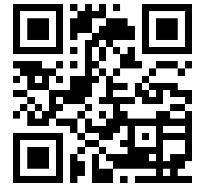


A Sociolinguistic Survey of How Covid 19 Terminologies are Translated to Tonga Language of Zambia



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ABSTRACT: In Zambia, COVID- 19 and other health lifesaving information is not adequately disseminated in the indigenous languages understood by the majority citizens. In cases where this information is written in local languages, the terminologies are inexact due to wrong methods and approaches to translation. This study sought to establish the appropriate methods and approaches to translation and it has also attempted to come up with the most appropriate and correct Tonga terminologies for COVID-19. The study also recommended that African languages should be taught in medical tertiary institutions so as to equip health practitioners with African linguistic knowledge.

KEYWORDS: Communicative translation approach, Coronavirus, COVID-19, Linguistic perspective, Philological perspective, Tonga.

1. BACKGROUND

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease with symptoms that include fever, cough, fatigue, shortness of breath, and loss of smell and taste. The disease was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, Hubei, China, and has resulted in an ongoing life threatening pandemic. Measures recommended by WHO and other government health agencies to prevent further infection include frequent hand washing, maintaining physical distance from others (especially from those with symptoms), quarantine (especially for those with symptoms) covering coughs, and avoiding handshakes..

However, lack of modern terminology in the indigenous Zambian languages for use in domains such as health, science and technology has to some extent affected the fight against the spread of Covid-19. As the spread of the disease has spiked up altering the lives of billions of people worldwide, it has correspondingly necessitated the need to create a new vocabulary and terminologies to the general populace accommodating specialist terms from the fields of medicine, especially terminologies directly related to Covid-19. As cases of Covid19 spread to developing countries, affecting poor indigenous peoples, it is crucial to join efforts and cooperate closely to ensure the sharing of vital life-saving information and resources about COVID-19 in minority and indigenous languages. According to Madzimbamuto (2012), patients always prefer receiving vital information in their own language, but in Africa the development of such technical language has been neglected. In Zambia, technical terminologies are not formally translated and used uniformly by various institutions and stakeholders. In most cases scientific words especially medical terminologies are simply used as borrowed or loaned words as public health specialists addressing speakers of indigenous languages fail to find equivalent terminologies in indigenous languages. It is noted with concern that in the Zambian scenario, most health workers lack the terminology in their African languages for the information being delivered, mainly because such technical and medical knowledge is acquired and developed through formal education in English rather than their first languages.

Stressing the importance of teaching Africans science and technology in indigenous languages, Osborn (2010) points out that accommodating the language most familiar to people is a consideration of primary significance in an effort to use ICT and science for development. This view is very crucial as it is a known fact that education and communication are easily executed in the first language than in the second or foreign languagee.

As fears mount over the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on developing countries, the African government through ministries of health and other health agencies have been scaling up efforts of communications to warn people of the dangers of COVID-19 and how to stay safe. Okonkwo (2016) points out that in emergency situation, there is need for translation and it is unreasonable to think that everyone speaks and understands English or an international language. This means that language comprehension is the centre of all communication and without it the world would remain static.

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A critical aspect of transmitting lifesaving health information in the languages that are understood by speakers of other minor languages is translation. But insisting on using jargon terms which are largely unknown outside the medical community is actually complicating and frustrating efforts of fighting the spread of COVID-19 worldwide. The challenges encountered in translation just reveals and emphasises the need for health information to be accessible to speakers of minority languages especially in developing countries. Looking at the technical terminologies used by health professionals, there is no doubt that people aren't getting enough reliable, accurate and timely information that they can understand and use to best protect themselves.

As COVID19 pandemic escalates to all parts of the world, it is crucial to join efforts and collaborate to ensure the sharing of correct life-saving information and resources about COVID-19 in minority and indigenous languages of the world. Since all the vital information about the COVID-19 pandemic is transmitted in the English language, the limited English proficient individuals are at risk of not understanding the steps they must take to protect themselves and others. In order to enhance this exercise of ensuring everyone is not left behind, there is need to translate this vital information to minority indigenous languages of the world.

