

The Null Horizons of Word-For-Word in Sci-Tech Translation: A Study of *Bilingual Glossaries of Automobile Terms*

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Abstract

With the age long invasion of African local cultures by Western technological inventions, translating scientific-technical texts into local languages became imperative. However, terms for coding those western inventions in our local languages have not fully evolved, due mainly to the linguistic and cultural divergences between the western languages and African languages, the former, of wider diffusion than the latter. Colonization of African countries by the West did not help matters, as it entailed setbacks to efforts geared towards asserting the authenticity of African linguistic and cultural identities across nations of the continent, occasioned by suppressive colonial administrative policies. This situation has serious implications for interactions between the illiterate and literate population in contact with the use of western technological inventions at different levels of their uses in Nigeria. Our survey of the Automobile Industry, South-East of Nigeria, reveals some snags arising from divergences between Igbo and English stemming from the dearth or paucity of equivalent terms in Igbo for the expression of many automobile concepts existing in English. This naturally poses a great obstacle to effective communication between English speakers and the great percentage of the Igbo youth population currently engaged in the industry as mechanics, who are not proficient in English. The trend thus underscores the need for deep-rooted Igbo Terminological researches in the automobile industry as a tool for translation, on one hand, interpreting and orientation of the illiterate Igbo masses in the industry, on the other hand. On the strength of the foregoing, this paper, outlines the limits of the literal translation (word- for- word translation) technique in the Igbo equivalent definitions of some English Automobile Terms in a Bilingual Glossary of Automobile Terms. The said limits are hereby analyzed through a descriptive approach.

Keywords: Null Horizons, Word-for-word, Sci-tech Translation, Automobile Terms, Bilingual Glossaries, Technological Inventions

Introduction

The pivotal role of translation as a language barrier breaker (Ajunwa, 2014:9) in Nigeria's march towards scientific and technological advancement through the spread of scientific and technological information, has been sustained over the years by the tool of **Terminology**, defined in *Oxford Advanced Learner's English Dictionary* as " a system of words used to name things in a particular discipline". It is however evident that there has scarcely been equivalent terms in Nigerian native languages to those of English in various fields of Science and Technology. This is partly a result of the scarcity of bilingual glossaries of terms in the two-in-one field of translation involving Nigerian local languages. It is on that note that our recent research adventure into terminology, yielding a Bilingual-English/Igbo Glossary of Automobile Terms may be seen as a reference of contribution to bridging the gap.

The problem of translation has rightly been observed by Okeke (1997) as co-terminus with the contentious issue of terminology or register, as translation, according to Anyaehie (1996) must be meaning preserving. It is pertinent to note that linguistic and cultural affinity presents a major challenge in translating scientific and technological information from English to any of the three major Nigerian local languages- Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa. Mbah (1997) further observes: "This proviso of meaning-preservation between the original and the translated texts in lieu of diverging world-view, scientific and technological developments across nations, makes translation a complex but fascinating linguistic endeavour".

Conceptual Framework

Before we proceed, it is imperative to formally conceptualize the key terms driving our discourse, viz: **Sci-tech Translation**: This constitutes one of the three main domains or branches of translation studies. It involves the translation of scientific and technical texts in all the fields of science and technology. Scientific-Technical translation is the domain that underscores the importance of translation as an instrument for the dissemination of scientific and technological information, to which the world largely owes its industrial advancement. Ajunwa (2014:141) does not agree less with this view, and thus reports:

In recent times, scientific/technical translation has come to assume a role of great importance with the rapid industrialization of many countries of the world. The rapid industrialization owes much to the translation from one language into another of research findings and reports in all the branches of science and technology, which has immensely facilitated the work of scientists in their research activities, discoveries and inventions.

Word-for-word Translation

Also known as literal translation, word-for-word translation is the word-for-word rendering of complete target language sentences. Literal translation is more likely going to occur in simple sentence types, in which case, a simple sentence contains only one finite verb and so gives only one idea. Examples:

French: Il **est** grand.

Où **sont**-elles?

