

Categories Of Lukabras Non-Equivalence At The Word Level In The Translation Of Mulembe Fm Luhya Newscasts By Non-Native Lukabras Presenters

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Abstract: *The process of translation has existed for millennia, thus facilitating both linguistic and cultural transfer. Equivalence in translation is expressed by language and the translator is therefore an expert who requires the necessary skills and knowledge to appropriately render the source language information to the target language audience. Mulembe FM is a vernacular radio station targeting listeners of the Luhya dialects spoken in Western Kenya. However the station employs presenters drawn from different Luhya dialects. The presenters are non-native speakers of some of the target dialects of the listeners of the Luhya broadcasts. Mulembe FM newscasts are translated from English into any of the Luhya dialects depending on the presenter broadcasting the news. This situation calls for competence in the selection of appropriate words by the non-native presenters to effectively accommodate all the Luhya listeners in Mulembe FM broadcasts. The study found it necessary to ascertain whether there was a mismatch between the translation strategies used by the non-Kabras presenters and Lukabras equivalence in Mulembe FM newscasts. A sample of one hundred and fifty lexical items and phrases from morning and evening Mulembe FM 2016 newscasts aired by the non-Kabras presenters were investigated. The researcher also sampled 47 Lukabras listeners as respondents. Data was collected using audio recording of Mulembe FM, interviews for the presenters and Focus Group Discussion for the listeners. The study established the following categories of Lukabras non-equivalence: the items have different meaning in Lukabras, the source words that are semantically complex, the target language lacks hyponym and the words have a different meaning in the target language. Accordingly, Lukabras equivalence was not achieved by the three non-Kabras presenters of Mulembe FM newscasts. There is need for Mulembe FM presenters to apply specific strategies to deal with these categories of Lukabras non-equivalence.*

Keywords: *Luhya language group, Mulembe FM newscasts, Lukabras equivalence, Non-Kabras presenters, Semantic mismatches, Source Language, Target Language.*

I. BACKGROUND

Mulembe FM is a Luhya vernacular radio station whose broadcasts target listeners across all the 19 Luhya dialects (The Media Council of Kenya 2015). According to the Royal Media Services (RMS) broadcast policy, the newscasts for all the RMS vernacular FM stations are written in English. Translation of the newscasts into the various local languages is done by the vernacular presenters of the news. Mulembe FM

newscast is therefore a translation from English into any of the Luhya dialects depending on the presenters' dialect (A. Sakwa, personal communication, August, 6, 2015). Given that the station uses different presenters who may be non-native speakers of some of the target languages of the listeners of Mulembe FM newscasts, the study sought to establish categories of Lukabras non-equivalence in the translation of Mulembe FM newscasts by the non-Kabras presenters. These categories were attributed to the vocabulary differences

between Lukabras and the non-Kabras dialects used in the translation of Mulembe FM newscasts. Lexical choices have significant impact on translation, because as Baker (1992) notes, translators first look at the meaning of words as single units before carrying out a translation.

