Igede Igbo Journal of Igbo Studies

Vol. 4 Number 1, 2019, 92 – 102

**TRANSLATION ERROR ANALYSIS IN TWO IGBO FILMS SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH**

**Felicia Oluchukwu ASADU**

**Mariam BIRMA**

**Gerald Osita NWAGBO**

**Abstract**

Subtitling is one of the audio visual methods/techniques available to a film translator to communicate to their new audience in another language different from the original language of the film. It is done by writing at the bottom of the screen, what the actors are saying,for the comprehension of viewers who speak other languages other than the language of the film. This paper investigates the different types of errors made by amateur subtitlers in films. Two home videos titled

**Felicia Oluchukwu ASADU**

Department of Modern European Languages

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Nigeria .

[asaduoluchukwu@yahoo.com](mailto:asaduoluchukwu@yahoo.com)

**Mariam BIRMA**

Department of French,

Ahmadu Bello University

Zaria- Kaduna State, Nigeria

[mariambirma@yahoo.com](mailto:mariambirma@yahoo.com)

**Gerald Osita NWAGBO**

Dept. of Linguistics, African and Asian Studies

University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos.

[osynwagbo@gmail.com](mailto:osynwagbo@gmail.com)

*Nkiru the Slave Queen* and *Pino Pinoasamma* were randomly selected for this study and descriptively analyzed. These were all produced in 2018 in Igbo Language and subtitled in English. It was found that the two films contained various kinds of errors in the subtitles as follows: transfer errors, spelling errors, omission errors and grammatical errors. In this paper, therefore, the correct versions of the words and sentences were identified and recorded. It is argued that, a good subtitled film in English helps the viewers to acquire more vocabularies and structure of English, while subtitled films with errors mislead, demoralize, hinder and constrain the capacity of the viewer to learn correct English usage.

**Introduction**

Nollywood is Nigeria’s movie industry by Nigerian production teams for the Nigerian people while African Magic Igbo is the movie industry by Igbo production team for Igbo people especially the Igbo non elites. Subtitling is a form of Audio Visual Translation (AVT) in which the verbal dialogue is written below the screen. Supporting this, O’Connel 2007:169 defines subtitling as “supplementing the original voice soundtrack by adding written text on screen”. Gottlieb 2004:240defines subtitling as: “a process which entails technically transferring a SL movie or audiovisual media, synchronized with the original verbal message.” According to Gottlieb 2004:247, there are two types of subtitling: 1.intralingual subtitling which involves “taking speech down in writing, changing mode but not language.” 2.Interlingual subtitling involves “the subtitler crossing over from speech in one language to writing in another, thus changing mode and language”(247).This work borders on the interlingual subtitling of two Igbo movies subtitled in English. Subtitling enhances meaning, so a film which is not well subtitled will lose its meaning and that is the thrust of the paper. The researchers have found out that most of the films subtitled in English are full of errors.

**Importance of subtitling**

Films are produced mainly for commercial purposes, hence Igbo films subtitled in English will have a higher audience subscribing to it than one without subtitles. Also for deaf people subtitledmovies will be their favorite. A subtitled movie could be watched anywhere, in the church, meeting through phones by putting the audio in mute.A good subtitled movie helps audience who are not competent in the language of the subtitler to learn the grammar of that language.Subtitles improve one’s reading,comprehension and understanding.

**The quality of subtitles**

Subtitles are most appreciated when the translation of every verbal film segment or caption is analysed stylistically and semantically in order to identify areas of weaknesses. Gottlieb argues that to assess the quality of a certain subtitling, the translation of every single verbal segment of a film must be analysed in terms of its stylistic and semantic values.Gottlieb developed a typology of subtitling strategy made up of 10 approaches to assist subtitlers as follows: 1) Expansion, 2) Paraphrase, 3) Transfer, 4) Imitation, 5) Transcription, 6) Dislocation, 7) Condensation, 8) Decimation, 9) Deletion, and 10) Resignation (1992:166).Similarly, Pedersen 2017 has identified three parameters that are used to test quality translation. They are viz:functional equivalence, acceptability and readability.These approaches will be explored in assessing the corpus of this study.

FAR Model

Functional Readability Acceptability

Equivalence

Segmentation and spolting Grammar

Semantic errors punctuation and reading spelling

Stylistic errors speed line length idiomaticity

For Gottlieb,“functional equivalence” has to do with subtitles that convey speaker’s meaning.Acceptability is where the subtitles sound correct and natural in the target language while readability means that the subtitles can be read in a fluent and non-intrusive way”(210). For the purpose of this work, acceptability errors will be used to analyse this work. He classified acceptability errors into three viz:grammar errors, spelling errors and errors of idiomaticity. Spelling errors are further classified into three which could be serious, standard and minor errors.