English: He **is** tall.

Where **are** they?

Experience has shown that generally, the recourse to literal translation should be the last option in translation, as it can only bring solution to some expressions that cannot translate otherwise. In principle, however, literal translation is a unique solution, receivable and complete in itself. Many of its examples can be seen in translations carried out between languages of the same family and most especially, the same culture. Inyang (2015:50) sustains the view that "If a certain number of literal translation features between French and English, it is because metalinguistic conceptions can equally imply some physical coexistences." (Our Translation)

Glossary of Automobile Terms

By this we mean a list of definitions of terms and concepts related to automobiles including their parts, operations, and manufacture, as well as automotive engineering, auto repair and the automotive industry in general.

A good number of commendable efforts have been made in the recent past by scholars, including one among us, to wade into the ocean of trans-cultural waters by translating scientific texts into Igbo, leaving out texts in technology to keep yearning for attention. Such works as "Studies in Terminology: a Bilingual Glossary of Thirty Terms in Epidemiology" (English-Igbo) by Iwunze et al. (2018), Towards checking HIV/AIDS- related Stigma and Discrimination in Africa: A French Version of Relevant Igbo/English Proverbs" by Iwunze and Eke (2013) and "Towards the Development of Igbo Health Terminology: Pediatrics" by Iwunze and Cookey (2006) could be sampled among others that lend credence to the above claim. It is on the above premise that we ventured into again into technology-based terminology project, with a Bilingual (English-Igbo) Glossary of Automobile Terms, as the product, a likely tool of scientific-technical translations connected with the industry, going forward. That the automobile industry is one field of the scientific- technical domain of translation in dire need of Bilingual Glossaries involving English and Nigerian indigenous Languages, most especially, Igbo, is common knowledge. A huge percentage of the Igbo youth population have joined the automobile industry, mostly as apprentices-rendering their services to clients at mechanic workshops. This has been the outcome of the harsh economic climate in Nigeria that has lingered for many years, so much so that many youths drop out of school, and many graduates and school certificate holders resort to learning trades, in the face of the high degree of unemployment in the country.

Thus, to promote understanding, healthy and result- oriented interaction between all such stakeholders at all levels of engagement with clients in the industry, the need to secure standard English-Igbo Glossaries of terms in the industry cannot be overemphasized. None of the few available bilingual dictionaries (English-Igbo) within our reach, has focused exclusively on any specialized area of technology. Their scopes have also been too general and their contents inexhaustive, and yet, inundated with contextual inadequacies in their use of terms. Depending on such quality of books for expressions in Igbo in specialized areas in this era of globalization and rapid technological advancement is both unrealistic and outdated.

Null Horizons: This term made up of two words-"Null" and "Horizons" can be conceptualized in that order, featuring:

Null, meaning: of no legal validity, force or effect, nothing. "As used in the phrase "null and void", "Null" refers to something that binds none or is incapable of giving rise to any rights or duties under any circumstances" (Legal-dictionary-the free dictionary. com>...)

Horizons: This is defined as 1. "Something that might be attained (www.meriam-webster.com>horizons).

2. The range of interest or activity that can be anticipated. The word "Horizon" thus has a synonym in the word "view". (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English). Null horizons can thus be defined as horizons, areas, instances, or situations of no effect, possibility, validity, or and/ or meaning.

Contextually, our discourse is showcasing, analyzing and addressing cases where literal or word-for-word translation of some terms or concepts in the definitions of some English Automobile Terms into Igbo in our glossary of repeated mention will not convey effective meanings. These cases largely stem from snags arising from divergences between the two languages and cultures (English-and Igbo) in contact.

Technological Inventions: An invention is a machine, device or system that has been invented by someone. The word “technological”, an English adjective, on the other hand, is defined in Collins Dictionary as : 1. “of or having to do with technology”. 2. “due to developments in technology resulting from technical progress in the use of machinery and automation in industry, agriculture, etc”. (www.collinsdictionary.com) Technology itself implies the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry. Collins dictionary defines it as “methods, systems and devices which are the result of scientific knowledge being used for practical purposes”. Technological inventions thus refers to inventions-machines, systems or devices that came into being due to developments in technology; resulting from the technical progress in the use of machinery and automation in industry, agriculture, etc.