Lukabras is one of the dialects of the Luhya cluster of languages of Western Kenya. According to Marlo (2008), Luhya is an umbrella term for some nineteen language groups of Western Kenya with varying degrees of mutual intelligibility. These dialects are: Lubukusu, Luwanga, Lunyore, Lusonga, Lutura, Lulogooli, Lukabras, Lutoriki, Lwisukha, Lwidakho, Lumarama, Lukhayo, Lushisa, Lumarachi, Lusamia, Lutachoni, Lutsotso, Lunyala East, and Lunyala West. Due to the distinct lexical, semantic and phonological diversity exhibited by Lukabras, some scholars classify it as a separate language (Lewis, Garry & Charles, 2015). According to Lewis *et al* (2015), Luhya is a macro language with the various dialects now promoted to the status of distinct languages. A linguistic gap that motivated the focus on Lukabras equivalence is whether there can be a satisfactory translation by non-native Lukabras presenters that can accommodate Lukabras listeners in Mulembe FM newscasts. Such a gap is based on the arguments on whether Luhya is a language that can effectively accommodate all the 19 dialects or whether these Luhya dialects are separate languages. The present study focused on Lukabras listeners as a representative of the listeners who have to be accommodated in the Mulembe FM Luhya broadcasts. The selection of Lukabras listeners for the study was informed by the fact that those listeners receive the newscasts aired by the non-Kabras Luhya presenters (A. Sakwa, personal communication, August, 6, 2015). In this view, the study aimed to establish how the non-Kabras Luhya presenters deal with such lexical diversity to accommodate the Lukabras listener in Mulembe FM newscasts. Based on the lexical differences among the various Luhya dialects, there was need to establish categories of Lukabras non-equivalence in Mulembe FM newscasts.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The centrality of translation activity in bridging communication gaps among speakers of different languages, especially in radio broadcasts must be underscored. With translation as an indispensable activity, different language communities render it mandatory for their interaction. An appropriate translation should reflect the environment in which the professional translation activity takes place. This truism is asserted by Koller (1989) who defines translation as the result of a text-processing activity, by means of which a source-language text is transposed into a target-language text. Between the resulting text in and the source language text there exists a relationship which can be designated as translational, or equivalence relation. From the above definition, it can be inferred knowledge of the semantics of both the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) is a prerequisite for a successful translation. Moreover, the meaning of a language is often tied to the lexical choices in a translation which dictate the semantic realization of the source language message and hence cannot be overlooked in

translation. This calls for attention to the lexical choices by the non-Kabras presenters in Mulembe FM newscasts.

Bell (1991) emphasizes how the meaning of the SL expressed in the target language during the translation process by defining translation as the expression in a language of what has been expressed in another, preserving semantic equivalence. Bell's (1991) definition of translation served as a basis for the study's concept of translation as a target language product which is as semantically appropriate for the source language text. In other words, the translator's main attention should not be focused on a literal approach where source language words are mechanically replaced by their target language equivalents. Indeed, according to Wilss (1982:95), "the notion of translation competence," "is aptly assessed in transfer situations that require at least some degree of adaptation to new and challenging textual demands." He describes such situations as "accommodatory situations" which need "structural adjustment" (*ibid*) and generally textual manipulation. In point of fact, careful selection of appropriate lexical items is a key for attaining target language equivalence.

Effective delivery of vernacular radio broadcasts, like any other form of communication relies very much on tactful use of communication strategies for appropriate interaction with the target audience. Reiss (1989) places great emphasis on equivalence at the communicative level, for instance, the function of the language of a text, stating that, "The transmission of the predominant function of the ST is the determining factor by which the target text is judged" (Reiss, 1989: 109). Mulembe FM newscasts are informative texts. In such texts, Reiss (1989) observes that plain communication of facts should be exercised with explications when necessary, keeping in mind the target audience. With the assistance of the author's suggestions, the translator can be offered a general rule for his or her translation according to the text type. For instance, to translate Mulembe FM newscasts, the presenters basically need to focus on the contents or the message since it is an informative text, and explication – expressing clearly and precisely – the SL messages that need to be effectively rendered into the target language.

Scholars have investigated various issues concerning the translation of texts from English into different Luhya dialects. Wangia (2003) investigated the aspects of mistranslation of the Lulogooli Bible. The author observes that the translation of the 1951 King James Version of the English Bible into Lulogooli had a lot of lexical flaws. The author notes that although Lulogooli Bible is one of the earliest attempts to translate English into Luhya, the non-native speaker factor on the part of the translators, coupled with lack of a Lulogooli writing system basis must have largely contributed to the lexical inevitable flaws in the translation. She observes that the Lulogooli Bible was a literal translation from English, which failed to appropriately render the SL message to the Lulogooli readers. There is no doubt that TL equivalence is based on appropriate selection of individual words that address the needs of the TL audience. There was need for an investigation on how the non-Kabras presenters select appropriate words to accommodate Lukabras listeners in Mulembe FM newscasts.

Mudogo (2011) found that Lukabras listeners used several interpretation strategies to comprehend Mulembe FM newscasts by the non-Kabras presenters. This was attributed to the presenters translating the newscasts into their native dialects. The study by Mudogo (2011) is a clear indication that the listeners were striving towards convergence with the presenters in order to comprehend the Mulembe FM newscasts. There was need for a study that would establish what the presenters were doing to ensure that the SL message is appropriately delivered to the listeners.

