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## Socio-Syntactic Approach to Translation

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### ABSTRACT

This paper investigates socio-syntactic approach to translation. Socio-syntactic approach to translation is more useful in language planning, because it deals with the social and structural aspect of the language. The study adopts sociolinguistics theory; sociolinguistics theory has a clear and extensive theory which views language planning, from a scientific perspective, unlike other theory of translation which is primarily based on assumptions, speculations and unprofessional opinions of people. The theory of sociolinguistics holds that language is viewed as a tool which can be evaluated, regulated and changed so as to be prestigious. Sociolinguistics theory of translation is more advantageous than other theories of translation as it concentrates on the structural aspect and the social nature of a language. The supremacy of sociolinguistics' theory over other theories or models summarily be based on its basis on society and the interaction pattern in the society and no language is optimal in a society. The implication of the sociolinguistics theory to teaching is that it is rooted in the society; emphasis is placed on the language values, culture and aspirations of the society where it exists. It helps to create awareness for learners to understand the culture and the cultural differences in the society.

**Key Words:** *Approach, culture, language, planning, sociolinguistics, translation, Urhobo*

### 1.1 Background to the study

Language is one of the most powerful emblems of social behaviour. Language is used to send vital social messages about *whom we are, where we come from, and who we associate with* [1].

Trudgill [2] observes that it is often shocking to realise how extensively one may judge a person's background, character, and intentions based simply upon the person's language, dialect, or in some instances, even the choice of a single word. This amply explains that language play no small role in the development of individual potentials to adapt in their social environment. Hence, it represents or uses symbolically fundamental dimensions of social behavior and human interaction. The importance attached to language makes its study at higher education level very imperative, hence, its study as linguistics. Linguistics is concerned with the nature of language and communication. It deals both with the study of particular languages and the search for general properties, common to all languages or large groups of languages. According to Robert [3], Linguistics is the scientific study of language and involves an analysis of language form, language meaning and language in context.

The earliest activities in the documentation and description of language have been attributed to the 4<sup>th</sup> century Indian Panini who wrote a formal description of the Sanskrit language [4]. Linguists traditionally analyse human language by observing interplay between sound and meaning. Translation and interpreting is increasingly capturing the attention of sociolinguistics, for not only linguistics but also representatives of other disciplines more and more often view the process of translation as a communicative act in a specific situational context.

The term *translation* was coined by the Amsterdam – based American Scholar James S. Holmes in his paper *the name and nature of translation studies* which is considered of foundational statement for the discipline [5]. Historically, translation study has long been prescriptive (telling translators how to translate), to the point that discussions of translation that were not prescriptive were generally not considered to be about translation at all.

Translation is ultimately a human activity which enables human beings to exchange ideas and thoughts regardless of the difference tongues used. AI Wassety [6] views the phenomenon of translation as a legitimate offspring of the phenomenon of language, since originally, when humans spread over the earth, their languages differed and they needed

a means through which people speaking a certain language (tongue) would interact with others who speak a different language. Enani's [7] views translation as a modern science at the interface of philosophy, linguistics, psychology and sociology. Literary translation in particular is relevant to all these sciences, audio-visual arts, as well as cultural and intellectual studies. Translation is, in Chabban's words [8], "a finicky job", as it has not yet been reduced to strict scientific rules, and it allows for the differences that are known to exist between different personalities. Translation is a heavily subjective art, especially when it deals with matters outside the realm of science where precisely defined concepts are more often expressed by certain generally accepted terms. The question of the possibility of translation is widely regarded as crucial to any understanding of what language is.

Translation between languages is not the whole of translation, but it is an especially illuminating limit case of a much broader phenomenon. The need to translate the spoken word (either within or between languages) presents serious practical difficulties for a great many people on a day-to-day basis. However, it is written texts that most profoundly present the theoretical problem of translation; a *literal* translation would be more conceivable in an entirely oral culture. Indeed, the notion of "fidelity" to an "original" must be quite different in an oral culture than it is in a print-dominated culture. In addition written texts raise the question of the "translation" between speech and writing. The creation of alphabets and the writing down of oral traditions authorise or at least permit the separation of the linguistic medium from it.

