign groups say there’s a *culture of impunity* in central American nation (which was engulfed in nearly three decades of civil war)”.

9(b) “Majalisar dokokin kasar dai ta samar da wata doka da zata magance cin zarafin mutane a cikin gida, sai dai kuma akwai *keta a zukatan ‘yan kasar*” (BBC Hausa 17/01/13).

In this particular example, an endeavour was made to translate the term 'Impunity' as '*keta a zukata*,' signifying 'violation of hearts.' Regrettably, this translation bears almost no correlation with the intended meaning. Such a rendering threatens to distort the narrative's purpose, as the chosen words lack a meaningful connection with their contextual placement. To preserve the coherence of the story and ensure a more faithful transmission of the intended message, it is imperative to select a term that aligns with the language of delivery. Hence, the recommended translation would be:

“Majalisar dokokin qasar dai ta samar da wata doka da za ta magance cin zarafin mutane a cikin gida, sai dai kuma ‘yan qasar na da **xabi’ar rashin bin doka**”

10. “Kidan shantu ke nan wanda wasu mata ke kadawa suna waka wasu kuma na yin rawar kidan da *takwarorinsu* ke yi” (Rahoton BBC Hausa 21/08/14)

In this instance, the term '*takwarori*,' signifying 'peers,' is employed in an inappropriate context, potentially causing confusion for the audience. None of the sentences in the report imply that others are currently dancing, let alone insinuate that they are being imitated. This could lead to a misinterpretation on the part of the listener. While these individuals share the same role as team members and could be considered peers, using the term 'counterpart' would be more precise. Most listeners would interpret 'counterpart' to refer to individuals with similar roles but distinct differences. Hence, the more suitable expression would be:

“Kixan shantu ke nan wanda wasu mata ke kaxawa suna waqa wasu kuma na yin rawa”

11. “Kimanin Naira biliyan 24 ne ko kuma dala 155 ta Amurka Nijeriya ke fatan samu daga karin tan dubu 120 na gyada wacce har ake fatan za ta kai ana yin dalar ta kamar yadda ake yi a baya” (Rahoton BBC Hausa 21/04/14)

This report implies that Nigeria anticipates a financial gain if the groundnut production reaches 120,000 tons, a quantity believed to be sufficient for re-establishing the groundnut pyramid, reminiscent of past endeavours. The information presented may evoke various interpretations among the audience, given that the report does not explicitly specify the current quantity. It is crucial to clarify that the mentioned financial benefit of 100,000 dollars is contingent upon reaching the target of 120,000 tons. To enhance clarity, the report should be articulated as follows:

“Kimanin Naira biliyan 24, k watankwacin dalar Amurka 155 Nijeriya ke fatan samu daga qarin tan dubu 120 na gyaxa, wacce ake fatan za ta kai ana yin dalar ta kamar yadda aka yi a baya”

12. “Masu lura da al’amuran dai ba za su yi mamaki da irin wannan sabani tsakanin masu ruwa da tsaki a jam’iyyar APC ba, domin kuwa wasu sun *jima suna jiran fara jin wannan*, kasancewar suna yiwa jam’iyyar kallon wata *gangami* na masu bukata” (Rahoton BBC Hausa 11/06/14)

Once again, the term '*wata*' has been utilized, which is incongruent with the subsequent word, given that '*wata*' specifically denotes the female gender, while the subsequent word pertains to the male gender. Consequently, the context in which '*wata*' is positioned is inaccurate. Additionally, the term 'campaign' does not align appropriately with its context. In the context of 'mobility,' the term typically signifies the summoning of a meeting or the disclosure of someone's secret. Using it in this context could lead to misunderstandings for the listener. To rectify these issues, it is recommended to express:

“Masu lura da al’amuran dai ba za su yi mamaki da irin wannan savani tsakanin masu ruwa da tsaki a jam’iyyar APC ba, domin kuwa wasu sun jima suna jiran fara jin wannan, kasancewar suna yi wa jam’iyyar kallon *wata matattara* ta masu buqata”

13. “A sau da dama dai ‘yan siyasa kan mai da martani a rediyo idan aka fadi wani abu da suke ganin ba haka ba ne. To sai dai a wasu lokutan, martanin yakan kasance *afkawa* mutum ta yadda zai ji a jikin sa” (Rahoton BBC Hausa 13/06/14)

In this example, the term '*afkawa*' is employed in an inappropriate manner, lacking a coherent connection with the other words in the sentence. '*Afkawa*' specifically translates to 'destroy' or 'ruin,' implying a more fitting context involving body parts meeting. Using it in the current sentence may cause confusion for the listener, considering its original meaning. To convey a clear and direct message, it is imperative to construct a sentence containing words most pertinent to the subject under discussion. The revised report should read as follows:

“A sau da dama dai ‘yan siyasa kan mai da martani a rediyo, idan aka faxi wani abu da suke ganin ba haka ba ne. To sai dai a wasu lokutan, martanin yakan kasance mai zafi”

14. Hukumomi a kasar Saudiyya sun bayyana *gagarumar karuwar* mutanen da cutar MERS mai sauri kisa ta hallaka a kasar (Rahoton BBC Hausa 03/06/14)

In this report, the term '*gagaruma*' does not align with the context in which it is employed. '*Gagaruma*' conveys the meaning of something large,

significant, or important, while the intended explanation pertains to the quantity of deaths. As such, it is essential to articulate:

“Hukumomi a qasar Saudiyya, sun bayyana
yawan qaruwar mace-macen mutane a qasar,
sanadiyar cutar MERS mai saurin halaka xan-
Adam”

Conclusion

Understanding the context of speech is crucial for the task of translation, as context plays a pivotal role in discerning the accurate meaning of the content being translated. Ignorance of the context can lead to a distortion of meaning, and bringing out the intended meaning is essentially the foundation of translation work. This underscores the direct relationship between the context of speech and the translation process. Research has consistently highlighted that translation can never be considered complete unless the intended meaning is faithfully conveyed.

Furthermore, investigations have revealed the significant impact of the speaking environment on the translation of news and reports within the Hausa section of the BBC. The BBC, as a platform utilizing the Hausa language, holds a responsibility to address the linguistic needs of the Hausa people, particularly in terms of language style and cultural nuances. Paying attention to these aspects will enhance the quality of the stories, reports, and other programs presented, ultimately ensuring the satisfaction of the Hausa community.

References

- Blackmore, D. (1992) *Understanding Utterances*. Oxford:Blackwell Publishers. Coulthard, M (1992) *Studies in Translation*. No. 28, pp 37-49.
- Gutt, E.A. (1991/2000) *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context*.UK: Basil Blackwell.
- CNHN (2006). *Qamusun Hausa*. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press Ltd.
- House, J. (2006). Text and Context in Translation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol 38, pp 338-358. Hamburg: University of Hamburg.
- CNHN (2006). *Qamusun Hausa*. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press Ltd.
- Leech, G., (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.

- Levinson, S., (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Munday, J. (2008). *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*. New York: Taylor and Francis Group.
- Piotrowska, M. (1997). *Learning Translation- Learning The Impossible? A Course of Translation from English into Polish*. Poland: Instytut Anglistyki.
- Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. (1986/1995) *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sperber, D. & Wilson, D. (2002) “Truthfulness and Relevance”. *Mind* 111: 583-632.