A Study on the Problem of Translating Some University Administrative Terms

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Abstract

There are observed problems in translating certain university administrative terms from English to Hausa. Variations are noticed in translating the terms "Chancellor", "Pro-chancellor" and "Vice-chancellor" during speeches, conversations and in media translations. The aim of this study is to find better interpretations in translating the university administrative terms. The specific objectives of the research are: (i) to identify the various interpretations of the three terms: (ii) to determine better interpretation of the terms in line with certain established theoretical concepts and socio-cultural norms of the receptor language Hausa. The study is of qualitative type in the collection and analysis of the data by employing Halliday's (2014) theoretical concept of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) focusing on "context of situation" and "context of culture". Among the findings of the study were that: (i) The three terms, Chancellor, Pro-chancellor and Vice-chancellor have variations in translation among Hausa speakers and media organisations; (ii) by employing the context of situation and context of culture of the receptor language Hausa, Chancellor was translated as *Uban Jami'a*, Pro-chancellor as *Shugaban Majalisar Gudanarwa ta Jami'a* while Vice-chancellor was interpreted as *Shugaban Jami'a*. The study concludes that the functional and pragmatic approaches to translation using Halliday's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics theory was effective in unveiling meaning through the application of the contextual variables of language instead of restricting to only the linguistic context.

Keywords: Translation, interpretation, SFL, pragmatics, chancellor, pro-chancellor, *uban jami'a*.

Introduction

Role of a translator in bridging communication gaps between two languages is indeed a big one. This is as a result of the need to take into consideration, various factors peculiar to both languages involved in the translation task (the source language (SL) and the target language (TL)). Distortion of meaning occurs when there are variations or conflicting interpretations of some linguistic terms hence, the need to device ways of arresting the menace. Variations are noted by language scholars and language users especially translators in translating some important university administrative terms – chancellor, pro-chancellor and vice-chancellor. This is an observed problem to Hausa native speakers, Hausa speakers of English as a second language and translators on various media (especially radio and television) and the audience. The problem arises when the terms are translated interchangeably with chancellor sometimes interpreted as vice-chancellor, or pro-chancellor represented as chancellor in the receptor language. Little or no works have been done in attempting to address or reduce to menace of the problem of conflicting translations of the three terms under study. For example an online translator openTran translates the term "vice-chancellor" as *mataimakin shugaban jami'a* in three sentence examples where the term appears.

Theoretical Background

Translation involves at least two languages with a massage to be communicated as the central focus. There

are numerous approaches to translation. For instance, Abdullahi (1997) describes translation as mainly transforming what is said in one language to another language. Bargery (1993) cited in Sajo (2010) posits that translation refers to transfer of meaning of a word or expression from the source language to the receptor language. Similarly, Bunza (2006) asserts that translation is the process of conveying meaning from one language to another in spoken or written form. He highlights that there are basically three types of translation as follows:

1. Word-to-word translation (*Fassarar kalma-da-kalma*)
2. On-the-spot translation (*Fassarar nan-take*)

- Free or interpretative translation (*Fassara mai 'yanci*)

In word-to-word translation, a translator follows strictly the semantic interpretation of the word or sentence components of an expression to be translated. Instances of on-the-spot translation can be seen in court sessions when one of the parties to the court proceedings does not understand the language of the session hence, an interpreter should be engaged. In free or interpretative translation, a translator employs the principles of creativity by taking into consideration, the linguistic culture of the two languages involved in order to explore nearest equivalence of the forms from the source language to the receptor language.

There are various theories paving way for meaningful approaches to translation depending on the languages involved. Nida (2006, pp.11-14) contends that there are six contemporary theories on translation. The theories are sociolinguistic, communicative, hermeneutic, linguistic, literary and semiotic. They are discussed as follows:

1. Sociolinguistic approach to translation is based on the proposition that social context defines what is to be translated, what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in translation through selection, filtering and even censorship. This suggests that socio-cultural norms and values of a given language should be taken into consideration when translating
2. Communicative approach: This theory is virtually the same as interpretative method of translation as pointed out in Bunza (2006). It is also known as "theory of sense" mainly due to the sense of reasoning and interpretation being exploited by a translator in the task of translating. The proponents of the theory, Seleskovitch and Lederer (1989) argue that meaning must be translated not language. Their proposition suggests that language is nothing more than a vehicle for the message and can even be an obstacle to understanding. This explains why it is necessary not to always regard only verbal elements when translating. This concept also has certain relation with the last, i.e. the sociolinguistic theory.

