

## A QUICK LOOK AT STRATEGIES IN THE TRANSLATION OF RADIO NEWS HEADLINES FROM THE IGBO PERSPECTIVE

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### **Abstract**

*Without headlines, a radio news bulletin is not complete, because the news headlines play a significant part in the news. It is the summary of a news story; hence it should be highly crafted and translated. Translation on its own is a complex process as it involves processing the source language texts and maintaining neutrality. The absence of trained media translators has not only affected the translation of media news stories from English to Igbo, but has affected radio listenership pattern. This study emerged from the researcher's observation that translating for the media is by nature a challenging task that requires professional skills, high competence and news background knowledge. This paper established that some features of the news headlines may require the Newmark's Communicative or Semantic translation approach, but in practical translation, both cannot be employed separately. This study provides information about translation and news headlines translation strategies. Finally, the research offered some guidelines for effective mass media translation in Nigeria. These guidelines include training of mass media translators and acquainting them with strategies, rules, and structures used in headlines translation. As a result, this study clarifies the fundamental ideas and useful aspects related to translating radio news headlines. In the end, this study's conclusions can aid in the creation of standards and best practices for translators working in the radio and journalism industries.*

**Keywords:** radio, news headlines, translation, strategies, Igbo

### **1.0 Introduction**

The 'Radio' is a product of Mass media which is recognized as a creation of technology. Ever since the act of writing was perfected, the new media technology has aided each age in human history. As a result of its technological linkage, mass media have over the years become an important as well as an indispensable aspect of human society because a society without the mass media is unthinkable. McQuail (2000), describes mass media as a means of communication that operates on a large scale, reaching and involving virtually everyone in a society to a greater or lesser degree. The world owes the mass media great gratitude for making social, worldwide interactions possible. Ndimele (2007), states that the concept "mass media" implies multiple channels for transmitting messages to a large segment of the population at the same time. 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. Mass media can also be described as the vehicle of mass communication which include print media such as newspapers, magazines, books and other printed materials; electronic media which are radio, television, films, satellite, cable TV, cinema etc. it must be noted that mass media is a significant force in modern and popular culture. This study focuses on translating radio news headlines and attempts to identify the suitable strategies a radio news translator might use to enhance effective communication.

Okunna & Omenugha (2012) say that the mass media perform a number of functions, which benefit the individual as a member of a society. They further disclosed that these functions range from serious informational and educational to lighter functions like entertainment. The mass media function in various capacities, but for the purpose of this study we shall discuss the role of the mass media in the society. Broadly speaking, there are four major roles which mass media play. Moemeka divided them into: Surveillance (information), Correlation (interpretation) Socialization (education or transmission of culture) and entertainment.

Surveillance: this is the provision of information about events the society to the society. This is the primary use of the mass media. Information in the fields of interests of the audience are presented through the mass media. The mass media inform the general public about Nigeria's next general

election, death of prominent personalities, stories about events and situations. They inform the public about local, national and international news.

**Correlation:** through this, the mass media provide a forum for debate and discussions. This function interprets the news in such a way to induce appropriate and necessary reactions. (Ebeze (2002) cited in Okunna, 2002) says that correlation includes prescribing what to do, how to do it and why it is necessary. He went on to say that correlation helps limit some of the undesirable consequences of surveillance.

**Socialization (Education).** The mass media increase social cohesion by educating the audience in accordance with their needs. According to Hassan (2013), the best purpose mass media can serve and the best way it can contribute to social progress is by educating the masses keeping in mind the real needs of the audience. Ebeze (2002) explains that the mass media can help unify society and increase social cohesion by upholding and teaching a broad base of common social norms, values and collective experiences.

**Entertainment:** the entertainment function of the mass media deals with providing amusement and relaxation. Some media theories like the play theory support that entertainment is the basic function of the media. It must be noted that these mass media functions are interrelated, as each of them has some elements of the consequences of the other function.

## **2.0 Definitions of a Headline (radio)**

Generally, radio news headline summarizes a story. Dor (2003) says that a headline is what creates a sort of communication between the reader and the meaning of the text. Headlines are important points of the main news stories that are read at the beginning of a news presentation. Radio news headlines are the major news items read or discussed in the bulletin. The editor puts them at the beginning for the purpose of spotlight and also at the end to sound a reminder on the prominence. Radio news headlines are not the same with newspaper/Magazine headlines, but these days some radio news editors copy stories and headlines verbatim from newspapers and news agencies. As often, the language used by these print media are not suitable for radio news headlines. Newspaper Headlines can also count on ambiguity to arouse the interest of the reader; however, ambiguity will be removed in the lead and main story (Bell 1998). According to Ngwuoke (2019), headlines are like bribe; they are the windows to a news story, because headlines are what the listener would hear first which would make him to glue to his radio. A radio news headline should be convincing, but without ambiguity and sensationalism.

