TRANSLATING INTO LOCAL MEDIA LANGUAGES: THE IGBO EXAMPLE

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Abstract

Observations and experiences show that educated Nigerians of Igbo extraction do not like to listen to or watch media programmes (Radio and Television. When asked why, some have said that what you get in Igbo news is a far cry from what you get in English. Others have also described Igbo versions of such programs like the news with some derogatory words as garbage, nonsense etc. Meanwhile these news items, news talks etc are translated from English to Igbo or to any other Nigerian language. We have tried to establish in this paper that translating for the media, otherwise called media translation is a technical and professional activity. It is not a simple act of bilingualism. Bilingualism or multilingualism is simply a human condition that makes it possible for an individual to function at some level, in more than one or more languages. The absence of trained career media translators has not only adversely affected the translation of media items from English to Igbo or to any other Nigerian language, it has also affected the depth and frequency of news items from non–English speaking nations of the world, even on our national print and broadcast media. In this paper, we have tried to prove that translation as a discipline goes beyond bilingualism. We have also proffered solutions to the problems of mass media translation in Nigeria.

Introduction

According to Ndimele (2007:200), the concept "mass media" implies multiple channels for transmitting messages to a large segment of the population at the same time. The mass media are used for mass communication. They are the intermediate transmitters of the message which emanates from a source (the sender). The presence of the mass media makes it possible for the message to travel far beyond the immediate location of the sender of the message. Subscribing to this, Emenanjo (2006:128) says that:

> *The audience of mass communication is very large. It is indeterminate in number and shapeless in form, spatial distribution or location. Its sheer size, heterogeneous nature and far flung location do not allow for face-to-face interaction.*

Ndimele and Emenanjo agree that forms of mass media are several. They include radio, TV, newspaper, magazine, book publishing, film, sound recording, billboards, posters, the internet, etc.

Roles of the Mass Media

The fundamental roles of the mass media, according to Emenanjo (2007:129) are:

1. To educate; 2. To inform; and 3. To entertain.

To perform their educational role, the media engage in the selection of meaningful content for their wide spread audience. The content could be on law, health, religion, finance and so on. The content is broken into segments, parts or units as the producer may choose to name it. They also choose effective ways of transmitting the knowledge they intend to impart on the audience. For example, to educate the audience on HIV/AIDS, the broadcast media may prefer a piece of drama to an expository teaching on radio or television. These make Nwabuiro (1995:275) to assert that the goal of education is to impart knowledge and skill to the recipients. To educate, the mass media adopt various programs: discussion panels, children and youth programmes, documentaries, news talks, phone-in programmes. The information role of the mass media comes broadly under such news-related items as: public announcements, commercial announcements, television crawls, newspaper headlines and subscripts. For their entertainment role, the mass media use newspaper cartoons and word puzzles, musical programmes, dramas, sports and jokes. In fact, entertainment is all that the mass media, whether print or broadcast use to keep their audience in a lighter mood, reduce tension, ward off stress and enhance relaxation. Okunna (1999:10) quoted in Ndimele (2007:243) agrees with this and states that:

> *The functional objective of mass media entertainment is generally regarded as that of providing diversion and escape from the harsh realities of life, relief from the tedium of day-to-day existence, and lessening the stress and strain emanating from rapidly-changing world.*

Speaking on the role of the African mass media, Nkrumah (1965:10) quoted in Uche (1989:134) asserts:

> *To the true African journalist, his newspaper is a collective instrument of mobilization and a collective educator… a weapon, first and foremost, to overthrow colonialism and imperialism, and to assist total African independence and unity… Our revolutionary African Press must present and carry forward our revolutionary purposes. This is to establish a progressive political and economic system upon our continent that will free men from want and every form of social injustice and enable them to work out their social and cultural destinies in peace and at ease.*

This statement establishes another role of the mass media: the political role and social mobilization. Government programmes and agenda are sold to the masses through the mass media. Whether the deregulation of the petroleum downstream sector, privatization policy, environmental protection, removal of petroleum subsidy, wars against indiscipline/inactivity, pipe line vandalization, militancy in the Niger Delta region, Boko Haram insurgence in the Northern part of Nigeria, the maintenance of Nigeria as one and indivisible political entity and even political electioneering campaigns are done through the mass media. This is why Akpan (2009:258) argues that:

> *Public support is generated mainly by the media through discussions of policy issues by well informed persons. Policies that lack mass media support are likely not going to have community support because it is media support that creates community support.*

Another role of the mass media which has evolved as a result of modern development in media practices and modern economy is "Advertising". The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, which is the trade association of British advertising agencies as quoted in Jefkins (1992:5) defined advertising in these words:

> *Advertising presents the most persuasive possible selling message to the right prospects for the product or service at the lowest possible cost.*

According to Jefkins, the main purpose of advertising is "to sell". What is to be sold to the public could be a product, an idea, a service or a programme. As Offiong (2007:132) succinctly put it:

> *Advertisement language is often loaded with ambiguity, awfulness and propaganda. The primary aim of language of advertisement is to attract attention and make a favourable disposition towards some ideas, product or services.*

Advertising is a persuasive aspect of mass communication. Its language concatenation is tailored towards persuading the media audience.

The Need for Media Translation

The first factor that makes media translation imperative, from international languages to indigenous languages, is the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996) which is a statute of global application. Section (iv) of the declaration on communication, media and new technologies, Article 36 states as follows:

> *All language communities are entitled to have at their deposal all the human and material resources required in order to ensure the desired degree of cultural self-expression in communication media in their territory: properly trained personnel, finances, buildings and equipments, traditional and innovative technology.*

Article 40 of the same declaration states thus:

> *In the field of information technology, all language communities are entitled to have at their disposal equipment adapted to their linguistic system and tools and products in their language, so as to derive full advantage from the potential offered by such technologies for self-expression, education, communication, publication, translation and information processing and the dissemination of culture in general.*

Article 3 paragraph 2 of the declaration accords to every language community: "The right to an equitable presence of their language and culture in the communication media". Again, the Cultural Policy for Nigeria (1988), Article 8.2.2(b) states that the Nigerian state shall promote the production of newspapers in Nigerian languages…."

The status of the English language in Nigeria as our lingua franca and its predominance over our indigenous languages has prompted Nigeria's mass communicators: reporters, producers, and editors etc. to use English as the source language for their programmes. This has necessitated the re-expression (translation) of the programme (news for example), from the source language (English) to a target language (vernacular). This is an inevitable duty of the Nigerian mass media given the statute of the United Nations (UN) and of the Nigerian Government. The second factor to consider, which makes media translation an imperative is globalization. In the words of Soubestre (1997) quoted in Okeh (2003:1):

> *The pace of change in the world seems to have been accelerated sharply over the last few years- certainly since the end of the cold war. Communication have become more rapid, working patterns are changing, markets for goods and services have been transformed and money can be moved freely and instantaneously from one country to another. Globalization is the catch-all word used nowadays to describe what is happening.*

Heidegger (1971) quted in Friday-Otun (2007:165) sees globalization as:

> *The shrinking distance in time and space caused by fast means of transportation, the viewing of the cultures of a foreign land in another land through film tracks.*

The communication implication of globalization is that the people (the masses, rural dwellers, illiterates) want to know what is happening in other lands because it has been made possible through the mass media: the internet, the print and the electronic media. They do not want to be inhibited by their inability to understand the English language. They want to hear the news, the audio content of foreign cultures they watch on the television and videos relayed to them in vernacular. This is why the Hausas and Fulanis who do menial jobs in the Eastern part of this country always glue their ears to the vernacular broadcasts of their home state radio stations, and the media owe the non-English speaking class in our society the unadulterated version of what is broadcast in English, in vernacular too. Our contention here is that what is broadcast in the Languages of Wider Communication (LWCs) must be faithful to what is broadcast in indigenous, local languages of narrow communication (LNCs). It is in line with this view that David Dominique argues that:

> *Globalization may make information available but poor people in poor countries are hindered not only from having access to it but also from making sense out of it (2003: 4).*

What Is Translation?