- The third concept, hermeneutic approach is based mainly on Steiner's (1998) argument that translation is not actually a science but rather an "exact art". He highlights that a true translator should be capable of becoming a writer so that they could capture what the author of the original text means to communicate. Steiner (1998) is of the view that any human communication is a translation.

1. Linguistic approach seeks to focus primarily on the issues of meaning and equivalent (i.e. same meaning conveyed by different expression). In this, linguistics tries to discover meaning equivalent in terms of "what" the source language actually means in order to transfer same into the receptor language. This theory appears to contrast sharply with the three earlier discussed because, relying with the linguistic components of an utterance can hardly bring out meaning. This is especially when dealing with certain texts and languages that have certain socio-cultural peculiarities whose interpretation goes beyond the sentence components.
2. Literary approach does not look at translation as a linguistic endeavour but a literary one. This theory emphasises that language has an "energy" which is manifested through words which are the result of

cultural experience. Such cultural experience is the charge which gives language strength and ultimately, meaning which the translator should translate (or interpret). This concept also relates with the others that give room for interpreting texts beyond the sentence.

3. Semiotic theory of translation dwells on the science of understanding signs and signification. To effectively decode a message, there must be a harmony between a sign, an object and an interpreter. In this, the sign in the view of this review covers the various contextual variables of the languages involved in the translation.

Having explored the six theoretical concepts on translation, it is pertinent to look at translation in the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth SFL) as highlighted in Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar (2014) (henceforth SFG) where meaning in language is seen as interplay between social, culture and context of usage. The review also incorporates pragmatics as a discipline seen to be related to aspects of Halliday's (2014) SFG. It is employed in view of the fact that pragmatics focuses on meaning in context. Halliday (2014) presents three language metafunctions – ideational, interpersonal and textual which he argues that they form the functional model of language. Halliday's (2014) SFG stipulates that all languages are organised around two main kinds of meaning – the "ideational" or reflective, and the "interpersonal" or active, which combine to form the third metafunctional component the "textual".

Ideational metafunction is concerned with ideation, i.e. the content or proposition of a massage. The interpersonal metafunction is concerned with the interaction between speaker and addressee through which they express their own attitudes and judgements or attempt to influence other's attitudes and judgements. Textual metafunction is concerned with the creation of text, which is mainly about how to get coherence in text. He posits that SFG views language as a social semiotic resource people use to encode messages in relation to context. Martin (1992) cited in Liv (2014) explains that SFG theory uses language as a social semiotic resource people use to accomplish their purposes of expressing meanings in context. To this end, Halliday (2014) highlights that the term "context" classified into two, "context of situation" and "context of culture" which in the view of this work, form the basis for the interpretation of the main linguistic terms under study. The systemic functional concept is seen to be in tandem with all but one of the six theories of translation earlier discussed – sociolinguistic, communicative, hermeneutic, literary and semiotic which seek to be harmonised and used as the theoretical construct in this work.

On Pragmatics, Adegbija (1999, p. 189) while citing Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and Grice (1975) submits that "the three philosophers were influential in drawing attention to the fact that the occasion of an utterance is important and that its total context must be understood before the meaning and intention of an utterance can be fully grasped. Also Barton (1996) cited in Adegbija (1999) submits that pragmatics is the meaning that consists of interpretation within context. Yule (1996, p.125) elaborates on pragmatics in the following proposition:

In many ways, pragmatics is the study of 'invisible' meaning, or how we recognise what is meant even when it isn't said actually said (or written). In order for to happen, speakers (and writers) must be able to depend on a lot of shared assumptions and expectations. The investigation of those assumptions and expectations provides us with some insights into how more gets communicated than is said.

In the context of this study, therefore, the term pragmatics can be seen as the study of language use focusing on translation from English to Hausa in Nigerian socio-cultural communicative contexts.

The three university terms under study are defined in Briggs (2013) and Ifeanyi (2022) as follows:

Briggs (2013) describes Chancellor as a titular or ceremonial head of a university who awards the degrees of the institution at convocation ceremonies when he is present. He stresses that It is a position given to revered traditional rulers and accomplished senior citizens of Nigeria. Pro-chancellor is the chairman the governing

council as well as some committees of council such as Finance and General Purposes Committee and Tenders Board.