Writing radio news headlines is an art that should not be left in the hands of amateur news editors. Writing or casting headlines is an art and difficult one that requires professionalism. An editor needs a lot of creativity and mastery of the language in order to write a suitable radio news headline. A radio news headline should be simple but not with too many explanatory words. They should peak the listeners interest. Fang (1991) notes that in radio style of writing stipulates that news stories be told/written in familiar words combined into sentences, which run at comfortable lengths in a style known as 'conversational.'

### **2.1 Functions of radio headlines:**

Radio news headlines are short news stories that radio stations broadcast to inform listeners about the newest news and current events. It is also called the major news or highlights of a news bulletin. Headlines aim to draw readers in and give them the important details in an easy to remember manner. Radio news headlines can be summarized to be performing the following functions

- a. To summarize the news item.
- b. To grade the prominence of news stories.
- c. To catch the listener's attention/interest

### **2.2 Features of News Headlines**

Here are some unique features of a headline which provides listeners with up-to-date information about important news stories. Since headlines are also called main points, highlights, top stories, it is important

to look at few samples of radio news headlines differentiating them from that of the print media – Newspaper and Magazine.

**2.2.1 The Lexical Features of News Headlines.**

Radio headlines may accept some Midget words, especially nouns, but mostly by professional radio news editors who can creatively used them, but sometimes they become difficult for translators.

Print (Newspaper/Magazine)	Electronics (Radio)
Reps <i>probe</i> NDDC	House of Representatives <i>probes</i> Niger Delta Development Commission

Vague words are not encouraged in radio news headlines. Radio news headlines are always simple with words which are in everyday spoken vocabulary.

Print (Newspaper/Magazine)	Electronics (Radio)
Abuja-Kaduna train attack: lead negotiator between bandits, kidnapped passengers, Mamu, arrested by Egyptian Police	lead negotiator between bandits and victims of Abuja-Kaduna train attack, Mr Mamu arrested by Egyptian police.
FG IFAD VCD Programme begins data collection over female farmers in Anambra	Federal government Agricultural programme begins data collection of female farmers in Anambra

Abbreviations (or acronyms) which are popular tools in headlines casting in the print media are also rarely used in radio news headlines casting. Media scholars insist that for an abbreviation to be used in a radio headline, it must be one which the listeners are familiar with.

Print (Newspaper/Magazine)	Electronics (Radio)
Presidency defends <i>DSS</i> over Sowore Anambra fifth in <i>HIV</i> transmission in Nigeria <i>CBN</i> slashes <i>ATM</i> withdrawal fee. *** <i>DR</i> Congo in election turmoil	Presidency defends <i>DSS</i> over Sowore Anambra fifth in <i>HIV</i> transmission in Nigeria <i>CBN</i> slashes <i>ATM</i> withdrawal fee. *** <i>Democratic Republic of Congo</i> <i>witnesses election crisis</i>

**2.2.2 The Grammatical Features of News Headlines.**

In English news headlines, it is common to omit certain words like articles, prepositions, conjunctions and pronouns, but radio news headlines sometimes do not omit prepositions and conjunctions to avoid vagueness. Radio news headlines use simple sentences that last in the memory of the listener long after the news broadcast. Radio is immediacy, uses active and present tense for emphasis so that they will appear to the listener to be happening now (immediacy).

Print (Newspaper/Magazine)	Electronics (Radio)
Ten Die in Ondo Church attack 7 injured in Onitsha gas explosion Police, kidnappers in gun duel in Anambra	Ten People Die in Ondo Church attack Seven people injured in Onitsha gas explosion Police engage kidnappers gun fire exchange in Anambra state

**2.2.3 The Rhetorical Features of News Headlines.**

Rhetorical devices such as metaphor, rhyme, pun, alliteration, repetition, question sentences etc. are used for the readers enjoyment, but radio news headlines have no room for such, although chances of using any of the rhetoric are high.

Newspaper headline- *Subsidy: who is sure of sure-P?* To recast this headline for radio, we may have: *Nigerians express doubt over Subsidy reinvestment Programme. Nigerians unsure of Subsidy reinvestment Programme's success.*

#### 2.2.4 Cultural Features of Radio News Headlines.

Every language is imbued with culture. Radio news headlines also have headlines with foreign or western cultural elements. For a radio news translator in Nigeria, such cultural elements could come from English idioms and allusions, Nigerian language or a Nigerian colloquial.