Wangia's (2014) study found out that tense, aspect and case have a great significance in translation of information from English into Bantu languages. With the focus on Lulogooli, one of the Luhya dialects, the author established that the intricate nuances of a language are often tied to the supra-segmental features which in some languages dictate the semantic realization and hence cannot be overlooked in translation. She established that tense, case and aspect were not appropriately captured in the Lulogooli Bible translation and hence resulted to many cases of meaning loss. Wangia's study illustrates how various levels of linguistic analysis are relevant to translation theory and practice. There was need to focus on how the lexical choices at the word level can have significance on translation.

A. EQUIVALENCE IN MULEMBE FM NEWSCASTS

Due to the lexical divergence among the Luhya dialects, it may require great skills to find standard equivalent terms for English items to accommodate all the Luhya speakers. In this view, Kebeya (1997) observes that there is more divergence than convergence among the speakers of the different dialects of the Luhya language group during the communication process. In her study of linguistic accommodation between two Luhya dialects: Lulogooli and Lwitakho, Kebeya (1997) observes that both the Lulogooli and Lwitakho speakers tend to have loyalty to their individual dialects, hence higher cases of divergence than convergence. Given this, there was need to establish the choice of words used by Mulembe FM non-Kabras presenters to bridge the communication gaps that may result from such divergence. The study sought to identify and describe categories of Lukabras non-equivalence in the translation of Mulembe FM newscasts.

Baker (1992) proposes five levels of equivalence: equivalence at word level, equivalence above word level, grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence, pragmatic equivalence. For the present study, equivalence at word level is taken into consideration. As Baker (1992) puts it, the difficulty and problem in translating from one language into another is posed by the concept of non-equivalence, or lack of equivalence. This problem appears at all language levels starting from the word level up till the textual level. Baker discusses various equivalence problems and their possible solutions at word, above word, grammatical, textual, and pragmatic levels. She takes a bottom-up approach for pedagogical reasons. Baker proceeds with her equivalence discussion from word to further upward levels. She claims "translators must not underestimate the cumulative effect of thematic choices on the way we interpret text" (ibid: 129). Baker also acknowledges the fact that there are translation

problems caused by non-equivalence. She identifies common problems of non-equivalence as follows: culture specific concepts between two languages, SL concepts not lexicalized in the target language, the target language lacks hyponym, the target language lacks superordinate, difference in expressive meaning between the source language and the target language concept, source language words that are semantically complex and source language and target language words make distinction in meaning. Baker's (1992) categorization specifically deals with non-equivalence and falls short of exploring the possibilities of equivalence between the source language and target language involved in the translation. Baker (1992), claims that a word is the basic unit to be considered in meaning of translation text. Her analysis on target language equivalence at the word level provides the framework for the researcher's categorization and description on Lukabras non-equivalence in Mulembe FM newscasts.

In summary, Baker's (1992) categories of non-equivalence at word level and strategies to address the problem has been corroborated and strongly recognized by many linguistic theorists and researchers. In Mulembe FM newscasts, the non-Kabras presenters face the task of dealing with nonequivalence, especially at word level in English – Luhya translation. Moreover, the non-native Lukabras speakers need to select the target language words that can be appropriate for Lukabras listeners of Mulembe FM newscasts. It is the fact that almost all of the previous studies dedicated to analyze the non-equivalence of English and some other frequently used language such as Spanish, German, Chinese, Kiwahili, Gikuyu and Dholuo, etc. It is noteworthy that, in this study, Baker's (1992) taxonomy will be relevant in such a way that truly reflexes the categories of Lukabras equivalence in English-Luhya translations by the non-Kabras presenters of Mulembe FM newscasts.

The current study considers the equivalence of the text type – especially the functional type – to be central to the assessment of qualities of informative translation, as the case of Mulembe FM newscasts, where the translated versions are assumed equivalent to the originals by default.

