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THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATING SOME ANAAÑ LEXICAL ITEMS INTO ENGLISH

VERO-EKPRIS URUJZIAN (PhD)
Department of English
Akwa Ibom State University, Nigeria
&
JACKSON ARCHIBONG ETUK (PhD)
Department of English
Akwa Ibom State University, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to identify some existing obstacles in the process of translating some Anaañ lexical items into English. Hinged on the concept of bilingualism, the paper identifies idioms, fixed expressions, taboos, euphemisms, polysemous lexemes and homonymous lexemes and the like as what constitute the barrier to smooth translation. These variables are an inalienable part of each language. The meanings of these items cannot, in some cases, be understood from the superficial meanings of the single words constituting them. The process of translating idioms and fixed expressions and other items in this category from Anaañ into English is a tough work which obliges a translator to have a good knowledge of both languages as well as their cultures. Expressions that sound vague to interlocutors from one cultural setting could be tangible and easy to understand for other interlocutors. Understanding the idioms is one problem, recreating the same set of idioms and fixed expressions of one language in another language in a way that it conveys the exact idea of the original language is a bigger problem. The paper proposes a deepening research to further knowledge on strategies for easing translation difficulties between Anaañ and English.

Keywords: Challenges, Translation, Anaañ, Lexical items, English.

Introduction

The globalised world refers to the mutual communicative/relational impact among persons and events through interconnectivity by "world languages" and information communication technologies (ICTs). The mere thought of a worldwithout language elicits depressive boredom and retrogression.Language is the most important instrument through which a writer organises and memorises (Urujzian, 2023). Etuk and Akpan (2023) aver that language reveals the thought pattern, beliefs and consciousness of an individual or a community of people.Languages are numerous and, thus, were documented as "Babel of voices" in the Tower of Babel's Biblical narration. These tongues vary from one speech community to another. In Nigeria, there are about 400 of such tongues (Bamgbose, 1971). Each of these tongues is needed to develop its cognate community. English has emerged as the world's most sought after language (Baugh, 1959) and (Urujzian, 2020). It is focused on here as a very powerful driver of all sectors and the development of humanity globally. There is a general recognition of English as the central conveyor belt; and that which moves ingredients and products from feeder belt to other disciplines in order to churn out a developed and globalised human capital. This high prominence given to the English language, therefore, makes mastery of the English language, in relation to other languages and dialectal

communities, a pressing necessity to the growth of respective fields of human endeavours. This is correlated in Urujzian, 2020. Efficiency in the translation of Anaañ linguistic items into English becomes utterly important in order to bridge communicative gap and ameliorate the challenge an Anaañ speaker of English could face in his bid to express himself in English. Enang and Urujzian (2013: 217) and Udondata (2018: 32) have already identified "a number of underlying dissimilarities in apparent similarities" between Anaañ and English which has posed not just grammatical problems for the Anaañ speaker of English but also, by extension, translation challenges. This paper examines some of the challenges of translating some Annan lexical items into English.

What are Translation and Interpretation?

A commonsensical definition would explain translation as the transfer of meaning from one language to another. This means the representation of a message in a language other than that in which it was originally written. Whereas the art of interpretation predates writing (as elderly ones would have interpreted specialised language forms to young people in the traditional period), translation began only after the appearance of written literature. Lewis (1958) notes that the term "translate" is coined from the Latin words "trans" and "latus" which means "carried across". Catford (1965) defines translation as the substitution of textual material in one language by an equal textual material in another language. Similarly, Finlary (1971) defines translation as a communication process involving bilinguals who work towards the creation of a target language text that is functionally equivalent to a text in a source language. Translation helps in "transmitting culture, revitalising language, interpreting text, diffusing knowledge, suggesting the relationship between thoughts and language as well as contributing towards cooperation between nations" (Newmark 1981:x).

Translation does not have to be word for word or to follow the exact word order or literal meaning of a text. Rather, scholars like Newmark (1988) have emphasized that what is important is the provision of the meaning of the source text in the target text without adding, subtracting, increasing or deteriorating any part of the meaning. Be that as it may, idioms, taboo words, polysemous and homonymic words have always posed a problem to translators. For example, while there are idioms in all languages, these idioms may not be directly translated. It would take the ingenuity of a bilingual who is also bicultural to understand the intricacies surrounding the culture of the source language from which an idiomatic text is derived in order to arrive at a meaningful translation. It is difficult for idioms to be translated word for word as the cultural context from which a text is produced may hinder effective translation.

