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Translating Medical Terms into Tiv Language – Problems and Prospects

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Abstract

The issue of translating medical concepts in Tiv language should be viewed with great concern, interest and attention. This has become necessary for most of our medical doctors and health workers who do not have the linguistic competence either in their mother tongue or in the language of the immediate community where they are working. Moreover, most of their patients are illiterates and cannot express themselves fluently in English language, which results into communication barrier. This paper therefore, intends to examine the importance of translating medical terms into Tiv language, suggest steps in translating medical terms into Tiv language and highlight the problems and prospects of the exercise in Tiv language.

Medical terms are terms used for the accurate description of the human body and associated components, conditions, processes and procedures in a science based manner. Term creation is part of linguistic engineering as it involves a systematic and organized adaptation of a language by acclimatization of neologies corresponding to new ideas. Language engineering is a mechanism of language planning that recognizes problems and moves on to “engineer” solutions to such problems. Owing to the fact that a proportion of our population is illiterate, there is an urgent need to translate and create where necessary medical terms in Tiv language to enable the illiterate dwellers benefit from the improved health care system and to enable them also improve their lives and society.

The Need for the Use of Tiv Language in the Medical Domain

The importance of using mother tongue or language of the environment in our daily activities need not be over-emphasized. This is because many scholars have proved that learning in one’s mother tongue yields maximum result as against learning

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in foreign language. Ikonne (2006) revealed that “Nigerian children will develop incuriosity, manipulative skills, spontaneous flexibility initiative, industry and manual dexterity if they are taught in their mother tongue” This was confirmed by the Ife experimental project also known as the SYPP. The Ife experimental project also revealed that:

“Primary education in mother tongue leads to more permanent literacy and numeracy”. It leads to faster and more rounded development of cognitive, affective and manipulative skills” Fafunwa (eds) (1989) also agreed that primary education in mother tongue has greater surrender value and makes the child a better adjusted citizen in the community.

Abiodun (2003) explained that “no foreign language can take the place of the mother tongue and no system of education can afford to disregard the native language without serious detriment to the mental development of the child”

Ubahakwe (2002) considering the injustice of being taught in a foreign language asked:

How could we harness indigenous knowledge, how could We generate local initiatives and mass participation in the Development discourse if the elites in Africa continue to Use languages that are not the language of the indigenous People?

UNESCO (2003) confirms through years of research that:

Children who begin their education in their mother tongue Make better start and continue to perform better than those For whom school starts with a new language. They not only acquire strong initial literacy skills, but also acquire second language faster when it is introduced later in the education cycle.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the use of mother tongue in all spheres of life facilitates and encourages mass participation. In the medical domain, it is imperative that people be informed, advised, treated and reassured in their native languages as any little mistake jeopardizes the life of the people. This friendly discussion in the native language will surely improve the healthy life style of the people and it will encourage their full participation in health care programmes.

Ndukauba (2007:146) affirmed that:

No other profession or institution has contributed More towards the cause of peace through mutual understanding than translation. The rural dwellers and illiterates need to understand the primary health care programmes, the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, the immunization against childhood Killer disease, care and treatment of malaria and tuberculosis among other ailments. They have to understand the why, how and method of birth control.

It is believed that one of the major causes of the increase in the spread of HIV/AIDS is the use of foreign language in disseminating information on this dreaded disease. There will be drastic reduction in its spread if information is disseminated in the local languages. If this is done, communication between health workers and their patients would be enhanced. Ross and Mico (1950:16) pointed out that “lack of communication is a possible barrier in health care services”. This is because where health services are accessible, they may be unacceptable to the patients because of the inability of the staff to communicate with those who are not literate in English language.

It is as a result of communication problem that most patients express half of their ailment expecting the doctor or health worker to imagine the rest. This may result into the misinterpretation of the patients’ condition, thereby leading to wrong prescription and administration of drugs which is very dangerous. This situation could be avoided if the communication between the health worker and the patients was done in native language.

