

Linguistic Errors in Shop Signs in Erbil City

This study aims at investigating the language of business in Erbil city – the capital of Kurdistan region- to figure out how often shop signs fail to convey any relevant information to target language readers.

These errors are classified into three categories:

- 1) Spelling
- 2) Grammar –most frequent
- 3) Word choice

This study supposes the reasons behind these sorts of errors include:

- A) Translator's language incompetence
- B) Translator's carelessness
- C) The socio-cultural differences among English, Arabic, and Kurdish.

Following the methodology adopted by Al-Kharabsheh (2008), four main types of errors have been identified:

A) Orthographic errors affecting the message

B) Transliteration

C) Translation errors

D) Avoidance of translation via recouring to total foreignization demonstrating ignorance at best.

Results:

1) Orthographic errors are cognitive errors consisting of the substitution of a deviant spelling for a correct one when the writer simply doesn't know the correct spelling of a particular word or forgot it or misconceived it (ThambiJose, 2014, p.2439). One can find two important characteristic features of orthographic errors.

A. They generally result in a string which is phonologically identical or very similar to the correct strings.

For example, prefre instead of prefer.

B. Proper names, infrequent words (uncommon words) and borrowed words are particularly prone to orthographic errors.

For example, datem instead of datum.

To illustrate this category of errors, consider the following example:

- 1) LORIS Parfume
- 2) Chat coffe
- 3) FisHouse.
- 4) LABoss LUAY.
- 5) ROYAL FOR CURTANIS
- 6) International Developmant Bank
- 7) Cosmetiques
- 8) Tabuu
- 9) Koton
- 10) Vertu (Boutique Erbil)

Grammatical Errors

Most of grammatical deviations are simple and straight forward and don't seriously affect the conveyed message. These include:

- A) Inappropriate use of the plural form
- B) The wrong word order.

At the same time, there are instances of signs in which target text structure seems odd and somehow disturbed. It refers to the insertion of the superfluous preposition *for* in target translation. They also include the wrong word order and the wrong part of speech as follows:

11) 4 U for covermobil

(12) Femin

(13) Price صرفه

*Price (exchange)

(14) Opal Optik

(15) Coffee prince

(16) The future embracing the heritage.

(17) Live olive (Aleppo soap)

(18) Kitchen tasty

Transliteration Errors

Transliteration is the task of converting a word in one language into a sequence of characters from a different language while attempting to best approximate the native pronunciation.

Similar to grammar errors, some of transliteration errors are slight and have no effect on the conveyed message of shop signs. The focus will be on the diacritization (vowelling) and gemination (consonant lengthening) which are related to the transliteration process and usually lead to more serious translation problems. It will also pay attention to the addition of ي) (although it is not available in the original sign due to the intensive effect of the mother tongue.

(20) Rawah pomegranate

Rawwah

(21) كومبانياي بون فوياج (21)

BonVoyage company

(22) British international Institute

سٺٺري بٺريٺاني نيودهٺولٺٺي

(23)Ashna restaurant

خوار دنكٺي ئاشنا

(24) هوتيلي ئاكار (24)

Akar Hotel

Inappropriate Lexical Choice:

This type of translation errors has been repeated in the collected data. The reason behind that is the lack of the translator's and owner's awareness. The choice of a catchy shop sign is not a matter of writing any English word. Beside the linguistic, cultural, and social features, it must be chosen according to the habits, traditions, and the religion of place residents. The following examples reflect the absence of all these considerations.

(28) Harveys furniture store

(29) German restaurant and beer garden

(30) Barista Coffee

- Example 28 has used the word 'Harveys' which is a company for selling wine in Bristol. This word has nothing to do with furniture store and it reflects the shallow information of the shop owner. Example 29 has chosen "German" , and there is no German dish, though. It also uses "beer garden" which is an exotic expression to the culture and the tradition of the people of Erbil city. Example 30 has chosen the word " Barista" which means a person serving in a coffee bar. This word is a little bit awkward and it is not acceptable a lot. Besides, the wrong lexical choice is used. This appears in the word "coffee" instead of " café".