For the purpose of this study, we choose to approach the definition of translation in the words of Ekundayo (2007:238):

> *Translation cannot but be mimesis of what the original creator has expressed if it is to be called translation and not a new autonomous creation. The notion of mimesis is the principle of achieving for another language and/or culture what the original author sought to achieve in the source language.*

Ekundayo was theatrical enough to use mimes to define translation: it conveys the idea of exact representation, exact re-expression, exact reformulation or exact transportation of the intention of the author of a text, written in a given language and context without betrayal, whether as over-translation or under-translation. Again, this definition signifies that translation is both a linguistic and a cultural activity requiring the "process" of reformulation. "Process" means method and technique.

Translation is a discipline that enjoys interesting links with a wide variety of disciplines, as a communicative activity. This accounts for why Akakuru (2003:95) sees translation as: "a dynamic activity which calls into play diverse but convergent competences". As a communicative activity, translation enjoys communicative and pragmatic indices as stated in Ndimele (1997:137), namely: illocutionary act (coherent sentence), the illocutionary force (the implicature of a coherent sentence) and the perlocutionary effect (anticipated response from the interlocutor). As a rule, a translated text must be so linguistically and pragmatically coherent that it will produce the same meaning in the target language (TL) and the same effect (psychological, pragmatic, sociological, ideological) in the target audience (TA). Diverse but convergent competences refer to the inter-disciplinary knowledge that a translator must have in order to do an effective work: lexicography, communication, linguistics etc.

The table below is a sample of some media mistranslated words and expressions from English to Igbo.

Table 1

English	**Igbo**
1. Obinna Kalu was reported to have failed the doping test.	Obinna Kalu ka Asiri na ona anu ogwu ike wee na aku bolu.
2. NAFDAC Officials have arrested one Mr. Tochi Luke for selling substandard drugs.	Ndi ulo oru NAFDAC akpochiela ofu onye ana akpo Mazi Tochi Luke maka ire ogwu ndi gbara uka.
3. The director of Nigeria satellite Bank has appeared before the EFCC for misappropriating the sum of ten million naira.	Onye isi nke ulo oba ego Nigeria Satellite Bank awuchaala n'ihu ulo oru EFCC maka izu ego di nde Naira iri.
4. It is reported that the student ran away as the teacher was trying to discipline him.	Asiri na nwata akwukwo ahu gbara oso oge onye nkuzi ahu nara acho inye ya ntaram ahuhu.
5. The chairman of Paragon Football Club has said that his team is fully ready for the match between his team and the KSF Football Club of Zambia, coming up on Sunday, the 22nd of July, 2017.	Onye isi nke otu egwuruegwu Paragon Football Club ekwulo na otu egwuruegwu ya ataala ochichi igosi ndi otu egwuruegwu KSF nke Zambia ihe nwoke ji kara ibe ya, na asoroma mpi egwuruegwu nke ha ga enwe n'ubochi Sunday bu abali iri abuo na abuo n'ime onwa asaa nke afo 2017.

A Comparative Study of the Translated News Items

1) Obinna Kalu /was reported/ to have failed the doping test.

   Obinna Kalu/ ka asiri na/ (ọna aṅụ ọgwụ-ike were aku bọlụ).

This part of the sentence we have put in parenthesis above, is a transpositional activity in translation. Here, the media translator moved from the implied form of the sentence to its implicature in Igbo, which we accept in our retranslation. However, the term: *ogwu ike* (hard drug) is where the disagreement and flaw lie. Although the media translator applied the technique of transposition correctly because for a footballer to fail doping test means the footballer takes doping drugs and this implicature makes the meaning of this news item more understandable to the native Igbo speaker than the following direct translation of that segment of the sentence. Note the transposition from infinitive (English) to Igbo past tense below:

….to have failed the doping test.

ọdara ule nke ọgwụ-ike

2) NAFDAC Officials/ have arrested/ one Tochi Luke /for selling/ sub-standard drugs.
   Ndi ụlọ ọrụ NAFDAC/ akpochiela/ otu onye ana akpo Tochi Luke/ maka ire/ ogwu ndi gbara uka (ogwu ndi gbara uka = expired drugs).

This is terminological inappropriateness.