III. CATEGORIES OF LUKABRAS EQUIVALENCE IN MULEMBE FM NEWSCASTS

The researcher was of the view that there are target language categories at the word level in Mulembe FM that can be susceptible to Lukabras non-equivalence if not well rendered by the non-Kabras presenters. This was influenced by the fact that the communication among speaker of different Luhya dialects has been characterized by more divergence than convergence in terms of lexical choices (Kebeya 1997). Analyzing how the non-Kabras presenters rendered the words in these categories would help the researcher establish whether the presenters achieved the target language equivalence. The sub-sections below gives an analysis of the categories of Lukabras equivalence in Mulembe FM newscasts.

A. THE ITEMS USED HAVE DIFFERENT TERMS IN LUKABRAS

In this category, there is an analysis of words used by the non-Kabras presenters which had different terms in Lukabras. Identification of words in this category was informed by the fact that the different dialects of the Luhya Language group have many differences in vocabularies (Marlo 2008, Kebeya 1997 & Mudogo 2011). Although the literature has alluded to common divergence pattern among the speakers of different Luhya dialects, the study holds the view that such divergence gaps can be bridged if the non-Kabras presenter strove towards convergence with their audience during the translation of Mulembe FM newscasts.

EXAMPLE 1: Luwanga presenter's translation: *Amakomia kavele amanzi khushiro sha ekero*

SL version: The supply of bananas was plenty on Ekero market

EXAMPLE 2: Lukhayo presenter's translation: *Avele nacha mufumbiro*

SL version: Was going to the kitchen

In example 1, where the SL message 'The supply of bananas were in plenty on Ekero market' was translated as, '*Amakomia kavele amanzi Ekero*' by the Luwanga presenter. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2013) a banana is a curved fruit, yellow when ripe, while a market is a place for selling different items. The translation of 'bananas' and 'market' as '*amakomia*' and '*eshiro*' respectively by the Luwanga presenter fails to attain Lukabras equivalence because Lukabras dialect doesn't have the items '*amakomia*' and '*khushiro*'. The equivalent Lukabras items for 'bananas' and 'market', are '*amatore*' and '*esoko*' respectively. A similar case can be observed in example 2, where the Lukhayo presenter translated 'kitchen' as '*mufumbiro*', an item that does not exist in Lukabras. A kitchen is a room where food is cooked (The Oxford English Dictionary 2013). The Lukabras item for kitchen is '*chikoni*', a nativised version for the Swahili item 'jikoni'. Such a mismatch is a big challenge in translation of information into Luhya producing very unnatural translation for the Lukabras listeners. As observed by Giles, McCann, Ota and Noels, (1991), individual communicators can adapt their communicative behaviour in such a way as to become more similar to their interlocutor's behaviour in what is commonly known as convergence. For this reason, competence in both the source language and target language is necessary for any successful translation task. Though the translator must be able to read and comprehend the source language and render comprehensibly in the target language, the translator must also be able to choose the equivalent expression in the target language that both fully conveys and best matches the and ultimately the intended Skopos of the translation. As example 1 and 2 above show, the different terminologies between Lukabras and the dialects of the non-Kabras presenters used in Mulembe FM translation affected the Skopos of the translation. The Skopos Theory is built on the concept of equivalence, which is the milestone in linguistic theories. According to Reiss (1989) the translation of an informative text should transmit the full referential or conceptual content of the source language and the translation

should be without redundancy, but with the use of explication when required.

B. SOURCE LANGUAGE WORDS THAT ARE SEMANTICALLY COMPLEX

In this category a sample of items which were semantically complex are discussed. English and Luhya belong to two different cultures and hence, provide good evidence for the possibility of translating what is sometimes referred to as "untranslatable" due to the possibility lack of equivalence in certain terms. As observed by Wangia (2013), English is rich in culture-specific terms and concepts that have no equivalents in Luhya. Reference is made to the examples below;

EXAMPLE 3: Luwanga presenter's translation: *Willy Mtengo wi shama sha ODM aviri nitsikura tsinyishi*

SL version: Willy Mtengo, the ODM candidate had a landslide victory

EXAMPLE 4: Lukhayo presenter's translation: *Mlala khuvakhae va marehemu Kerishom Kirima*

SL version: One of the widows to the former city tycoon Kerishom Kirima

In Example 3 the concept 'landslide victory' describes the concept of winning by an overwhelming majority of votes. There was equivalent word in for this concept in the Luwanga presenter's translation. In case the presenter has to translate it into any of the Luhya dialects, he might have to use explanations which appropriately capture an overwhelming win. Nevertheless, the Luwanga presenter just translated it as '*yavira*' (won). With the absence of figures to indicate the margin of the win, the concept is not effectively captured in Lukabras.