In this case, one needs knowledge of the original language to understand idioms as well as knowledge of the target language to find the equivalent. While growing up in my maternal grandmother's village years ago, I remember a woman defending a battery case against her by uttering this:
"mmembuño, mmennanemakut se anyeasennamnyien, aminsukmbonsook idem. Anyeandomefudikiddeafid, aminnuñdomanyeiwuonsehemkpo".

At another instance, two co-wives fought. In a bid to settle the dispute, Wife A who is slim said this about Wife B who is fat:

"nwuanimaebe, nwuanisommotosaadeheafoadiaakukubedafuudntiibodibok. Udutimmenyiensammebontoafo "ewuwugaferedktikoro"? Ehee, mmadioñokeakenkokook.

In the first expression, an interpreter that begins by saying "the lame and the blind had seen" has got it all wrong.

"Mbuñommennan" means everybody, everyone, all the people etc., while the second expression has its hitches in "ibodibok" and ewuwugaferenkekoro" and "keakenkokook. Translating the above to convey the meaning as well their local colours requires the knowledge of both Anaañ and English as well as the intricacies surrounding language use in both linguistic societies.

The Essence of Bilingualism in Translation

It is difficult to discuss translation without bilingualism. This is because two or more languages are involved in translation. Bilingualism (in the same fold with multilingualism) can be defined as "...the use of more than one language by individuals; and/or within societies and countries" (Deumert, 2011: 261). This involves the existence of two languages in the repertoire of an individual or a community. Akindele and Adegbite (1999) distinguish types of bilingualism using four criteria: user, chronology/time, learning situation and purpose. Users could be individuals or a particular society where two languages exist and function independently especially as both languages could be assigned different roles and functions. Bilingualism in terms of time could be defined as simultaneous or sequential: Simultaneous bilingualism refers to a process where two languages are learnt concurrently while in sequential bilingualism, the languages are learnt at different limes. An individual can also acquire a second language outside school (informal) or in a formal learning context (formal bilingualism.

This gives rise to the third, criteria. In the fourth criteria
(purpose), Akindele and Adegbite term a situation whereby two languages are employed for the same function, balanced bilingualism, with 'ambilingualism' referring to when two languages are used for different reasons by an individual or a society. Translation is almost impossible without bilingualism/biculturalism. In this case, an individual has to completely understand the language as well as the cultures behind these languages before she can effectively translate. This submission is also applicable in the case of translating linguistic items from Anaañ into English.

Factors Militating Against Effective Translation

1. Taboo

The term 'taboo' is often used to refer to things that are sacred or consecrated.
The meaning of the term 'taboo' is sometimes extended to cover things that are unclean or dangerous on religions or social grounds. Fershtman, Gneezy and Hoffman (2011) define taboo as " ...an 'unthinkable' action" (139). Taboo not only imposes a ban on certain persons, animals and things, but also on their names. There are also situations where a taboo word is abandoned and a harmless substitute, or euphemism, is introduced to fill the gap. In this way, the taboo gives rise to euphemistic synonyms. In a language, euphemism is, therefore, the use of a pleasant, mild and indirect word(s) or phrase(s) to replace a taboo word or/and to avoid frightening or unpleasant subjects. Knowledge of taboo words and their accompanying

euphemistic words enhance the power of translation. In Anaañ, there are numerous euphemistic lexemes (pleasant lexemes) which are used to replace vulgar expressions and to represent social taboos. Below is a selection of euphemistic synonyms in Anaañ. The wrong translations are indicated below for emphasis:

Table 1:

Expressions in Anaan	**Wrong Interpretation**	**Correct interpretation**
Ekponkaagwo	Masquerade go person	The gods of illicit love act
Ukanessien	Loitering outside	Flirting

Table 2:

Here are more examples of Anaañ euphemistic synonyms:

LEXEME	**GLOSS MEANING**	**EUPHEMISTIC SYNONYMS**	**LITERAL MEANING**	**GLOSS**
Akpara	Flirting	Asañaessien	To walk outside	Flirting
Mkpa	Death	AkponIsoñ	To leave the earth	To die
Agwood	Kill/Eliminate	Anime inwek/ati/ ntim	Quench breath	Kill/eliminate
Ojomo ilib	Pregnant	Ajaija	Is beautiful	Pregnant
Unaidan	Perform illicit love act	Nkaagwo or nsaba idem	To go to a person or to toy with One's body	Illicit love act