Examples:

Miracle in *Coal City* as pastor heals two mad men. Coal city is a Nigerian colloquial for Enugu, known for its mineral resources-coal. The trained media translator would use 'Enugu.'

Federal government declares *Amotekun* illegal. Amotekun means Leopard in Yoruba language, and has been used as a name for the south western Geopolitical zone's vigilante group.

President Tinubu meets service chiefs at state house over *prison break*. Prison break means 'jail break', which means an escape from prison through unofficial or illegal means. The term became popular after release of the movie-*Prison Break* in 2006. Suspected ritual killers meet *waterloo* in Kwara state. Waterloo means to experience final and notable defeat. Originated from a battle fought at Waterloo, Belgium on June 18, 1815, resulting in the final defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte.

### 3.0 Translation and Concept of Radio Translation

Translation can be defined as the act of reproducing information in one language (the source language), into another (the target language), while maintaining the meaning, beauty and idea of the original language. Neubert & Shreve (1992) posit that translation is a difficult task of pulling a text from its natural surroundings and have it recreated in an alien linguistic and cultural setting. It is not simply an act of faithful reproduction, rather, a deliberate and unconscious act of selection, assemblage, structuration and fabrication – and even, in some cases of falsification, refusal of information, counterfeiting, and creating of secret codes. Akakuru (2003:95) sees translation as: "a dynamic activity which calls into play diverse but convergent competences". Lauscher (2000) posits that translation evaluation is determined by factors related to the target culture rather than the source text. Snell-Hornby (2019) says translation is the process of interlingual communication, where a text produced in one language is reproduced in another language, keeping in mind the cultural and linguistic nuances to ensure effective communication.

Radio on the other hand is a source of information distributed by wired and wireless services. it usually offers informative, educative and entertaining contents of general and special interest. Radio translation is like writing for radio which demands a short, accurate and simple production. Radio translation is a type of translation through which news and programmes are translated and broadcast to the audience for communication purpose. Radio translators go through complex processes in translating a news headline. Radio translation involves the process of translating spoken content or written content from one language to another is during a radio broadcast. This can be done through consecutive interpretation, in which the translator hears or reads a portion of the original audio and then verbally translates it or it can be done through simultaneous interpretation, in which the translator speaks the translated version while listening to the original audio. Radio translation makes broadcasts accessible to multilingual audiences by facilitating the exchange of information and entertainment across linguistic barriers. It also entails translating grammar, idioms, linguistic components, and cultural allusions from the source language to the target language during broadcasting. A novice translator who is not conversant with news system or current happenings will always make a mess of his copy which in most cases result to misinformation. For instance, a translator who is neither knowledgeable nor update with current happenings will continue to produce inaccurate translation of news headlines, like referring DR Congo as Doctor Congo. Aspinall (1971), explains:

Above all, radio writing is writing for the spoken word, and everyday speech should be the guide to the words we use and the manner we use them. In talking with one another we use familiar words. We assemble what we have to say in short phrases and seldom

put ideas together in the kind of lengthy paragraphs which we may write. We put forward our ideas directly, not cluttered with small details nor involved in rambling parenthesis”.

In support of the skills required in writing for the radio, Ndukwe (2013), says:

The radio translator and the translator of a general text receive texts in the form of written material but they do not process the message for the same target audience. Whereas the radio translator produces texts for the ear (the listener), the translator handling an ordinary general text does the same thing for the eye (the reader). It then follows that in translating for the radio, oral mode of expression is paramount.

When news or headlines are read, they are broadcast once or twice depending on the nature of the production, news bulletin or house style of the station. If the listeners have to think twice or deep to understand the translated headlines, then the information is lost.

### 3.1 Translation Strategies

Strategy can be seen as a plan for a goal. It can also be said to be a long term steps and guide used to achieve a specific outcome. Generally speaking, a news translator applies a translation strategy when he or she encounters a problem in the news translation.

According to Williams and Chesterman (2002) some contextual factors can affect the content of translated material. They are:

- Source-text variables which include text style, format, structural and semantic aspects, text type, and the source language itself.
- Target-language variables including language-specific structural and rhetorical constraints and comparable non-translated texts in the target language.
- Task variables that encompass production factors such as the purpose and type of the translation, deadline, reference material available, computer programs used, and relations with the client.
- Translator variables including degree of professional experience, emotional attitude to the task, male or female, and translating into or out of mother tongue.
- Socio-cultural variables that involve norms, cultural values, ideologies, and status of the languages concerned.
- Reception variables encompassing client's reactions, critics' reviews, readers' responses, and quality assessments”.