Like other African countries, the issue of medium of communication in the public health sector is also a serious challenge. The current COVID- 19 pandemic, like other public health crises, introduces new terminologies to the health fraternity and the general public. As a result, this study sought to establish how some prominent COVID- 19 terminologies are translated to the Tonga language of Zambia. The study also attempted to investigate if the indigenous speakers of Tonga were availed with the correct information on COVID- 19 in Tonga language. This study, working with other Tonga language specialists has proposed expeditious translation of coronavirus-related terminologies so that important information can reach the people who need it.

2. CHITONGA LANGUAGE

Kashoki (1998) reports that Chitonga is one of the seven officially recognised languages in Zambia and represents a cluster of languages (Bantu Botatwe) spoken by about 25% of Zambians. Members of the Bantu Botatwe linguistic group Lenje, Ila, Kaonde-Ila and Sala are closely related to Chitonga though Chitonga is considered as a separate language. According to Simwinga (2006), Chitonga has the status of a regional official language spoken in Southern, Central and parts of Lusaka (rural) province. In these regions, Tonga is widely used in public discussion, on the radio and television and in various print literatures. In the domain of education it is used as language of instruction in the lower levels of primary education, and is taught as a subject up to tertiary level in few colleges of education in the country.

The challenge however with Tonga, like any other Zambian language, is that there hasn't been any effort made to develop science and ICT terminologies in this language to adapt to the fast changing lifestyles and technological trends. Example: Basic protective measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 include recommendations using new terminologies which are new to Zambian indigenous language vocabulary. It is not uncommon to hear health professionals failing to translate COVID-19 terms to Tonga as they explain health issues in Tonga during local language forum interviews. However, local journalists especially those from the national broadcaster, Tonga section of ZNBC are doing a good job to translate most of the key COVID-19 words to Tonga.

3. THEORETICAL Framework

This study falls under the umbrella of sociolinguistics and language use, translation to be specific. There are six main approaches within contemporary translation theory: the sociolinguistic approach, the communicative approach, the hermeneutic approach, the linguistic approach, the literary approach and the Philological perspective/ Sociolinguistic approach. For the purpose of this study, the Philological perspective/ Sociolinguistic approach, Communicative translation perspective and the Linguistic approach will be discussed as they underpin this study.

3.1. Philological perspective or Sociolinguistic Approach

The Philological or Sociolinguistic approach is based on the translation act which links language to social factors of society by analysing the weaknesses and strengths of the original text. Nida (1991) argues that the meaning of verbal symbols on any level depends on the culture of the language of the community. Language is a part of culture, and in fact it is the most complex set of habits that any culture exhibits.

According to the Sociolinguistic approach, a translator is naturally the product of his or her society. This means therefore that our own sociocultural background is present in everything we translate and the moral norms of society prevail over contents of the original text.

3.2. Communicative translation perspective

According to Ali, W, I (2018) Communicative translation perspective attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original text in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable. Nida, E (2006) points out that the process of translation is not simply the replacement of one word or expression by another, but places the message before the language used.

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“Communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original. It is the process of conveying a message from one language into another while respecting the linguistic features of the target language (TL) at different levels, morphological, lexical and grammatical” (Newmark, 2006: 39). He claims that the message in communicative translation is the most significant factor. It stresses the power and influence of the message more than the content of the message. In communicative translation, the translator is available, somehow, when necessary, and has the right to remove obscurities or repetition and specify general terms.

3.3. Linguistic perspective

Linguistics plays an important role in the translation of a document from one language to another. Translating information includes more than just changing each word from the original language to another. Ulanska (2014) stresses the fact that since linguistics is essentially the study of human language, it takes a significant place in the process of translation. Linguistic perspective therefore breaks down the target language into several sub-categories: *Grammar*: the study of language structure and the system of rules it uses. It includes several fields as follows, *Morphology, Syntax, Phonology and Semantics*. According to Ulanska (2014) translation is a language act in which a text from one language is substituted with an equivalent text from another, by making that substitution in accordance with the regulations of both language systems. This, according to the Linguistic approach to translation, means that the translator should consider all the grammatical elements of the source language as he or she attempts to translate the text to the target language.

4. COVID-19 SITUATION IN ZAMBIA

The recent spike in COVID-19 cases and subsequent rise in COVID-19 related deaths in Zambia has been a reason enough to see the Ministry of Health scale-up its effort in mitigating the pandemic. Although sensitisation work in communities is growing, it is not clear whether members of the communities, especially those in rural areas are getting this lifesaving information in the language they understand.