If it is just a spelling error it will be considered a minor error but if it changes the meaning, it is considered as standard errors. Serious errors produce false or misleading informationwhile standard errors are those that hamper comprehension. Minor errors are those of capitalization, apostrophes and insertion of small word.(Romero-Fresco 2017). In addition Baker (1992:40-86) has identified 3 categories of omission in translation: 1) omission in word or expression, 2) omission in idiom, 3) omission in content of information. Consequently, Gambier cited by Mariam 2017 says“English subtitles in Nigerian language films and home videos should be accessible and viewer friendly: relevant, intelligible, clearly legible, readable and demanding little cognitive effort to follow”.

**Methodology**

Data were gathered from secondary sources due to the nature of data required such as online video and home movies. Two Nollywood films were used in the study namely “Pino PinoAsaNma” and Nkiru the slave queen. Out of the total number of subtitled films in Igbo which are indeterminate, the two films were randomly chosen. The limitation to two films was informed by time and resources. The study uses descriptive methods in analysis; the verbal dialogues were examined together with the translation (subtitles) in order to assess the quality of the translation/subtitling.

**Data presentation and analysis**

Data is presented and analysed below:

**Transfer Errors**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S/N | MOVIE | UTTERANCE | SUB TITLE | CORRECTION |
| 1 | PinoPinoAsaNma | Ịhụla ihe imere | See what you have coursed | Have you seen what you caused |
| 2 |  | Achọghị m ka agba m egbe. | I might not be shoot | I don’t want to be shot |
| 3 |  | … kpọga ya sikịa | …take you to Sycyratic hospital | …Take him to psychiatric hospital |
| 4 |  | N’ezienanị̀ gị̀ bụ nwoke ihe ya masị̀rụọ m na ndi ikom nile biara ka ha lụọ m | Honestly speaking, you are the man I love among the men that are comming after me. | Honestly speaking, you are the only man I love among the men that came to marry me |
| 5 | Nkiru the Slave Queen | Keduiheezenaụlọ m mere. | What have my family got to do with this? | What has my family got to do with this?  What did my family do? |
| 6 |  | Tochukwuogeeruolamgbeị ga-ala. | Tochukwu its time for you back off let me see her off. | Tochukwu, it is time for you to leave |
| 7 |  | Ị dị very stupid, m gakpọrọ gịọha obodo. | That I am very stupid? You will summomn the villagers | That I am very stupid? You will summon the villagers |

The data shows a total of seven transfer errors in the two films; four found in *PinoPinoAsaNma*, and three found in *Nkiru the Slave Queen*. In sample 1, the utterance is a question I hula ihe I mere? But the subtitle is a plain or declarative sentence, *see what you have coursed*. The problem with this kind of error is that the declarative form fails to capture the effect of the original utterance which is an interrogative. In sample 2, the utterance *achọghị m ka agba m egbe* is incorrectly transferred in the subtitle *I might not be shoot*. The use of the modal verb *might* in the subtitle weakens the original utterance expressed in the verb *want* which is not used for polite expressions. In sample 3, the utterance *… kpọga ya sikịa* is not correctly transferred in the subtitle‘*…take you to Sycyratic hospital’*thereby creating a confusion in meaning.

Instead of the third person plural form ya ‘him’, the subtitle uses ‘you’ and thus fails to refer to the right person in the film. In sample 4, the subtitle did not adequately transfer the meaning of the utterance, especially with respect to the adjective naani ‘only’ and the verb *lụọ* ‘marriage’. First the subtitle did not suggest that the referent is the only man out of the lot that the lady loved. Second, the idea of ‘*men that are coming after me’* as translated in the subtitle could mean people coming to attack or kill her, and does not totally reflect the idea of men seeking her hand for marriage.

In the second film, *Nkiru the slave queen*, the subtitle did not adequately transfer the meaning of the utterance *Keduiheezinaulo m mere*? In sample 5. The subtitle *what have my family got to do with this* is an obvious inquiry about the involvement of the family in the matter, and not what the family did which is the intended meaning. In sample 6, the idea of back off in the subtitle is different from the intended meaning in the utterance which is actually to go home. Back off is actually a charge or command different from the polite expression in the utterance. In sample 7, the utterance is in the first person pronoun *m* ‘me’/’I’ while the subtitle is in the second person *gi* ‘you’ thus creating referential confusion. These transfer errors affected the meaning of the actors’ actions in the films.