Practically every radio station in south east of Nigeria has segments for Igbo news. While few private stations broadcast only once, others especially government owned radio stations broadcast twice in a day. Some have special hour to give only news headlines as the major stories are broadcast in subsequent bulletin. For someone to be a professional translator at a radio station the person also needs to have journalistic and editorial competence. As Nida (1975) clearly pointed out, no two languages can have the exact identical systems of structural organizations.

### 3.2 Application of Translation Principles on Radio

Baker (2011) highlighted several approaches that professional translators have used to address translation which Owji (2013) described as the taxonomy of Baker. Many translation scholars have also proposed some strategies also known as principles or techniques of handling the factors that affect the content of translated material. Mona Baker has 7 strategies. Here are some examples. While (a) is the English news headline, (b) is the suitable translation of it.

1. **Translation by a more general word:** here the headline news translator may find a general word in the target language as equivalence. This is usually the most common strategy for radio news translator to save time and avoid ambiguity on the listeners. Baker believes this works appropriately for almost every language.
  - a. Seven people die in helicopter mishap

b. Mmadu asaa nwuru n'ihe mberede *ugboelu*. Here, *Ugboelu* is more general than *ugboelu nshiko* - Helicopter.

a. Fire razes lock up market in Benin

b. Oku agbapiala oma ahia na Benin. *oma ahia* is a general name for markets, irrespective of being lock up or open air.

2. **Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word:** Here, words with complex meaning are translated into more neutral and less expensive words.

Example:

a. Anambra state government employs adhoc teachers. Goomenti Anambra steti eweela ndi nkuzi *nchere oge* n'oru. The Latin phrase *adhoc* has been translated into the Igbo language to mean temporal-*nchere oge* (for the time being) without any flavour of vagueness.

3. **Translation by cultural substitution:** This strategy involves replacing a culture specific item with a target language item in order to have a familiar impact on the target listener, and make translated text more natural and understandable.

Examples:

a. Europe records hottest summer ever

b. Yurop ezutala *oge okochi* kasi kpoo oku

*Okochi* is the closest equivalent of summer in the Igbo language. Baker (1992) states that the major advantage of this strategy when adopted by the translator is that it gives the target audience something they are familiar with.

a. Prices of building materials skyrockets

b. Onu ahia ngwongwo eji aru ulo *arigopula n'elu oji*.

News headlines bear cultural characteristics of a certain country or nation. They are bound with western cultural features. *Skyrockets* verbal form of the noun *skyrocket* -an object that rises quickly into the sky is best replaced with the Igbo adage of *n'elu oji* (on top of the iroko tree-a popular giant tree).

4. **Translation using a loan word or loan word plus explanation:** This act is popular among radio news translators, but they always over use it. As the name suggests, it occurs when the target language loans a word from the source language and/or accompanied with an explanation. This is used for dealing with culture specific items, modern concepts and buzz words.

**Example**

a. Onitsha tomato dealers decry *excessive taxation*

b. Ndi na-ere tomato n'Onicha na-akwa ariri banyere *oke utu isi ha na-atu*

a. Nigerian university students demand sack of *education minister*

b. Umwakwukwo chorọ ka achuọ *Minista na-ahu maka mmuta akwukwo/Minista mmuta akwukwo*

a. CBN closes bank accounts of various groups

b. *Obaego Izugbe Naijiria, CBN emechiela akpaego otu di iche iche*

In full news translation, this explanation of loan words should be used at first mention while the word should be used on its own in the next mention. This explanation needs to be done once to avoid distracting or boring the listener with lengthy explanations.

5. **Translation by paraphrasing using a related word:** Translation by paraphrasing has the primary benefit of achieving a high degree of precision in defining the meaning of a word or concept that is difficult to translate, regardless of whether related or unrelated words are used. This occurs when a concept expressed by the source item is lexicalised in the target language but presented in a different form. Paraphrasing is also useful in addressing the problem of semantically complex words. Baker (2006) says that "the paraphrase may be based on modifying a superordinate or simply on unpacking the meaning of the source item, particularly if the item in question is semantically complex".

7. **Translation by omission:** One would wonder why a translator should omit words especially news items. That is sacrilege! As funny as it may sound, some scholars believe this is a solution to certain

problems of translation when properly used. Here, a word or an expression is not necessary to be mentioned as it distracts the listener. Translators can simply omit the item or the expression in a creative and professional manner without distorting the information.