In example 4, the Lukhayo presenter has rendered the item widow as '*mukhae*'. The Lukhayo item '*mukhae*' means 'a woman', which is a broad concept that does not specify the 'widow' concept as depicted in the source language. Most respondents said that widows are simply known by their husband's name, preceded by the word '*kwa*' show their status. In Lukabras, the widow of Kerishom Kirima will simply be referred to as '*KwaKerishom Kirima*'. A translation which does not capture the respondents' conceptualization of the source language item 'widow' in their target language will lead to message distortion. This was the case in the examples 3 and 4 above where most respondents did not get the accurate source language message. As observed by Newmark (1988), this kind of translation should attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable to the target language audience, a fact that was not taken into consideration in the above translations.

C. THE TARGET LANGUAGE LACKS A HYPONYM

Another common problem a translator encounters is that at a time he translates a word which has different expressive meaning in source language and target language. This kind of translation uses an equivalent cultural item in the target language to render the source language message. Using this strategy, the three non-Kabras presenters used an item in the

target language to replace the source language items as shown in the examples 5-6 below.

EXAMPLE 5: Luwanga presenter's translation: *Avakhala ve vintu vitutu mutawuni vavele mumayia ketsimbiro navasikari*

SL version: The city hawkers engaged policemen in running battles

EXAMPLE 6: Luwanga presenter's translation: *Avantu veranga tsinyama tsia muvulimo vatililwe*

SL version: The poachers were arrested while.

English has many specific words (hyponyms) for words related to the English culture for which Luhya has no equivalents. For example, English has many hyponyms for the word 'trader'. Most of these words are based on the business for which Luhya has no equivalents, such as hawkers, merchants. 'Hawkers' in example 5 was translated as *vakhala ve vintu vitutu* by the Luwanga presenter. However, this elaboration does not effectively convey the source language message in the target language. The item *vakhala* in Luwanga means traders, while in Lukabras the most common item used is *avachurusi*. To distinguish hawkers from other traders, the Luwanga presenter elaborates further as *vakhala ve vintu vitutu* (traders of small things). The translation is too wide and misleading to imply that traders who sell things in small quantities are hawkers. Such a rendering distorts the source language message due to lack of hyponym in the target language. In example 6, the Luwanga presenter translated 'poachers' as *avantu veranga tsinyama tsia muvulimo* (people who kill wild animals). The problem in this translation is that it is too wide and fails to capture the illegal concepts associated with poaching. Most respondents could not get a clear distinction between the translated version and their understanding of 'hunters'. Among the Kabras, hunting small animals like hares and monkeys is a common practice. Moreover, there are those who chase away animals which destroy their crops like monkeys, baboons and squirrels. It was therefore necessary for the presenter to give the listeners a clear distinction between the poachers and hunters. If the presenters were to translate the original text using this procedure effectively, Lukabras listeners would understand the foreign concepts easily. However, when the original information is in conflict with the communicative purpose, equivalent effect will be chosen as a compromise mediator. The equivalent effect can only be attained when the elaborations capture Lukabras concepts effectively.

D. THE WORDS HAVE DIFFERENT MEANINGS IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE

This category comprised of the TL words used by the non-Kabras presenters, which had different meaning in the TL. The words have been analyzed in the examples below:

EXAMPLE 7: Luwanga presenter's translation: *Vavele nivalamanga*

SL version: They were praying

EXAMPLE 8: Lukhayo presenter's translation: *Vantu va Mulembe muriena?*

SL version People of Mulembe where are you?