Thus, socio-semantic includes the study of who translators are, what their forms of work are (workplace, studies), and what data on translation, causes the movement of ideas between languages which the main schools of thought on the level of research have tended to cluster around key theoretical concepts, most of which have become objects of debate.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 The grammatical model of translating**

This approach to translating and translation teaching is based on translation theories which regard translating as solely a linguistic operation. The distinctive feature of this model is its association of translating with grammatical transfer. Within such a perspective, language is viewed as grammar, and translating is no more than substituting the grammar and vocabulary of one language for the grammar and vocabulary of another.

Along these lines, translating has been defined as the replacement of SL grammar and lexis by equivalent TL grammar and lexis [9]. Underlying this attitude is the assumption that language is an objective code with a fixed structure. According to Chau [10], this approach to translation is anti-mentalistic in focusing on grammatical structure, while leaving meaning out of account. The task of translating is considered a symbol-to-symbol transformation. Linguistic signs, therefore, are supposed to be essentially objective, allowing for a one-to-one one-dimensional matching of codes. When translating, one is operating at the level of language rather than parole. The unit of translating is either the word or the sentence. The Grammatical Model, therefore, yields a literal translation with cultural differences between the two languages ignored. In terms of translation teaching, contrastive grammar is the sole method adopted in this model.

Chau [10] distinguishes two methods of translation based on the grammatical model

- i. The traditional grammar method
- ii. The formal linguistic method

#### **2.1.1 The traditional grammar method**

According to Chau [10], this method is basically an adaptation of a method of foreign language teaching which a direct application of Traditional Grammar is. This method is prescriptive since it takes Greek grammar, studied directly or indirectly through its Latin adaptations, as its model. According to this view, translating is the search for the correct TL equivalent lexicon/sentence via grammar [10]. This method is popular and practical with beginners who know very little about translating.

Though it is the responsibility of the translation teacher to highlight similarities and differences of parts of speech and sentence patterns between different languages, some translation teachers believe that the task lies primarily within the scope of language courses and not translation courses. In translation teaching, the Traditional Grammar Method continues to be used on a large scale especially in the teaching of beginners. According to Chau [10], Traditional Grammar never dies. It fulfills a need in the training process.

#### **2.1.2 The formal linguistic method**

This method of translating has evolved with the development in structural linguistics in the sixties. That is why the theory is considered scientific as opposed to the prescientific Traditional Grammar Method. Although both methods are equally static in outlook in so far as they examine language and exclude parole, the Formal Linguistic Method overshadows its counterpart in that it is descriptive rather than prescriptive. While Traditional Grammar subjectively defines classes and assigns rules for language based on meaning, Formal Grammar does so objectively based on the structural analysis of phonology, morphology, and syntax.

In the light of this approach the focus of attention has been laid on the arbitrary nature of grammatical forms in relation to their meanings. The old belief in the universality of the meanings of parts of speech in different languages has been utterly rejected. The new trend holds that there is no exact equivalence between languages.

Thus, much attention was devoted to the highlighting of structural differences between languages in terms of gender, number and cohesive devices. In other words, Formal Linguists have discovered that the traditional classification of parts of speech was inadequate to account for the diversity of word classes in various languages. These new discoveries were seen by many linguists as having added new difficulties to translating.

In terms of translation teaching, many translation teachers are obsessed with grammar so much that contrastive grammar is the only method of translation teaching. Their sole aim in translating is the replacement of the SL structure by the TL structure paying no attention to the possibility that the reader may not understand the translation, owing to the difference between the world-views expressed in the translation and those of the social system which he belongs to [10].

Catford [9]'s Linguistic Theory of Translation may be regarded as a representative of the Formal Linguistic Method. In giving priority to formal correspondence over textual translation equivalence, He advocates a rank-bound translation based on formal linguistic units. He makes this quite clear when he defines total translation as the replacement of SL grammar and lexis by equivalent TL grammar and lexis with consequential replacement of SL phonology/graphology. Though Catford [9]'s approach to translating is primarily Formal Linguistic in focusing on formal aspects of language, it can be said to have touched upon and even overlapped with other models like the Cultural and the Interpretive. In discussing the relativity of colour terms in different languages, Catford [9] is actually dealing with meaning, which falls within the scope of the Cultural Model. On the same score, when he discusses contextual meaning and features of situation-substance such as stress, intonation and focus, he is also studying context which is related to the Interpretive Model in general, and to the Text Analysis Method in particular.