Example:

a. West African Examination Council releases result of May/June senior school certificate exam

b. Kaunsi na-ahụ maka ule West Africa ewepụtala mputara ule nke onwa Mee/Jun

Here, the translator dropped senior school certificate exam since the exam is only meant for senior school students. Moreover, translating Senior school certificate exam means...*Ule asambodo maka ndi no n'ogo di elu n'uloakwukwo.*

a. Federal government drags striking university lecturers to *industrial arbitration court* in Abuja

b. Gọmentị etiti akpupụla ndi nkuzi mahadum no abubu oru n'uloikpe di n'Abuja. *Arbitration court* was omitted in order not to over translate and bore the listener.

Al-Falahi maintained that radio news translators must adopt specific methods to achieve an accurate translation of headlines. Moreover, it is important to read the whole piece of news before attempting to translate the headline, because sometimes Igbo translation of news headlines usually require more details .

### 3.3 A Quick Look at Newmark's Communicative and Semantic Translation Approaches.

Peter Newmark developed two modes of translation, namely, Communicative Translation and Semantic Translation, which this research proposes and believes is more practice, encompassing and general in radio news headlines translation.

#### 3.3.1 Communicative Translation

Newmark (2001) states that communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the listeners of the original. He enumerated that Communicative translation has a target language bias; it is free and idiomatic. On this, since radio is very dynamic as it tries to reach a very vast audience of different background, the listeners need simplified, but accurate translation. Newmark notes that Communicative translation attempts to make the listening process easier for the Igbo news listener who does not anticipate difficulties, and would expect a generous transfer of foreign elements into his own culture as well as his language where necessary. Communicative translation relates to the sentence. In this method of translation, the radio translator gives himself the right to add or remove certain lexical items in order to make the news headlines clear to the listener. In the communicative approach, the translator aims to convey the message effectively and efficiently, considering the target audience's language proficiency and needs. This involves ensuring coherence, clarity, and naturalness in the translation, as well as preserving the original intent of the source text.

#### 3.3.2 Semantic Translation

Semantic translation basically centres around the message rather than on its effect or as the translation tends to be more complex and more detailed, in most cases radio news translators who often use this always over translate. Again, Newmark explains that Semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original. Semantic translation has a source language bias; It is understandable but remains with the original culture. The semantic approach emphasizes capturing the meaning and nuances of the source text in the target language. Translators analyze the semantic elements such as the connotation, denotation, and cultural references used in the source text, and then find equivalent expressions or phrases in the target language that convey the same or similar meaning.

From the above explanations, Communicative Translation for radio focuses on the comprehension and response of target language listeners, while Semantic Translation centers around the semantic content of the source language texts. The language of radio news headlines presents unique characteristics on the lexical, grammatical, with rhetorical and cultural levels being rare.

#### 4.0 Findings and Conclusion

As the research has demonstrated, news headlines are short, concise, and eye-catching titles printed above news reports. They have very unique features that most translators find difficult to translate. The paper explains those features with examples in a comprehensive and simple while identifying some techniques that help in comprehending headlines; hence, giving the accurate translation for them. First, it was discovered that the most popular method for translating Igbo radio news headlines was direct translation. This strategy entails translating the headline's words and phrases exactly, without modification. This may be explained by the need to uphold its original meaning and guarantee precision in the information presented. However, it was also noted that occasionally, adaption was used while translating the headlines. This strategy entailed changing a few headline components to better fit the Igbo language and cultural setting. One may argue that adaptation is an essential strategy for getting the desired message out to the Igbo-speaking audience. Furthermore, it was discovered that translating radio news headlines into Igbo involved the use of simplification. Condensing the information in the headline to make it more succinct and easily comprehensible for the reader was the act of simplification. This strategy is crucial in radio transmission, where rapid and effective information delivery is required. This study shows that accuracy, clarity, and cultural relevance were given top priority when translating radio news headlines into Igbo. Key tactics that were noted were direct translation, modification, simplification, cultural replacement, and preserving the tone and style. For media workers and translators involved in Igbo radio news translation, these findings offer insightful information. This paper also makes an attempt to apply Newmark's CT and ST theory to news headlines translation. In this way, the translation practice is guided by theory and the quality of the translated news headlines can be improved. It explains that communicative and semantic approach combined aims to produce translations that effectively convey the intended message while also considering the linguistic and cultural aspects of both the source and target languages. By doing so, it ensures that the translated text is coherent, accurate, and appropriate for the target audience. Since news headlines summarizes the news item, grades the prominence of news stories and catches the listener's attention, mass media translators should be trained and acquainted with journalistic and editorial competency, translation strategies, rules, and structures used in mass media translation.

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