**Grammatical Errors**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S/N | MOVIE | UTTERANCE | SUB TITLE | CORRECTION |
| 8 | PinoPinoAsaNma | Ole ị̀hị̀ị̀jere n’ụlọ Ifeacho ime? | What did you went Ifeacho’s compound to do? | What did you go to Ifeacho’s compound to do? |
| 9 |  | E tinyereyaọgbaghara | I have putting him into confusion. | I have confused him. |
| 10 |  | Chefuoafọ ole mgbagoro, m ga-eme ụzọ abụọ karịa ụmụ aka ahụ | Forget about my age I can do double of whatever those young boys does. | Forget about my age I can do double of whatever those young boys do. |
| 11 |  | Ị bụ onye iberibe | You are an idiots | You are an idiot |
| 12 | Nkiru the Slave Queen | Keduiheezenaụlọ m mere. | What have my family got to do with this? | What has my family got to do with this?  What did Eze and my family do |
| 13 |  | Ịnụọla ekpere nna gi Ogechi. | Did you hear your father prays Ogechi. | Did you hear your father pray Ogechi. |
| 14 |  | anụọra m iyi na m agaghị ele nwanyịọzọ anya… | I swear not admire another woman… | I swear not to admire another woman…  I have sworn not to admire another woman |

Seven grammatical issues were found in the two films, four occurring in *PinoPinoAsaNma*, while three occurred in *Nkiru the Slave Queen*. In sample 8, the subtitle used two past tense English forms. *What did you went*thus violating the rule of concord. In sample 9, the subtitle used the gerund *putting* instead of the simple verb *put* and makes the sentence look like a continuous action instead of a perfected one. In sample 10, the subtitle used the plural verb *does* against the preceding plural noun *young boys* and thus violates the rule of concord. In sample 11, the subtitle used the plural form *idiots* to refer to a singular subject *you* instead of the singular form *idiot*. In the second film Nkiru the slave queen, (sample 12), the plural form of the verb *have* is used in the subtitle to refer to a single entity *family* instead of the singular form ‘has’. The same issue of verb occurs in sample 13 where the plural form of the verb *prays* is used in the subtitle to refer to a single person *your father* instead of the singular form ‘do’. In sample 14, the utterance is in the perfective tense *anụọra m iyi*‘I have sworn’ but the subtitle renders it in the present continuous, thereby creating a problem of time of action.

**Spelling Errors**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S/N | MOVIE | UTTERANCE | SUB TITLE | CORRECTION |
| 15 | PinoPinoAsaNma | Ịhụla ihe imere | See what you have coursed | See what you have caused  Have you seen what you caused |
| 16 |  | … ọ naghị aza ekwe ntị̀ m | … but he is not peaking my calls | … but he is not picking my calls |
| 17 |  | Ikpere m dị n’ala. | I am on my knell pleading. | I am on my knees pleading |
| 18 |  | … kpọga ya sikịa | …take you to Sycyratic hospital | …take you to psychiatric hospital  …Take him to psychiatric hospital |
| 19 |  | … tutu ị̀ tụọ nwa m ime | … before inpregnating my daughter | … before impregnating my daughter  …before you impregnate my daughter |
| 20 |  | Nọọ, ole ihe ịchọrọ? | You are wellcome, what do you want? | You are welcome, what do you want? |
| 21 |  | N’ezienanị̀gị̀ bụ nwoke ihe ya masị̀rụọ m na ndi ikom nile biara ka ha lụọ m | Honestly speaking, you are the man I love among the men that are comming after me. | Honestly speaking, you are the man I love among the men that are coming after me.  Honestly speaking, you are the only man I love among the men that came to marry me |
| 22 |  | …asịịrị na m enweghi ego, nga ele anị m’ọbụ aga m ohi. | …if I can’t, I will sell my land or I will stealth | …if I can’t, I will sell my land or I will steal |
| 23 |  | Echere m naị sịrị na ị dịghị achọ ihe n’egbuka egbuka | I thought you said you don’t like flasy things | I thought you said that you don’t like flashy things |
| 24 | Nkiru the Slave Queen | Ị ma mbatakwa ebe a | You are not coming imnside | You are not coming inside  You will not come in here |
| 25 |  | Ị dị very stupid, m gakpọrọ gịọha obodo. | That I am very stupid? You will summomn the villagers | That I am very stupid? You will summon the villagers |
| 26 |  | Papa, nwa gị enwela ego | Papa, youir son is welthy | Papa,your son is wealthy |
| 27 |  | Mgbeọgụchala… | When she grafduates… | When she graduates… |

Spelling errors accounts for the majority of errors found in the sample. On the whole there were thirteen spelling errors. Minor errors are found in the way the following words were mis-spelt by the subtitlers of the two films. From the film titled *PinoPinoAsaNma* the following words were mis-spelt: *coursed* instead of caused (sample 15), *peaking* instead of picking (sample 16), *knell* instead of knee (sample 17), *sycyratic* instead of psychiatric (sample 18), *inpregnating* instead of impregnating (sample 19), *wellcome* instead of welcome (sample 20), *coming* instead of coming (sample 21), *stealt* instead of steal (sample 22), *flasy* instead of flashy (sample 23). In the second film the following spelling errors were found: *imside* instead of inside (sample 24), *summomn* instead of summon (sample 25), *welthy* instead of wealthy (sample 26), and *grafduate* instead of graduate (sample 27).However, it is noteworthy that, although these words were mis-spelt on the screen,they did not hamper the comprehension of the meaning.