This study revealed that lack of information in the language that is familiar to the vulnerable and underprivileged rural residents may soon be the culmination of the spike in community infection if no intervention is put in place. On the other hand, continuing attitude of ‘business as usual’ in many high density areas of the cities has seen many people going about their normal business without following health preventive measures. People still market in crowded places; travel in congested minibuses without wearing face masks either through negligence or lack of knowledge.

The challenge faced by health agencies in the disseminating of COVID-19 information to the majority of Zambians is the ability to translate COVID-19 information into local languages. There is need of writing important health messages in the seven local official languages so that the majority of the people can access and understand the technical language used.

5. TRANSLATING COVID-19 TERMINOLOGIES TO TONGA.

In Zambia there are a number of organisations and agencies that use Tonga language to disseminate COVID-19 information. These organisations include the Zambian National Broadcasting Cooperation (ZNBC), local community radio stations in Southern Province, district public health centres in Southern and Central provinces and some faith organisations.

The challenge faced by these organisations in disseminating COVID-19 information is lack of language experts in Tonga. This study revealed that there was no consistency and uniformity in coming up with the equivalent COVID-19 words and terms in Tonga by these organisations. It was noted that each organisation had different terminologies for the same words.

6. 1 FORMATION OF TONGA WORDS FROM ENGLISH COVID-19 TERMS

This study in consultation with Tonga language experts from the Tonga section of ZNBC, Curriculum development Centre, Teacher education colleges and teachers of Tonga, developed the following Tonga terms used in COVID-19.

Method of formation	Explanation	Example
Borrowing	A term is borrowed with its meaning and Zambianised	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coronavirus- Koronavairasi• COVID-19- Kovid 19
Loan translation	Form and meaning of the word in the source language is kept but the word is translated using words from the target language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New normal- Buponi bwenzu• Self quarantine-Kulizandula omwini• Lockdown- Kujalilwa

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Contextual translation	What is translated is the meaning of the message in the source language rather than the words used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact tracing- Kulangaula bantu bakaswangana amulwazi mazuba masyonto ayinda • Mass screening and testing- Kufunyangulwa mubunji • Hand sanitisers- Musamu wakunana mumanza ujaya tuzunda. • Face mask- Kasabwe kakulivumba kumulomo akumpemo • Social distance- Mwaako
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7. DISCUSSION

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Ulanska, T (2014) "The Role of Linguistic Factor In Translation" *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 191 (2015) 2585 – 2587

Many terms used in the medical fraternity are not easy to translate to African language; consequently most of them are borrowed and transformed morphologically to suit the Zambian language orthography and phonology. As noted by Okonkwo (2016), technical terms should be translated in the language of the less educated individuals so that the message communicated is actualised. In the same vein, Madzimbamuto (2012) points out that this problem of failure to use local familiar languages to disseminate lifesaving information is complicated by the fact that most of the science and medical experts have no linguistic knowhow. "Terminology development in science and technology is more difficult because many African scientists may have no formal training in their mother tongue or another African language and language specialists usually have little background in sciences."

Apart from using the borrowing method in translation, public health workers use the loan method which is based on the linguistic perspective. This is the most common translation method where translators put much stress and concentration on the lexical and grammatical elements of the language used. This method is not reliable as some terms may be translated out of contextual meaning of their original source words. Osborn (2010) observes that it is of primary importance to accommodate a familiar language of the community so as to impart modern technology to the less privileged. This is the most fundamental reason why this study employed the Communicative translation approach to come up with the appropriate Tonga terms for COVID- 19. It cannot be gainsaid that Communicative translation perspective is the most appropriate method for translating as it is not easy to find equivalent terminologies in target Zambian language. Since translation is a mutual process of conveying meaning from one language to another, the most effective way is to translate the context of the original text rather than translating the elements of the source language.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study revealed that there is no much effort being put in place to ensure that important information about COVID-19 is disseminated in indigenous Zambian languages so as to reach out to the rural communities of the country. The researcher, working with Tonga language specialists, managed to translate the most pertinent COVID-19 terminologies from English to Tonga using the Communicative translation approach which is the most effective and appropriate approach to translation. It is seriously proposed that Zambian languages should be taught to health institution students to enable them communicate effectively to the majority of Zambians.

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