Culture, Translation and Terminology: Culture, according to Cole (2024) “is a term that refers to a large and diverse set of mostly intangible aspects of social life. According to sociologists, culture consists of the values, beliefs, systems of language, communication and practices that people share in common and that can be used to define them as a collective” (Cole, 2014 www.thought.com). Sociology Dictionary defines culture as consisting “of patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behaviour, acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (ie, historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values”. (sociologydictionary.org).

Culture thus influences translation, entailing different ways of expressing the same message or idea across different groups of people and communities of the world. Consequent upon the fact that humanity is not exposed to the same ecological conditions, the way people perceive the world varies. Thus, even when different people perceive the same thing, their interpretations about what they see differ.(Mbah, 1997)

There are such other contentions about language and cultural realities as differences in the structures of different languages, being responsible for the differences in the worldview of the speaker of the various languages.

We are of the view that terminology in local African languages should as much as possible be tooled towards relating the separate identities or measures of perpetual cognitive effects which are different from language to language and where this is obviously impossible, the recourse to borrowing and retaining especially these terms that have gained universal acceptance is welcome. Language is a symbol of cultural identity. According to Robin (1976), “ Every language must become adequate to the needs and environments of the speakers at any time, and vocabularies, therefore vary from place to place and from time to time in their relative richness or poverty of lexical item in different semantic ranges’ (348)

Literal (word-for Word) Translation in Scientific Technical Translation: Limitations

As earlier stated, literal translation also known as “word-for-word translation” refers to the presentation of a complete word-for-word translation of a source language sentence or text into the target language. For emphasis: According to “Literal translation is more likely going to occur if the sentence is of the simple type. In this case, the simple sentence must contain only one finite verb and so gives only one idea”(Ajunwa, 2014:51). Ordinarily, the language of scientific-technical texts, compared with the literary language of literary texts, is totally devoid of expressions such as figures of speech, idioms and proverbs, which are susceptible to multiple interpretations. Scientific- technical texts are usually logical, unequivocal in language, impersonal, precise, clear, objective and devoid of flowery expressions. Though the implication of the above characteristics is that literal translation accords easier with scientific-technical texts, it generally has very limited practical application in translation operations. Our present engagement seeks to reveal that this stems from the cultural divergences in the two languages in contact. Robin (1976) further observes:

...While it is reasonable to assert that everything can ultimately be expressed in every living language as the need arises, languages differ in the way in which they divide up and lexically categorize the world of human experience, so that translation can seldom be satisfactorily carried out on a word for word basis. Also, cultural divergences do exist between languages. Because of these problems the literal translation of some source language sentences will obviously result either in meaninglessness or total misconception.

From the foregoing we can easily deduce that 1. Literal translation rarely achieves the goal of translation of literary texts 2. It is not befitting of the translation of long/complex sentences 3. There is a brighter chance of literal

translation rightly occurring in the translation of scientific- technical texts than literary and pragmatic or general texts. 4. There are cases in scientific-technical translation wherein literal translation can result in meaninglessness or total misconception.

An Overview of or corpus of Terms for the Study: Bilingual Glossaries of Automobile Terms (English-Igbo)

This collection of Automobile Terms is, when eventually published envisioned to be an effective tool for breaking English Language barriers to effective communication in the automobile industry, south-east of Nigeria. To mobilize the Igbo youth and adult population for active participation in the automobile industry, especially the illiterate, through electronic and other relevant information media outlets, production of English-Igbo Glossaries of Automobile terms is viewed generally as a more promising alternative. This is especially because “it is easier and quicker to handle glossaries... than to handle dictionaries” (Eke, C.U, 1994). The glossary contains a total of 607 (six hundred and seven) automobile terms well defined in both the source language (English) and the target language (Igbo).