In these capacities, they are more directly involved in the operations of the institution than either the Visitor or chancellor. Vice-chancellor is the head of the university who is responsible for its day-to-day management.

Similarly, Ifeanyi (2022) explains that Pro-chancellor is an appointee who takes precedence before all other members of the university except the Chancellor and Vice-chancellor. Pro-Chancellor is the chairman of all meetings of the university council; seasoned technocrats are often appointed as Pro-chancellors. According to Ifeanyi, Vice-chancellor is the chief academic officer of university who heads the university senate and is the chief accounting officer of the institution as well as leader of the Congregation.

From the discussion of the aspects of the three university administrative terms under study, next is the presentation and analysis of the data collected from interview and monitoring of English-Hausa translations from at least three media stations in Sokoto metropolis. The media stations were Rima Radio, Vision FM and Garkuwa FM,

The Data

From interviews with specific stakeholders on the use of the terms Chancellor, Pro-chancellor and Vice-chancellor, the following are the data derived therefrom. The respondents include media translators, university lecturers, non-academic staff of universities and others.

Excerpts	Linguistic Terms (English)	Translated Terms (Hausa)
1	Chancellor Vice-chancellor	*Shugaban gudanarwa na Jami'a* *Mataimakin shugaban Jami'a*
2	Chancellor Chancellor Pro-chancellor Vice-chancellor	*Shugaban Jami'a* *Na?a??en Shugaba* *Mataimakin Na?a?en Shugaba* *Mataimakin Shugaban Jami'a*
3	Chancellor Vice-chancellor Pro-chancellor	*Shugaban Jami'a* *Mataimakin Shugaban Jami'a* *Shugaban Majalisar Gudanarwa ta Jami'a*

4	Chancellor	*Shugaban Hukumar Gudanarwa ta Jami'a*
	Pro-chancellor	*Shugaban Majalisar Gudanarwa*
	Vice-chancellor	*Na'ibin Shugaban Jami'a*
	Deputy-Vice-chancellor (Academics)	*Mataimakin Shugaban Jami'a mai Kula da Sha'anin Karatu*
	Deputy Vice-chancellor (Administration)	*Mataimakin Shugaban Jami'a mai Kula da Sha'anin Mulki*
5	Chancellor	*Shugaban Jami'a*
	Vice-chancellor	*Mataimakin Shugaban Jami'a*
6	Chancellor	*Shugaban Gudanarwa na Jami'a*
	Pro-chancellor	*Mataimakin Shugaban Gudanarwa na Jami'a*
	Vice-chancellor	*Shugaban Zartarwa na Jami'a*
7	Chancellor	*Babban Shugaban Jami'a*
	Vice-chancellor	*Shugaban Jami'a*
	Pro-chancellor	*Shugaban Jami'a Jeka-na-yi-ka*
8	Pro-chancellor	*Shugaban Majalisar ?oli ta Jami'a*

Discussion and Findings

From the overview of the data on translation of the linguistic terms under study, it can be seen that there are conflicting interpretations of the terms "Chancellor", "Vice-chancellor" and "Pro-chancellor". This perhaps is as a result of emphasis placed on linguistic interpretation of the terms rather than taking into consideration, other factors of language usage and language dynamism such as sociolinguistic or cultural factors and context of situation as highlighted in Halliday's (2014) proposition on context of situation and context of culture. According to Nigerian university administrative structure as cited in Briggs (2013) and Ifeanyi (2022), "Chancellor" is the titular head of the university. A chancellor is appointed by government. They are expected to be persons of high standing in the society. In Nigerian context, a Chancellor is usually appointed from the royalty, a high class monarch to serve in that capacity. In Hausa socio-cultural norm, *sarki* (king or chief) is seen to be beyond the title of a chairman of a university community because, a university community is seen as a sub-unit of the larger community which the *sarki* leads. Also the role of *sarki* in their community (areas of jurisdiction) is beyond that of a chairman or Chancellor equivalence. The *sarki* in Hausa socio-cultural norms does not only serve as the head of his community but is the custodian of cultural norms and values as well as the spiritual head of the entire members of the land irrespective of religion, ethnic and political leanings. Hence, *sarki* is seen as a father of the land which he rules. This tallies with the common Hausa adage *Sarki uban kowa* as cited in Hadejia Emirate (2022) in part of an epithet (*kirari)* of the Hadejia monarch Alhaji Adamu Abubakar Maje. Therefore, in consideration of the context of situation and context of the Hausa cultural norms and values, the image of *sarki* in Hausa when taken in tandem with the titular position of Chancellor in the university administrative structure, *Uban Jami'a*