3) The Director of Nigeria satellite Bank/ has appeared before the EFCC/ for/
   Onye isi nke Nigeria Satellite Bank/ awuchala na ihu ulo oru EFCC/ maka/
   misappropriating /the sum of /ten million naira.
   Izu/ ego di/ nde naira iri

Here, the media translator applied the technique of *etoffement* by adding *ụlọ ọru* (*office* to EFCC in order to make meaning clear. The wrong lies in translating misappropriation as *izu* (stealing).

4) It is reported that/ the student/ ran away/ as the teacher/ was trying/ to discipline him.
   Asiri na /nwata akwukwo ahu/ gbara oso/ oge onye nkuzi ahu/ nara acho/ inye ya ntaramahuhu.

Here, to discipline is translated as *inye ntaramahuhu* i.e punishment.

5) The Chairman of Paragon Football Club/ has said that/ his team/ is fully ready/ for
Onye isi nke otu egwuregwu Paragon Football Club/ ekwuola na/ otu egwuregwu ya/
the match between his team and the KSF Club /coming up on/ Sunday, /the 22nd of
ataala ọchichi igosi ndi otu egwuregwu KSF nke Zambia, Ihe nwoke ji kara Ibe ya
na asoroma mpi egwuegwu nke ha /ga enwe na /ubochi Uka/ bu abali iri abuo na
July/, 2017.
Abuo n'ime onwa asaa,/ nke afo 2017.

In this news item, "To be fully ready" is translated as *ita ochichi igosi…. Ihe nwoke ji kara ibe* (To show…. What makes a man superior to his fellow man). In this translation, we note as follows:

A direct expression in English: "To be fully ready", is re-expressed in Igbo with a figurative expression that says more than what the news writer says. This is over translation In sports, politics and military, these are often purposeful propaganda translations that are meant to incite, impress or to arouse the interest of agitators and so on. Over translated texts are unfaithful to source text messages.

Summary of Findings

From the above study, it is evident that terms constitute the major difficulty in translating news items from English to Igbo, since out of five (5) samples of mistranslated news items, four (4) are term translation errors.

Translating direct statements with figurative/indirect expressions can lead to over translation.

Commentary

Our position on the above texts in English and their Igbo versions are as follows:

1. In text (1) *Ogwu Ike* (hard drug) does not translate "doping" rather "*ogwu na enye ike*" does.
2. In text (2*) Ogwu ndi gbara uka* (expired drugs) is translated as "sub-standard drugs". Rather, sub-standard drugs are *Ogwu ndi ihe ejiri mee ha na ezugh oke.*

3. In text (3), misappropriation of fund is not *izu ego* (to steal or to defrand). "….for misappropriating the sum of ten million Naira should be translated as ….*maka iji nde Naira iri tinye na ihe na abugh ihe ejiri maka ya wee mawaputa ya.*
4. In text (4), to discipline a person is not *inye ntaram ahuhu* (punishment) rather it is *ime ka o muta ikpa ezi-agwa*.
5. The Igbo version of text (5) gives the text the illocutionary force of "to undo a person" rather than to compete keenly. The illocutionary force of the translation is able to produce the perlocutionary effect of violence, which has been the bane of African football matches. To be fully ready is *idi na ezi njikere.*

See Table (II) for a re-translation of the news items in table 1 (English)

Table Ii: (Re-Translation)

English	**Igbo**
1. Obinna Kalu was reported to have failed the doping test.	Obinna Kalu ka asiri na ona anu ogwu na enye ike wee na aku bolu.
2. NAFDAC Officials have arrested one Mr Tochi Luke for selling substandard drugs.	Ndi ulo oru NAFDAC akpochiela otu onye ana akpo Mazi Tochi Luke maka ire ogwui nd ihe ejiri mee ha na ezugh oke.
3. The Director of Nigeria Satellite Bank has appeared before the EFCC for misappropriating the sum of ten million naira.	Onye isi nke ulo oba ego Nigeria Satellite Bank awuchaala na ihu ulo oru EFCC maka iji ego di nde naira iri wee mee ihe na abugh maka ya ka ejiri wee mawaputa ya.
4. It is reported that the student ran away as the teacher was trying to discipline him.	Asiri na nwata akwukwo ahu gbara oso oge onye nkuzi ahu nara acho ime ya ka omuta ikpa ezi agwa.
5. The chairman of Paragon Football Club has said that his team is fully ready for the match between his team and the KSF Football Club of Zambia, coming up on Sunday, the 22nd of July, 2017.	Onye isi nke otu egwuruegwu Paragon Football Club ekwuola na otu egwuruegwu ya adila na ezi njikere maka asoroma mpi egwuegwu nke ha ndi otu KSF Football Club nke Zambia ga enwe n'ubochi Sunday bu abali iri abuo na abuo n'ime onwa asaa nke afo 2017.