It is a product of deep-rooted studies in translation and terminology featuring automobile Terms randomly selected from various specialized and non specialized literature , including dictionaries, translation textbooks and journal articles.. From Ajunwa (2014)’s A textbook of translation: Theory and practice, to Anyaehie’s “Research in Terminology: The science, the practice and the product”, up to Sado’s “Translation and terminological Development in Nigerian Languages: The Hsekiri Experience” and Sager’s “Terminology” as published in Routledge Encyclopedia of translation studies (2001), we can count over fifteen works in Translation and Terminology consulted to give the glossary a sound footing, not forgetting *Alphabetical Glossary of Automobile Terms* (<https://www.edumunds.com>glossary>) and other online forums contributory to the project.

It is important at this juncture to also underscore the fact that Terminology is a basic tool of translation as a language barrier breaker, which has sustained the pivotal role it plays in Nigeria’s march towards scientific and technological advancement-through the spread of scientific and technological information. Paucity of terms in igbo in the various fields of science and technology equivalent to those in English and the inadequacy of terminological researches yielding bilingual (English-Igbo) Glossaries of terms in the two arrears are also highlighted. This of course has a concomitant effect of difficulty in actualizing translation practices and implementing translation training programmes with Nigerian native languages (focused on science and technology). It also inhibits and derails communication in igbo related to science and technology. The automobile industry thus featured as one of the fields of science and technology in due and urgent need of bilingual (English-Igbo) Glossaries of related terms finds its justification in the fact that majority of the igbo illiterate and semi-illiterate youth population are currently engaged in the industry. This is not unconnected with the prevailing harsh economic climate in Nigeria, spanning decades, as quite a large number of them yearly drop out of schools and focus on apprenticeship in various professional skills and trades, due to the inability of their parents and guardians to afford the high financial costs of sponsoring them through schools. This trend is manifest at all the three tiers of education in Nigeria, where successive government policies have apparently favoured the collapse of public institutions and indiscriminate floating (proliferation) of private schools that charge exorbitant school fees-beyond the reach of the poor masses. To be able to express themselves freely at the different levels of contact in the industry in igbo-the language they understand better, terms related to the industry need to find their equivalents in igbo, even in form of bilingual glossaries.

This in turn would serve as a tool for mass mobilization and orientation in the hands of the related governmental and non governmental agencies in the industry through the media, in the interest of all stakeholders in the industry in contact with such class of the Igbo population. Rightly put, the project when published is not intended to be an exhaustive igbo lexicography in the industry as its scope covers terms only related to maintenance and operations of motor vehicles.

The contribution to knowledge of the terminology project being processed may be viewed in the light that it is a pointer to further studies, such as the present undertaking.

The table below points to cases wherein it is impossible to achieve faithfulness in translation in the definitions of some terms in the book under review, from the source language-English to the target language –Igbo.

English Term	Igbo Equivalent	English Definition	Igbo Equivalent Definition
1. Air sleeve	Mkpuchi Ikuku	Large diameters flexible tuck connecting the air inlets and outlets to the air conditioning	Nnukwu opi njikọ oghere mbata na opupụ ikuku na igwe ntụoyi, bụ nke kwụ ziziriri n'etiti nke e nwekwara ike ipiaji apiaji.

A literal (word-for-word) Igbo translation of the above English definitions, thus: “Buru akara ziziriri nkewa etiti nwere ike ipiaji apiaji na-ejikọ ahụ ikuku ndị mbata na opupụ na ahu ikuku nhazi onodụ”, would have made no sense in Igbo. It is important to note that translation of all text types demands going beyond the tunes and dictates of words to achieve intended equivalent meaning of the source language text in the target language, as closest to it as possible, implying that there would be a little loss of information in the process, provided it is of no injurious effect on the message intended and the receptive audience targeted.

The dearth of ready equivalent terms in igbo to those of English in science and technology accounts for recourse to circumlocution (a round-about expression) in translating the accompanying expressions definite of the terms in question, as could be seen in the example above.