In example 7, 'They were praying' was translated as, *Vavele nivalamanga*. There were two problems with the translation of this phrase. First, the equivalent Lukabras item for the English verb phrase 'were praying' is *nivasalanga* and not *nivalamanga*. In this vein, the presenter did not use the Lukabras equivalent item *nivasalanga*, and therefore failing to capture the intended meaning. Such mismatches created semantic ambiguities in the comprehension of the items by Lukabras listeners. Data from the Focus Group Discussions indicated that most respondents were quick to decode the phrase to its Lukabras equivalent 'were cursing' hence missing the source language concept. Contrary to the present case, The Skopos Theory underscores the significance of accommodating the target language audience in an effective translation.

Lukabras non-equivalence in Example 8 was triggered by the Lukhayo presenters' use of the item *muriena?* to render the source language version of 'where are you?' The Lukabras word *muriena* can be rendered as 'where are you' in the source language. The fact that the same item can have different interpretations in the various Luhya dialects have a great influence on the accuracy in translation. It has been noted by Mudogo (2011) that semantic mismatches among the Luhya dialects has often caused communication breakdown among speakers of different Luhya dialects. Data from the Focus Group Discussions indicated that most of the respondents did not comprehend the Lukhayo presenter's item.

E. COMPARISON OF THE CATEGORIES OF LUKABRAS EQUIVALENCE IN MULEMBE FM NEWSCASTS

The comparison of the categories of Lukabras non-equivalence was done to establish the categories with the highest cases of Lukabras non-equivalence. The results were shown on the Table 3:1 below:

Category	Number of items
The TL items are lexicalized differently in Lukabras	48
The concept is semantically complex	64
The word lacks hyponym	20
The word has different meaning in the TL	18
Total	150

Source: Researcher's field observation data (2016)

Table 3.1: Number of items per category

The trend illustrated in Table 3:1 indicates that the most cases of Lukabras non-equivalence was as a result of concepts being lexicalized differently in the various Luhya dialects. In this category forty eight items of the total one hundred and fifty items were analyzed. Most studies on the Luhya language group, such as Wangia (2003), Kebeya (1997), Marlo (2008) and Mudogo (2011) established that the Luhya dialects have vast lexical divergence. The assertions by the authors above seem to feature prominently in the collected data. This reaffirms the conclusion that this category triggered the majority of the instances of Lukabras non-equivalence in Mulembe FM newscasts. The high number of items that exhibited Lukabras non-equivalence in this category could be

attributed to the use of Lukhayo, Lwisukha and Luwanga items in the translation of the English version of the Mulembe FM newscasts. In cases where the concept was not lexicalized in the target language, it was established that the three non-Kabras presenters used domesticated Lukhayo, Lwisukha and Luwanga items to render some English items which did not have Lukabras equivalence. In such cases, Lukabras had nativized or naturalized words for the same concepts. The items used by the presenters therefore sounded unnatural and therefore could not be comprehended well by the listeners. As indicated in Table 3:1 above, this category had 30 items. The other three categories where the concept was semantically complex; the words lacked a hyponym or the words had a different meaning in the target language had 34, 20 and 18 items respectively. The principle idea is that the translator should work to achieve the function or “the communicative purpose of the translation” (Pym, 2010: 44) rather than just follow the source language. In other words, the dominant factor is “what the end-user wants the translation for” (Pym, 2010: 44).

IV. CONCLUSION

To conclude, translation is “a complex rewriting process which has appeared in many conflicting theoretical and practical situations throughout history” (Aixela, 1996:52). In this respect, translating Mulembe FM Luhya newscasts is a challenge itself, because in the translation performed by non-native speakers of target dialects, the translator should exert all possible efforts to preserve the message of the source text. Moreover translation of art products is often supposed to be of artistic value, too. The translator himself must be an artist” (Vermeer, 1996:98).

The concept of equivalence is central in translation although its definition, relevance, and applicability within the field of translation theory have caused heated controversy. Indeed, Equivalence has provided a useful theoretical and pragmatic foundation for translation processes. In Mulembe FM newscasts, Lukabras equivalence is not achieved by the non-Kabras presenters. This is because the presenters do not pay attention to various categories where equivalence must be sought to determine appropriate lexical choices of the TL words for the SL items. This has resulted in many cases of divergence between the presenters and the listeners of Mulembe FM newscasts. The findings have underscored the significance of the lexical choices during the translation process. There is need for translators to recognize the meaning of individual words in the target language to realize an accurate translation.

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