The Translation of Proper Names

- Proper names are specific names assigned to places. So any name given to a business store and appears on a shop sign is dealt with as a proper name. It is a well-known fact that proper names are not usually translated. The main reason behind that is that proper names have no connotations and are the same in most languages. The problem with this category of errors is that most of the shop names are translated literally which is considered as an error and against the above mentioned rule.

- (31) hotel qasar basha
- Pasha palace hotel.
- (32) جمعية الامل
- Al-Amal hope center.
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- Here, the translator resorts to the literal meaning of the shop signs while the appropriate translation of such proper nouns is the use of transliteration technique. These errors are not much common in Erbil city but they are confusing. In example 31, the source sign implies that the hotel is big, prestigious, and providing five-star services but the target translation means it is only big and might the intended meaning not come to the reader's mind. Example 32 has two errors which is the repetition of the word (أمل) as transliterated and translated. Once the translator has used (Al-Amal) , there is no need to translate it. This reflects the carelessness of the translator. This tendency reflects the desire of the shop owner to show abreast to modernity and, in turn, to boost sales.

Culturally-Based Translation

- Jensen (2009) says that differences in culture pose several challenges to the translator. The most obvious problem is probably what is sometimes called cultural words which are words or phrases that are difficult, and often impossible, to translate. They are difficult to translate because they are deeply rooted in the culture and values associated with the source language but are not part of the cultural context of the target language. Often, the translator will have to paraphrase them, come up with an inaccurate 'equivalent' or even coin a whole new word in the target language as you see in examples 34 and 35.
- Al-Athwary (2014) says that signs in the public space cannot be denied as one of the main carriers of ethnological culture, and the meaning of the signs should not only implicate the entity but also connote the notion of culture. As a result, shop signs translation from Arabic or Kurdish into English is not only a bilingual activity, but also a bicultural activity.
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- (33) Altin Saray (Restaurant and café)
- ميني ماركي تي جاوي جاوم (34)
- جيشخانه وكتبابي جقر كي جقر كم (35)
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- As mentioned above, a single lexical item can sometimes destroy the general intended message of the shop sign due to first the socio-cultural differences between SL and TI and second due to the odd linguistic structure of shop sign texts which don't exceed the form of words, phrases, and compounds, a linguistic property makes each word enjoy a greater semantic status than it would have in other larger texts. In 33, for example, the translator refers to the transliteration strategy instead of the translation one thinking that this kind of buildings is not part of the western culture and ,consequently, has no English equivalent while it is.
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Informativeness Errors

- Errors caused by loss or change of information in TL message are usually classified as mistranslation on the cultural level. Al-Kharabsheh et al. (2008) call this approach “reductionist “ by which some information are lost due to translator’s carelessness or due to spatial considerations governed by the size and the cost of sign compelling the translator to be short and brief in the translation of shop signs.
- (36) Jame3 Anwa3 Alal3ab
- Space toon
- (37) کومبانياي بون فوياج بو فروکتواني وکتشت وکوزار
- Bon Voyage company
- (38) Jame3 Anwa3 Alkhubaz w Almu3ajanat
- Bakery and more
- (39) Jame3 Anwa3 Almalabs Alshabbiya likila Aljinsen
- Dockers
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Conclusions:

- This study has revealed that the current situation of the translation of signs in the streets of the capital of Kurdistan -Erbil- suffers from deficiency and it is not satisfactory. Translation problems found in this sample of this study are mainly spelling, grammatical, and lexical.
- These errors cause a kind of misunderstanding and confusion for foreigners. Reasons lay behind these errors include translators' language incompetence, translators' carelessness, socio-cultural differences among English, Arabic, and Kurdish interference. In other words, most of the errors that deal with the incorrect lexical choices and literal translation have come about partly because of the failure of the translator to pay sufficient attention to semantic boundaries between lexical items in English, Arabic, and Kurdish as well as to the failure to stick to the rule prohibiting verbatim translation of proper nouns. In order to avoid such errors, it needs paying great attention by translators, communicators, shop owners, and the local authorities as well.