English term	Igbo equivalent	English definition	Igbo equivalent definition
2. Body shape	Ođidị ahụ ugboala	Brief description of the exterior appearance of a vehicle without reference to its mechanical definitions.	Obere ngosị eluahụ nke na-agbasaghị ime nkowa banyere igweorụ ya.

Translated literally as nkenke nkowa nke ahụ nọ na mputa nke otu ugboala n'arutughị aka na ya banyere orụ igweorụ nkowa”, the meaning of the source language definition would equally have been lost in the target language. The technique of modulation is preferred in the target language rendition of the word “description”, as “Ngosi”. Much as it could contextually also yield to a literal translation as “Nkowa”, the word “ngosi” (showing) makes it more precise in oral Igbo culture as “Description” connoting 1. “The act of describing something” 2. “a statement that represents something in words” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary)

3	Coolant	Njuoyi	Liquid, usually consisting of water, glycol and some additives, which is circulated between the water chambers of the engine block and the radiator to remove the unused calories from combustion, in the case of a liquid-cooled engine	Akurungwa na-eme ka okpomoku mmiri obi ugboala juru.
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The ultimate quest for meaning explains the attempt to inject equivalent descriptive and functional terms in the igbo rendition, jettisoning much of the lexical items used to define the term in English. It is thus enough to have the word “coolant” as that which cools the engine in the context of automobiles “... na-eme ka okpomoku mmiri obi ugboala juru”, thus justifying the translation of all lexical items that characterize the definition of the term in the same language as “Akurungwa” (the part of the vehicle that ...) in the target language.

4	Draw bar pull	Okporoigwe ndokpuru	Traction force measured with a dynamometer placed between a towing vehicle and its trailer indicating the tractor’s capabilities	Okporoigwe ugboala ji-akpu ibe ya, nke otutu ogo ike oru ya, e jiri dynanometer mee putara ihe, burukwa nke na-anọ n'etiti ugboala ahụ na nke okpu n'azu.
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A word-or-word translation of the above text into igbo would have yielded something like: “okpukpu ike a turu otutu jiri out dayinamomita e dobere n'etiti otu okpukpu ugboala na nke ya nke okpu na-egosi ahụ nke nka ahụ na-akpu ike”. The above rendition does not convey the definition of the motor part at all to the igbo audience, it does not communicate. Our translation shows a symbolic modulation of the word “force” with the word “okporoigwe” (iron bar) showing “strength” while the English noun, “pull” is transposed into an igbo verb “...akpu” (pulls).

5.	Engine Unit	Ukwu ogbarangwa oru obi ugboala	Set of assembled parts, including a motor and its auxiliaries essential to its operation.	Ukwu akurungwa ugboala, nke gunyere obi ya na ihe ndi ozọ ya na ha so, bu ndi dicha mkpa n'oru ya.
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The Igbo equivalent of the “unit” is amplified, “unit” implying “oneness, singularity, seen as 1. “a single undivided entity or whole” 2. “any group or individual, especially when regarded as a basic element of a larger whole” (www.collinsdictionary.com>unit). This is evident with the addition term “ogbara ngwaorū” (The totality of tools or parts) to “ukwu” (whole unit-all in one), to realize its contextual equivalent in the target language, without negating the rule of precision and clarity. The English verb “assemble”, used in the past tense in the definition yields or corresponds to the meaning of the igbo noun “ukwu” (assemblage, unit, all in one) implying the application of the technique of “transposition”, as also applicable to the English gerund, “including”, which is non existed in igbo, changed to the verb “gūnyere” (includes).

6	Frequency	Frequency	Characteristic magnitude of vibration phenomena, inverse of the period, which expresses the number of cycles performance per unit of time.	Otutu onuogugu ole ihe mara jijiji na-atughari ihu na azu n'ime otu oge a kporo aha.
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The above translation already reveals the technique of “Borrowing” with regards to the English term. “Frequency”, as it has no ready one word equivalent in Igbo and the adjective “characteristic” shedded alongside the noun, “phenomena” to focus on the substance of the action defining the term and its mode. Shedding is a technique in translation involving the withdrawal or suppression of one or several terms that are not necessary in the target language rendition of the source language text or message.