Formal Linguistic Translation teachers accept Bloomfield (1933)'s postulation, that although forms cannot be separated from their meanings. We must start from forms and not from meanings. In line with this, what these teachers actually produce is a kind of literal translation with pragmatic and semiotic contextual values unaccounted for. In fact, both methods of the Grammatical Model have proved ineffective in translating proverbs, since they only take care of the literal meaning.

## 2.2 The cultural model

This approach to translating and translation teaching is based on the theory of language which defines meaning in terms of its cultural fields and contexts. According to this view, language is culture; translating is describing and explaining the world view of one people to another. This means that every language not only provides a means of communication for its speakers but also imposes on them a different vision of the world, a different way of analysing experience. In this way, language determines the way its speakers look at the world and the way they express their own thoughts. It follows from this that any form of intercultural communication is difficult if not impossible.

In the words of Sapir [11], no two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds not merely the same world with different labels attached. The attitudes and values, the experience and tradition of a people inevitably become involved in the freight of meaning carried by a language. In effect, one does not translate *Languages*, one translates *cultures*. Translating is an intercultural operation which poses many serious problems to the translator. These problems are the product of the many cultural differences between the two languages concerned. They stem from differences in the ecological, social, political, ideological, and religious aspects of the lives of both cultures. Chau [10] distinguishes between two methods of the Cultural Model:

1. The ethnographical semantic method
2. The dynamic equivalence method

### 2.2.1 The ethnographical semantic method

Ethnographical Semanticists are believed that the meaning of words according to the traditional classification of parts of speech is inadequate. For them, such a classification is superficial, arbitrary, and language-bound. Imu [12] believes that 'meaning' is culture-bound and cannot be separated from language itself.

Proponents of the ES are *particularists*, who take the strong view of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of language relativity, which postulates that there is little in common between languages. The conclusion which can be reached from this is that cultural gaps among languages are inevitable and are not always bridgeable. However, some theorists believe that though there is a problem when translating across cultures, the cultural gaps can be narrowed and experiences can be matched to a certain extent. Other proponents of the ES take a more liberal stand by saying that there is no problem of cultural gaps in translating at all. Aware of the difficulties involved in intercultural translating, Ethnographical Semanticists devised various techniques such as componential analysis of meaning. Componential analysis is a way to

assess the meanings of individual words. It can help the translator by providing him with insights into the distinctive features that underlie the contrasts between apparently equivalent terms in two languages.

In terms of translation teaching, Ethnographical Semantic translating teachers concentrate on contrasts between various cultures, demonstrating to the students how different people conceptualise and dissect the world differently. The students are trained to attain the maximum degree of sensitivity to the culture-bound elements inherent in each lexical item. Comparisons of kinship systems and colour terms in different languages are also common semantic exercises. The students are taught how different languages dissect the spectrum differently.

The ES Method operates on the level of langue. It confines itself to the level of the word and the sentence as the units of examination and of translating.

### 2.2.2 The dynamic equivalence method

This method has been known by different designations or labels, which may not be identical in content. For instance this method has been known as the Principle of Equivalent Effect, Communicative Translation, and Cultural Translation [9] etc. It can also be considered a modern and a refined version of the old notion of *free* or *idiomatic* translation, as opposed to word-for-word translating.

The major difference between this method and the ES is that while Ethnographical Semanticists are *particularists*, who view languages as having very little in common, the proponents of the DE method are *Univesalists* who believe that languages have much in common and anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, unless the form is an essential element of the message.

According to this method, the end-product is not another message, but the closest natural equivalent. Instead of concentrating on cultural contrasts and on comparative ethnography, this method focuses on readers' response. The TLT should evoke an equivalent response on the TL reader as did the SLT on its reader. In fact, DE translating emphasises the purpose of communication. Unlike the ES method which operates on the level of langue, DE operates on the level of parole. This makes it much more welcomed by linguists and theorists than its counterpart, as it regards the recipients as part of the translating process. As in the ES method, the word and the sentence are also regarded as the units of examination. Equivalence, therefore, is often sought at the level of sentences and lexical items.

## 2.3 Summary of Literature

The literature review shows that works in different approach and methods of translation has been done, but none done in socio-syntactic approach to translation

### 3. Socio-syntactic approach to translation.

Sociolinguistics is defined as the study of language in society so as to know how language is fulfilled in daily activities of man. Marvin [13] maintains that people tend to reexamine whatever surrounds them and respond to crucial question like; how can one stop all the violence in the world? or one of the subcategories of sociolinguistics; critical discourse analysis, makes an attempt to analyse the relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control in text and talk. This study will investigate the socio-semantic analysis of the three methods of translation in sociolinguistics: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods.