The Place of Media Law in Media Translation

Uwaoma Uche (2012:25) defines Media laws as:

> *Legislations made by government in power at the Federal, State and Local government levels to control or regulate the activities of the media in a country; made specifically to protect the rights of citizens and ensure an orderly society.*

Media laws are enacted to protect the fundamental rights of members of the public and to ensure the maintenance of peace and order in the dissemination of information and ideas. For the purpose of this study, we are considering media law as it relates to translation in the print media, radio and television broadcasting: defamation: libel, slander and sedition.

Defamation: Middleton and Chamberrlain (1988) quoted in Uche (2012:26) defines defamation:

> *Defamation communications are communications that expose a person to hatred, ridicule, contempt or likely to damage any person in his profession or trade by an injury to his profession.*

This doctrine of law is built on the maxim: "A good name is better than silver and gold". The law holds that if the defamation is spoken (broadcast) in which case it is transient, the defamation is termed slander. But when it is written, in which case it is permanent, the act is termed libel.

Sedition: According to Fogam (quoted in Uwaoma Uche) (2012:27-28) "sedition is an attempt by word, deed or writing to promote public disorder or cause riot, rebellion or civil war".

Both defamation and sedition are media offenses in which an aggrieved party has the right to sue an offending media house to a court of competent jurisdiction. Media offences (defamation and sedition) do not only arise intra-lingually through news reporting, editing and so on. Such offences can also arise intra-lingually through translation. Imagine where a visiting football team gathers from a news broadcast in the indigenous language of her host club that they have fortified themselves to show the visiting club what makes a man greater than his fellow man (see table 1(5) above). Of course, the visiting club will also fortify itself against any form of hostility, and whatever the host club does would be deemed to have been done "to show them what makes a man greater than his fellow man", whereas it is a sensational statement caused by over translation.

Imagine another situation where a manager of a company used the budget meant for the purchase of a vehicle to train his staff on computer application as urgency of work required. When the company's account was audited it was found to be so, (a case of misappropriation of fund), but on coming home one evening he hears a news broadcast in his native language that he stole the said amount. This may prompt a legal action against the media house.

Recommendation

Given the above realities, we recommend that departments of translation studies in Nigerian Universities should organize periodic courses and seminar/workshops for our mass media workers. The Nigerian Institute of Journalism (NIJ) and departments of mass communication in Nigerian Universities and Polytechnics should include translation studies in their curriculum up to the final year. These will go a long way in solving translation problems in the Nigerian mass media.

Conclusion

Given the all important functions of the mass media and the multilingual nature of Nigeria with over two hundred and fifty ethnic languages whose vitality has been endangered by the global language, English; given also the level of illiteracy in the country, low quality of education where a school certificate holder or somebody who has acquired tertiary education cannot understand some compound statements made in English, broadcasting in Nigerian indigenous languages has become imperative. Again since news reporters and programme directors draft their broadcast items first in English, for reasons of better literacy, and usage, translating into indigenous languages also becomes imperative. Added to these reasons is the question of globalization which transfers information and cultures to other language-communities, both at international and local levels.

Translation itself is a discipline that interacts with other disciplines. As such, bilingualism, though a very important asset in the practice and theory of translation, does not make an individual a translator since the one is bound to go into word-for-word translation, which is error packed. Training in mass communication either cannot make one a translator in the media sector. For a person to be distinguished as a media translator in our opinion, he or she needs a formal training in translation or at least regular seminars and workshops on translation to acquaint himself/herself with relevant skills and theories that will guide him or her in the exercise of that duty. The place of media law and media ethics as it applies to translation cannot be overemphasized as media translation is part and parcel of the media major roles of information, education and entertainment.

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