7.	Gear Brake	odugide	Ihe Mgbado gear	All elements contribute to the braking of a wheel linked to the rear axle	Ihe niile na-arukota oru, iji mee ka ukwu ugboala kwe mgbado, wee mee ka ya bu ugboala kwusi, bu nke e jikotara ya na okpu azu ya.
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A literal translation of the definition of the term into igbo would have yielded something like “ihe nille nke na-atunye oke na nke mgbado nke otu ukwu e jikotara na nke azu okpu, which makes no sense of the function of the automobile action/actor as defined. The literal meaning of the English verb thus changed from “to give something that is, or becomes part of a larger whole” to “working together” (na-arukata oru onu) in the translation, indicating the application of the techniques of “modulation”. The English word “braking” which is a verb (present participle of brake) though also a noun (the act of applying brakes) was also transposed unequivocally into igbo noun, for precision and clarity, as conventionally characterize the language of a scientific technical text, the igbo noun being “mgbado”. The technique of borrowing is also evident as regards the English word “gear”.

8.	Hinge Pin		Njiko	Removable hinge that securely connects the doors to the body and allows their opening	Ihe na-agbagide ibouzo ugboala n'ahu ya, nke na-eme ka o na-ekwe imehe imehe, bukware nke a puru iwepu ewepu.
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The above Igbo translation is indicative of the technique of “stuffing”, wherein one word in English “hinge” becomes seven words “ihe na-agbagide n'ahu ya” in its Igbo equivalent, as it affects the definition of the term. One word “njiko” also suffices in igbo for the two words that make up the term in English-both having the same functional meaning of the term- “pegging” or “pinning” (njiko). This shows the technique called “Economy”.

9	Inflator	Ihe na-afunye ikuku		Apparatus for inflating tires from a source of compressed air	Ihe e ji-esite n'ebe ikuku kpukatarara oru funye ya n'afoukwu ugboala.
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Stuffing is involved in translating “inflator”, one English word, into Igbo. Stuffing, also known in translation parlance as “reinforcement” is likened to “amplification” or “dilution”, all implying the use of more words in the target language to express a message content using lesser number of words in the source language, to achieve clarity and precision in the former.

10.	Jig	Ntuaka ije ngwaorū ugboala		Image of the machined part which guides the movement or the tool on a machine tool	Ngosi akuku igweoru ugboala na-ahazi usorooru na mmeghari ahu ngwaoru mere n'igweoru.
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In this case, stuffing as translation technique is on display as four igbo words translate the one word English term “jig”. A word-for-word translation of the English definition would likewise make no sense in Igbo.

Conclusion

Terminology occupies a key position in the role of translation as an instrument for the spread of scientific and technological information across the globe. The insufficiency of terms in igbo for the expression of many scientific and technological information equivalent to those that exist in English and other languages of wider diffusion makes it difficult to name some scientific and technological inventions of igbo origin in igbo language. Thus, it has been difficult to assert igbo linguistic cultural identity, especially in science and technology. The automobile industry South-East of Nigeria has been identified to have endured breaches to effective communication between

key players proficient in English and those who can only speak igbo. This factor has been traced to the paucity, and in some cases, total lack of terms in igbo for coding and expressing automobile concepts and notions as the case may be. Drawing from our bilingual glossary of automobile terms, a project involving the assemblage of existing automobile terms in igbo, and creating some where non-existent, and defining them in igbo as a target language, based on their English definitions, we have in this paper only been concerned with isolating cases wherein a recourse to literal translation as a technique in defining some of such automobile terms in igbo will amount to obvious mistranslation. *On the above premise, it is recommended that much as machine translation facilitates the translation of scientific-technical texts, and the word-for-word technique most practicable in this domain of translation, its adoption should be approached with caution, as it has just been proven to be susceptible to errors in exceptional cases. Fidelity to the message and not the form of the original text should be the translator's watchword.*

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