In the course of interpretation, a translator who chooses the literal meaning would likely miss out completely. More so, the meaning of words is determined by other words in the linguistic environment or by their contextual usage (collocation). According to Etuk and Urujzian,(2018:87)"During Communication, individuals may select certain adjectives which appeal to them to describe nouns and by so doing integrate all their senses into their subjective discernment of the environment to see different shades of colours, smell dissimilar odours, hear different sounds, taste contrasting flavours and touch sundry textures". Therefore, to translate correctly, one needs to learn to respond to the different collocation possibilities of words. Some of the collocations can become fixed expressions. For example, in Anaan, there is an expression like "ubokajedelem, elemajedubok" which means "reciprocity". This fixed expression can also result in the creation of idioms. The more fixed a collocation is, the more it is close to an idiom.

Idioms and Translation

An idiom is a fixed group of words with a special meaning from the meaning of separate words (Keizer, 2016). So "to spill the beans" has nothing to do with beans, instead it means "to divulge something that is secret". In most instances, idioms do defy translation into English because idioms carry loaded culture connotations which could be lost in the process of translation. Collocation searches are very important in uncovering idiomatic usages. The difficulty is in deciding whether a collocation is an idiom; whether it is fixed enough or has a meaning that is different from the meaning of its composite elements. Idioms, therefore,

involve collection of a special kind. An idiom is like a single lexeme because the meaning of the entire expression is equivalent to the kind of meaning that a single lexeme has. Although, the idiom is like a single lexeme it does not function as one. Hence, the combination of lexemes in an idiom yields some meaning, different from the basic meaning of its component parts (Collis,2007). It is for this reason that idiomatic expressions in Anaañ are different to translate into the target language(English). Below are some examples:

Table 3

IDIOMS IN ANAAŃ	**LITERAL MEANING**	**IDIOMATIC MEANING**
Nsanaubok	Clean hands	Innocence
Anyenaseanyoñ	To have eyes upwards	Carelessness
Assukanyenki'soñ	Eyes on the ground	Carefulness
Iliokitoñ	To have a bad neck	Greed
Mfoniso	To have a good face	Good luck
Uyiembarigwo	To have counting head	Intelligence
Nkubonsia	Intestines cutting	Meaning fear

To further buttress the above-stated points, the table below presents single lexical items which effectively provide the meaning that could be embedded in an idiomatic expression comprising two or more words in Anaañ cultural setting. The mere fact that creativity is an essential feature of language use entails that people would employ idiomatic and figurative language in communication in order to enhance their rhetoric. Such instances would require more than the knowledge of the individual words that make up an idiomatic expression for a proper translation.

Table 4:

SINGLE LEXEME IN ANAAN	MEANING OF SINGLE LEXEME	IDIOMATIC EQUIVALENT	LITERAL MEANING	IDIOMATIC MEANING
Nsu	Falsehood	Anyieedemeiba	to have to two tongues	falsehood
Ino	Stealing	Anyanubok	To have a long hand	stealing
Ndik	fear	Nkubonsia	intestines to split	anxiety
Ujai	Beauty	Isoalekeana	the face is well placed	beauty
Unana	poverty	Aliannakeinuaunenadia	he feeds on crumbs from the beak of the hen	poverty
Achon	difficult	Ideheuneketoknkañ	it is not dance for a small waist	difficult
Akpara	harlot	Anyen ache essien	eyes looking outside	harlot

In the above examples, translating the Anaañ lexical items into English by following the literal meaning would be misleading. A good translator/bilingual who should be versed in the knowledge of the cultures of both Anaañ and English should ignore the literal interpretation while presenting an idiomatic interpretation. This should prevent an interpretation such as: "a cow iron planted me on the bone road and the bone road stood market market", for the expression: "enanukwakantoonyienkeokpousuun, akpousungadauduaudua"