#### 3.1 Quantitative method

One of the first branches of sociolinguistics is variationist sociolinguistics that applies quantitative approach to data analysis. Sociolinguistics as an empirical science and a subcategory of Linguistics tries to analyse the correlation between language and society. Quantitative sociolinguistics makes an attempt to find out how the identity of a person or a social group relates to the way that person uses language. How have social variables such as age, gender, social class and level of education impact on language use in this context [14].

Correlational studies attempt to show how linguistic variable as a dependent variable that exist at all level of language from phonology, syntax to discourse is affected by social structure or variable such as social class, gender, age and ethnicity [15]. For instance, Nguyen [16] aimed to identify linguistic variables such as alternative pronunciations, equivalents grammatical constructions and synonymous words among different classes.

Words and language that people use are suitable criteria for psychologists so as to understand and translate people's intentional thoughts and emotions [17]. Language thus, can be used as an instrument which uniquely describes similarities and differences among people in terms of their differential language use.

Schwartz [17] have conducted a study on the relationship between language and personalities of people in social media and believe a social medium like face book is a valuation sources for the study of people since contrary to questionnaires and surveys, researchers can observe people as they express themselves in their words freely. They

examined 700 million word, phrase, and topic sentences from face book of 75000 volunteers. They administered standard personality tests to them and found interesting variations in language in accordance with personality, gender, age, for instance males used the possessive ‘my’ when mentioning their wife or girlfriend more often than females used ‘my’ with husband or boyfriend.

One of the branches of quantitative research is computational sociolinguistics which focused on statistical analysis to reveal the distribution of sociolinguistics variable. A study of the relationship between language and age shows striking and interesting facts how individuals change their language use during their life, for example adolescents utilise more non-standard forms than adults because of the importance of social advancement [16]. Nguyen [16] observed that speakers have the capacity to choose between some choices, the one which is appropriate to achieve social goals. Quantitative research begins with a hypothesis and the researchers are going to testify its truth and theory of the result of testing a hypothesis [18].

### 3.2 Qualitative method

This is one of the methods used by sociolinguistics to analyse data. A qualitative method tends to have a deep understanding of why people treat and behave in this way and how things come to be the way they are in a social world. Qualitative research analysis are inclined to uncover how people feel and think about whatever surrounds them without making judgments about whether those thoughts or feelings are valid [19]. Dornyed (2011) discriminates between the stages of quantitative and qualitative methods and maintains that the former can be divided into two stages of data collection and analysis, which follow each other, but the latter contain two phrases that often overlap and coincide. He further maintained that different ways of gathering data in qualitative research method are ethnography, interview, grounded theory, follows group interview, and case study.

There is quest for replicable methods of qualitative analysis that account for one’s ability to interpret what participants intend to convey in everyday communicative practice. An example of qualitative research analysis is to study how older adults confirm to living in a nursing home environment by ethnographers who study in the health care field [19]. Qualitative analysis is not going to test a hypothesis; actually it concentrates on understanding social phenomenon[18].

Therefore, qualitative research method used procedures that father data in numerical form which is analysed primarily by statistical methods, like survey research using a questionnaire that is analysed by statistical software such as SPSS, testing the various hypotheses it formulates. Qualitative research uses procedures that make use of non-statistical data such as interviews, case studies, or observations and gathers data in non-statistical methods. The triangulation method is a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods of analysing data.

### 4.1 Summary of findings

Translation studies have developed alongside the growth in translation schools and courses at the University level. Several theories have evolved concerning translation which includes sociolinguistic theories. The sociolinguistic theory has a clear and extensive theory which views language planning from a scientific perspective unlike other linguistic and philosophical theories of translation.

The superiority of sociolinguistic theory is based on its cultural root. It tends to consider both the social and structural aspects of the language used in the society and such should be encouraged as a method of translation used in schools as it uses both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis, the triangulation or mixed method.

The triangulation method or mixed method exists where researchers or people in the academic employ both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyse linguistic data in research.

### 4.2 Conclusion

The crucial problems of effective inter-linguistic communication are not primarily linguistic, but sociolinguistic because it is in the blend of language and culture, of words and concepts, and of semantics and pragmatics that the real significance of translation and interpretation can best be understood and the principles of sociolinguistics can be most usefully employed and appreciated.

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