(interpreted as father of the university community) is more appropriate as a better interpretation of the term "Chancellor" whose role is mostly ceremonial. This also can agree with the fact that social contexts can affect meaning in language (see Yule 1996, Adegbija 1999, Halliday 2014). The interpretation of the term appears to capture the context of situation taking into consideration, the nomenclature of Chancellor as a role or title given to a Sultan or emir (*Sarki*) in the Hausa socio-cultural settings in Nigeria because of high respect and regard the royalty commands from their subjects.

On the term "Pro-chancellor", Briggs (2013) and Ifeanyi's (2022) definitions of the term in relation to the university administrative structure is that, pro-chancellor takes precedence before all other members of the university, except the chancellor and the vice-chancellor when acting as chairman of congregation or convocation. The pro-chancellor is said to be the chairman of all meetings of the university council. It is in practice that seasoned technocrats are appointed as pro-chancellors in Nigerian university system. They are mostly people who climbed the peak of the ladder in civil service administrative roles up to retirement from service. In consideration of the description of the role of the pro-chancellor as head of the university council, and that their role is to chair the governing board of the university, *Shugaban Majalisar Gudanarwa* is more appropriate to the holder of such position. Therefore, pro-chancellor should be interpreted as *Shugaban Majalisar Gudanarwa na Jami'a* (i.e. chairman of the governing board) which is a better equivalence in the context of the role of the holder of that position in Nigeria's university system as described by Briggs (2013) and Ifeanyi (2022). Pro-chancellor in other words, is also said to be a deputy to the Chancellor and acts as practical chairman of the university council. It can therefore be reasonable to also assign an alternative translation to the term as *Na'ibin Uban Jami'a*. However, this study suggests the former than the latter.

"Vice-chancellor" which many translate as *Mataimakin Shugaban Jami'a*, ought not to be interpreted as such because, going by the administrative roles of the person holding the position, as highlighted in the review, such translation in Hausa is seen to grossly reduce the status of the holder of the office Therefore, translating "vice-chancellor" as *Mataimakin Shugaban Jami'a*, which apparently is being done based on the literal interpretation of the linguistic terms (word-to-word translation) as the data indicate, is seen to ridicule the person, roles and morale of the officer who performs executive functions of piloting the affairs of the entire citadel of knowledge. In view of the definition of the roles of the vice-chancellor as the chief executive and chief academic officer of a university, the interpretation *Shugaban Jami'a* is most appropriate. The translation of "vice-chancellor" as *Shugaban Jami'a* is further justified in this work going by the contextual roles of the officer as also highlighted by University of Cambridge (2022) that "vice-chancellor" is the chief academic officer of the university who chairs the university senate as well as oversees the entire affairs of the institution.

From the foregoing therefore, if the "vice-chancellor" is translated as *Shugaban Jami'a*, their lieutenants such as "Deputy Vice-chancellor Academic" should be translated as *Mataimakin Shugaban Jami'a Mai Kula da Karatu*. "Deputy Vice-chancellor, Administration" should be *Mataimakin Shugaban Jami'a Mai Kula da Sha'anin Mulki*.

Conclusion

Going by the study of various theories of translation and the analysis of the data, it is evident that interpretative and systematic functional approaches to translation appear potent in translating the three university administrative terms "chancellor", "pro-chancellor" and "vice-chancellor" from English Language to Hausa Language. The tools of the theories employed enhance the interpretation of the terms hence, moving away from the word-to-ward translation which does not take into account, the context of culture and context of situation of especially the receptor language Hausa when translating. Application of systemic functional linguistics and pragmatics in translation as used in this work has corroborated Halliday's (2014) proposition in the Systemic Functional Grammar that language is a social semiotic

resource people use to express meaning in context. The meaning of each of the three terms as used before is changed to the current forms as a result of the exploration of such meanings based on the layers of interpretation established from the social significance of language.

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