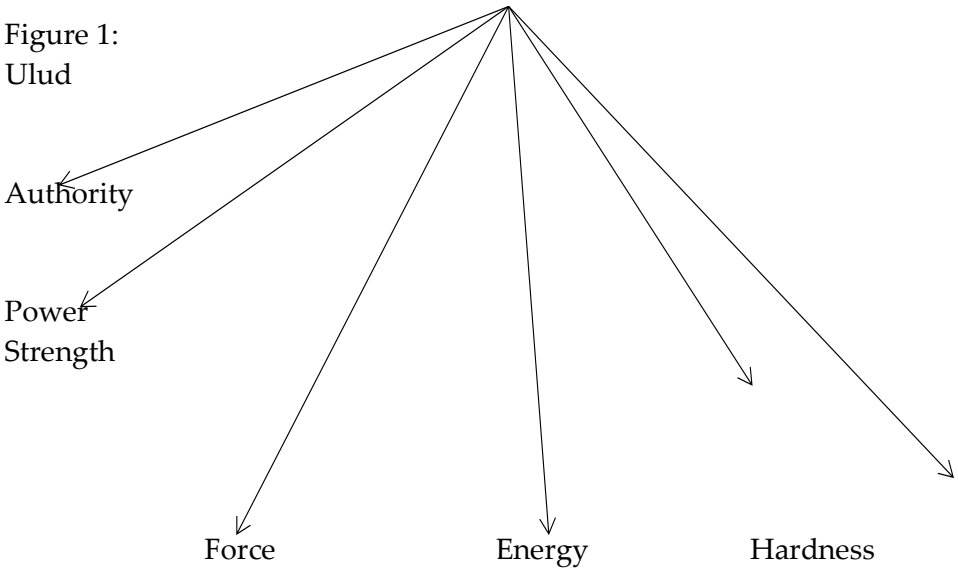
3. Polysemy / Homonyms and Translation

Worthy of note here is the "tem ayen" (literally translated to either mean, 'cook the child' or 'let the child sit') story, where a housemaid was asked to teach a baby how to sit. The domestic servant got confused by the word "tem" and cooked the child. 'Tem' is a polysemous word. Polysemes also pose restrictions to smooth translations. Most linguists admit the existence of word meanings, and the fact that some lexemes have only one meaning (monosemy) while others have more than one (polysemy). Polysemy is a necessary feature of language because it introduces flexibilities and economy in language. Also, if it were not possible to attach several senses to one lexeme, this would mean a crushing burden on memory as one would have to possess separate terms for every conceivable subject one might wish to talk about. Polysemes are words spelt and pronounced alike but with different sense meanings.

Polysemous lexemes in Anaañ	Gloss(different but related meanings) in English

Examples abound in Anaañ. For instance, "Ulud" could mean the following depending on usage.

Figure 1:
Ulud



These various senses are indicated in the following environments:

a. Awasiadeuludami - The Lord is my strength
b. Uludette-ematonwuon -
c. nyeinadepudukansiyeneulud - I want you to buy a rope that is hard
d. Ntoroase and agwoulud -Fufu gives energy
e. Etimabiouludatomkpoonagwoilun- Etim has received authority from the Elders
f. Mwuoon-om afeghemmeulud - This water flows with force.

The different senses of ulud, as we can see above, are related. Some other examples of polysemous lexemes in Anaan and English are:

Table 5

Polysemous lexemes in Anaañ	**Gloss(different but related meanings) in English**
Ufok	(a)Lineage (b)House (c)Family
Ifiok	(a)Wisdom (b)Knowledge (C)Tricks
Anyen	(a)Eye (b)Colour (c)Situation/state
Ukwak	(a)Metal (b)Bicycle
Iso	(a)Front(or surface) (b) Face (part of the body) (c) general appearance
Efud	(a)Bottom(N) (b)Buttocks(N) (c)Hind part (N)
Isoñ	(a)Earth (b)Ground (c)Land (d)Soil
Illiokechit	(a)Enmity (b)Jealousy
Igwod	(a)Head(part of the body) (b)Leader(of a group) (c)Theme/subject matter
Mfure/mfre	(a)Fruit(N) (b)Children(N)
Affioñ	(a)Moon (b)Month (c)Menstrual cycle

Iko	(a)Language (b)Dialect (c)Trouble (d)Sense/nonsense
Ajaija	(a)Fine(Adj) (b)Beautiful(Adj) (c)Handsome(Adj) (d)Pretty(Adj) (e)pleasant(Adj) (f)well(Adj)
Eto	(a)Stick(N)
	(b)Tree (c)Plant(N)
Nneleñ	(a)Dullness (b)Coldness
Ubok	(a)Hand(part of the body)(N) (b)Handle for(carrying)
Ikañ	(a)Fire(N) (b)Gun(N) (c)Light(of electricity)(N)

Polysemous Lexemes and contexts

Table 6:

Polysemous lexemes In Anaañ	**Gloss different but related senses**	**matrix or frame**	**English equivalent**
Inem	(a)Happiness(N) (b)sweetness(N) (c)deliciousness(N) (d)enjoyment(N)	Mmekop<u>inem</u> <u>Inem</u>akanakwook <u>Inem</u>afere ade-m	I am <u>happy</u> <u>sweet</u> honey this is a <u>delicious</u> Soup
		Enoakop<u>inem</u>ami	Eno<u>enjoys</u> me

Mkponnkpon	(a)Fatness(N) (b)bigness(N)	Ekaamiade mkponnkpon Ekpadamiademkoponnkpon	My mother is fat My bag is big
Usuñ	(a) path(N) (b)door(N) (c)means(N)	Usuñilim anyioñ Usuñamianainwañ Nsutousuñkeafoakedaan yenemmkpo-m?	the path to the stream is far My door is open By what means did you own these things?
Etok	(a)Small(Adj) (b)Young(Adj)	Nnoetok ikwa	Give me a small knife Eno is a young girl
		Enoadeetokajen	

A look at the above reveals why translation will always be cumbersome. For instance, inem could mean: happy, sweet, delicious, palatable, enjoyable etc., and in Anaañ the word, 'Inem', goes with every sweet or enjoyable situation: inemafere, inem a-tea, inemesit, inemusoro. Also, 'ujai' goes for anything or situation that is beautiful in the Anaan language. In English equivalent, various lexemes of 'inem' would collocate with different lexical items. For example, it is awkward to say 'a beautiful boy and a handsome girl', just as a 'sweet soup' and a delicious tea would be unacceptable. A translator who interprets 'inemefere' as 'sweet soup' is yet to get it right.

Polysemous Lexemes/Metaphorical Meanings

In Anaañ, there are also individual words which when used in different contexts, especially by metaphorical extension, express meanings different from their literal interpretation. Some of these words are illustrated in the table below:

Table 7

Again, the examples above re-stress the need for a translator to not just be bilingual but bicultural also in order to understand the context in which a lexical item or a certain idea is expressed.

Ibaan	Woman- the female or weaker sex	a weakling	AkpabioadeibaanAkpabio is a weakling
Itoñ	Throat- a part of the human body	greed /selfish desires	Itohogwo adeitoñ Itohogwo is greedy
Ewa	Dog an animal	A promiscuous person	Mmaakoadeewa Th woman is promiscuous
Afia	White-a color term	Honesty or purity	Ubokamiadeafia. My hand is pure.

Homonyms, on the other hand, are known to be written and pronounced alike but with meanings that are not related in sense. Examples are indicated below:

Homonymic Lexemes in Anaañ

Table 8

Homonymic Lexemes	**Gloss (different and unrelated meanings)**
Aluk	(a)Gun (b)trumpet

Polysemous lexemes in Anaañ	**Literal/Ordinary meaning**	**Transferred/metaphorical meaning**	**Matrix sentenc frame**
Ekpe	Tiger-a Large fierce animal	A powerful person	Udo adeekpe Udo is powerful

To	(a)Plant (b)collide (c)deceive
Siak	(a)Mention (b) split
Tabba	(a)Scoop (b)call by touching/tapping
Ikañ	(a)Fire (b)Gun
Ako	(a)Trade (b)walking stick
Tiai	(a)shoot (Plural verb) (b)Itch (c)Kick(plural verb)
Bob	(a)build (b)Tie
Isuñ	(a)messenger (b)debt
Idagha	(a)when -Idagha ke (b)standing - MmaghaIdagha
Tem	(a)cook (b)place in sitting position

Looking at the table above and taking the word "to" as an illustration, if a translator were to come across the expression, 'anyeake to', among the different ideas of 'to' that would come to mind would be plant, collide, deceive or maybe to induce sickness through diabolical means). It' is mostly through the context of utterance that the meaning of such an expression would be disambiguated by a culturallycompetent translator who is equally bilingual. In this case, context and the knowledge of the culture of the source language help to disambiguate ambiguity caused by homonymic lexical items.

Conclusion/Recommendations

A closer look at the analysis above reveals that the task of translation is a cumbersome one. In the face of this, deepening efficiency through intensive and extensive reading in the two languages involved is recommended as this will boost knowledge and increase vocabulary development. Knowledge of idioms, figurative usages, and words relations in both the source and the target language is a necessity for a translator who also needs to be familiar with the cultures of both languages. As at present, scholarship in this field remains scanty; and of such,

this paper is equally aimed at creating interest in this very engaging, yet, neglected area of study.

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