**Omission Errors**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S/N | MOVIE | UTTERANCE | SUB TITLE | CORRECTION |
| 28 | PinoPinoAsaNma | anụọra m iyi na m agaghị ele nwanyịọzọ anya… | I swear not admire another woman… | I have sworn not to admire another woman |
| 29 | Nkiru the Slave Queen | Tochukwuogeeruolamgbeị ga-ala. | tochukwu its time for you back let me see her off. | Tochukwu, it is time for you to go back |
| 30 |  | Nkiruagaakpọ nga gịnị? | Nkiru the meaning of this? | Nkiru what is the meaning of this? |
| 31 |  | … tutu ị̀ tụọ nwa m ime | … before inpregnating my daughter | …before you impregnate my daughter |
| 32 |  | Ị ma mbatakwa ebe a | You are not coming imnside | You will not come in here |

Errors of omission constitute the least number of errors in the data. Five errors of omission were found in the two films. In*PinoPinoAsaNma*, (sample 28), the subtitle omitted the infinitive *to* rendering the sentence incomplete. The same thing happens in sample 29 where the infinitival *to* is omitted in the sentence. In sample 30, the question word *what* is omitted in the subtitle and the omission makes it difficult to know that it is an interrogative expression. In sample 31, the second person plural *you* is omitted in the subtitle; although the meaning of the utterance was transferred, the referent *i* ‘you’ is missing in the subtitle. In sample 32, the subtitle omitted the demonstrative *ebe a* ‘here’ as seen in the utterance. The omission renders the subtitle less emphatic. It is seen that omission errors had different effects on the subtitles and the overall meaning of sentences in the data.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper has examined the different types of errors made by amateur subtitlers in two Igbo films titled ”PinoPino AsaNma” and “Ego Ego the Slave Queen”.The errors identified are as follows: seven transfer and grammatical errors, thirteen spelling errors and five errors of omission. The correct versions of the words and sentences were given. The researchers recommend the followings:1.The film producers should engage the services of translators to edit the subtitles before marketing their films in order not to lose their customers because of poor subtitle defects. 2. There should be a body responsible for viewing the subtitled films before they are finally pushed into the market because this will boost the image of Nollywood and Nollywood Igbo in particular. 3. There should be subtitle editors that edit the subtitles. 4. Understanding the two languages and downloading the translation software are not adequate for someone to produce a good subtitled film. All these suggestions if taken will minimize the errors found in some of our home videos subtitled in English because a good subtitled film in English helps the viewers to acquire more vocabularies and structure of English, while subtitled films with errors mislead, demoralize, hinder and constrain the capacity of the viewer to learn correct English usage.

**References**

Baker, M*. In Other Words*: *A Coursebook on Translation*, London and New York: Routledge, 1992.

Birma, Mariam. “Subtitling Kannywood Movies: Challenges in Meeting the needs of the Global Audience” paper presented at the Pan African Conference on Working with Languages in Local Communities which held in Nairobi, Kenya from 28 – 29 November, 2018.Pp 2.

Gottlieb, H. “Subtitling- a new University discipline’’ D.cat, A. Loddergaard (Eds.), Teaching Translation and Interpreting Training Talent and Experience, John Benjamins,Amsterdam (1992) pp 61-70.

Gottlieb, H.‘’ Texts, Translation and substitling in theory and in Denmark’’ Translators and Translations (2001), pp 149-192

Gottlieb, H. Language – Political Implications of Subtitling P. orero (Ed) Topics in Audovisual Translation, John Benjamins publishing Company, Amsterdam (2004) pp.240-247.

O’ Connell, E. Screen Translation: Kuhiwczak P, Littau K, editors. A companion to TranslationStudies. Multilangual Matters Ltd, Toronto: 2007:pp 120-133.

Pedersen, J. How is Culture Rendered in Substitles in Gerzymisch- Arbogast H, Nauert S., editors.Challenges of Multidimensional Translation , Proceedings of the Mutra conference in Saarbrucken, Germany, 2-6 May 2005. Pp 113-129.

Pedersen, J. The FAR model: assessing quality in interlingual subtitling J. Spec Transl. 2017 (28) : 210-229 Gottlieb, 1992.

*Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies,* London and New York: Routledge, 1998.