Translation of Some Medical Terms in Tiv

A number of medical terms are translated into Tiv language here. The techniques used in the translation are also highlighted to include naturalization, analogy, idiomatic Rendering, and composition or compounding,

Naturalization

This is where a word is introduced from the source language into the target language using the orthography of the target language. This could also be likened to borrowing or loaning from one language to another. Borrowing simply means the process of taking words from one or more languages to fit into the vocabulary of another language. Such words are loan words. A loan word is that which a recipient language has lifted from a donor language to mean the same object and practice to which it originally referred to in the donor language. The fact here is that when a word is introduced into the target language from the source language, the pronunciation of the lexical item introduced from the source language into the target language changes to suit the phonology of the target language without a change in the meaning of such lexical items. For example.

Bacteria	Bataria
Germ	Jam

Gentine Violate (G.V.) – Jen Jen Vali		
Alcohol	-	Akoho
Asprin	-	Asipirin
Fever	-	Fiva

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Nurse	-	Noosu
Panadol	-	Panado
Syphilis	-	Sifilis
Virus	-	Vairusu
Andrew liver salf		Andru Liva sotu
Cancer	-	Kyansa

Acronyms

Acronyms can be used as a technique to translate medical terms into Tiv Language by creating new words from the initial letters of a set of other words. Words formed in this way are called acronyms. Acronyms often consist of capital letters as in AIDS (derived from Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)HIV (Derived from human immune deficiency)UNICEF (derived from united Nations international children's Emergency fund).

Coinage

This is a technique where terms are coined to be used in the language. It could be words that are in the archives but are revived and assigned new meanings or words that have been combined to form special terms. For example:

Veneral Disease-		Angev mbu sha mnyande
Casual Sex	-	Dasam Mnya
Lesbian	-	Kasev mba voson ayolave

Analogy

This technique involves naming terms based on their shape or function they perform. For example;

Meningitis – nombu (pulling in neck a disease that twists the neck.) the disease gets its name based on the way it twists the neck – the act of twisting. This is analogy of function.

Midwives – Kasevmbakoronmar. Here, you have kasev + mba + koron+ mar – women + Plu. + catcher + birth) women that catch birth-babies. The midwives protect the new born babies from falling. This is also an analogy of function.

Uterus - Ikpawan

Ikpa + Wan - bag + child

Uterus houses or carries the baby in the womb. Bag is also used for carrying things hence the Tiv terms Ikpawan – bag that carries the baby. This is an analogy of function since the uterus performs the same function with a bag.

Composition or Compounding

This is a process of joining two or more meaningful independent words to form a single word. A word formed in this way is known as compound word. Compounding

is a very productive morphological process in most languages including Tiv language. It does not only involve stringing together of words from a particular part of speech but words from different parts of speech can be stringed together to form compounding. For example:

- Antibody** - Kulayol (Kula + yol) N + N
 Defeater/Killer disease
 Disease Killer
- Immunization** - Iwambe + Kuman N + V
 Drug prevention
 Drug that prevents (infection)
- Micro-organism** - Anigor + mba cuku cuku (N + Adj)
 Germ minute – small small
 Small germ.
- Orogenital Sex** - Mnyam + madzwaa (N + N)
 Sex - Mouth
 Mouth Sex – oral sex
- Sexual Abuse** - Mnyam + ma sha agee (N + Adj)
 Sex - by force
 To have sex by force – rape
- Veneral Disease** - Angev + mbu mnyande (N+N)
 Sexual (veneral) disease

Idiomatic Rendering

An idiom is a form of an expression or word coinage which leads to the introduction of new words or extension of meaning of existing words. It is also a succession of words whose meanings are not obvious through the knowledge of the individual meanings of the constituent words which must be learnt as a whole. The use of idiom is peculiar to a society. Examples of idiomatic rendering include the following:

- Abstinence** - Mciruanam – closing of legs firmly
 Not having sexual intercourse
- Condom** - Ijubuorapireshe – sock for a blind man.
 Sock for the penis.
- Sexually Active** - Ornorkeghakegh – highly active /youthful
- Virgin** - Kwase/or uafe or /kwase ga yo
 Not knowing man /woman

Other medical terms can be translated to have direct equivalent meaning in Tiv language. Such medical terms that have direct translation and meaning in Tiv language include the following:

- Atrities - Akpiti
 Body pains - Iyol nyioon
 Blood/menses - Awambe

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Conjunctivitis	-	Apolo
Doctor	-	Ortwer
Disease	-	Angev
Diahorca	-	Akongu a haan
Fever	-	Tsee (iyol tseen)
Guinea worm	-	Mough
Hospital	-	Youchi
Herbs	-	Ahuracigh
Injection	-	Anula u kuman
Jaundice /yellow fever	-	Ayarikure
Medicine	-	Ichigh
Measles	-	Amire
Needle	-	Anula
Patient	-	Oruange
Pains	-	Mnyioon
Poison	-	Megh
Ring worm	-	Lagh
Sickness	-	Kwaghnyioon
Surgery	-	Ipaven
Tablets	-	Asangechii
Tuberkulosin	-	Hough baa
To fall sick	-	Gba-angev
Whitlow	-	Loho

Importance of Terminology in Translation

Translation is the transfer of meaning from one language to other. Translation is however, best summarised by Cartford (1965:20) as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by the equivalent textual material in another language (TL)" Translation and terminology are interwoven. The urge to append names to things, objects, organisms, skills etc. started long ago with the creation of the universe. Dubue (2000) explains terminology as " the approach that enables one to group and to structure a collection of terms peculiar to a technique or discipline" Terminology is the proper use of terms in all domains of study. It identifies and clarifies a term for effective communication and comprehension. A term is therefore, a specialized vocabulary hence not all words are referred to as terms.

It is important to note that terminology is very essential in translation practices, Terminology precisely defines things, objects, etc which makes the work of a translator easier. It facilitates the translator's work in locating equivalent terms in the desired target language. Terminology in translation helps in facilitating the transfer and dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge. In translating any works, the

translator needs to choose appropriate terms that correspond with the source language. Consequently, the translator uses terms created by the terminologist.

Suggested Steps in Translating Medical Terms into Tiv Language.

A number of steps to be taken in translating medical terms into Tiv language are suggested as follows:

The etymology of such medical terms should be understood before translating or creating their equivalent terms in Tiv language. You can also seek the views of medical experts for further explanation of difficult terms.

It is advisable to use medical dictionary in translation. Thoughtful coinage is preferable to haphazard creation of terms.

The opinion of native speakers and traditional medicine men should be sought in the translation of medical terms because the Tiv equivalent terms may exist in the archives.

It is advisable that terms that have already existed in the language and are already in use should not be translated e.g. Stroke, cancer, hypertension, etc. are found in most languages.

Problems of Translating Medical Terms into Tiv Language

A number of problems have been identified as factors affecting the translation of medical terms into Tiv language such problems include the following:

Lack of interest in the language by Tiv native speakers is identified as one of the major problems of translating medical terms into Tiv language. Many families can neither speak nor write the language. They prefer expressing themselves in English language.

Another problem is that many researchers are not encouraged to express and publish their works in Tiv language. This means that nothing is done materially or financially to assist the researchers.

There is impatience on the part of the translators or terminologist. This means that most translators or terminologists do not have the patience to exhaust all available means of ascertaining and proving that the terms do not exist in the archives before translating or creating the already existing terms.

The attitude of some of our medical experts and health workers also contribute to the problem. This is because they are not willing to cooperate with researchers especially in Tiv language.

There is no willingness on the part of government and individuals to sponsor research in the language.

There is also no proper documentation or storage of research for easy retrieval for future use. All these among other factors constitute problems of translating medical terms into Tiv language

Prospects of Translating Medical Terms into Tiv Language

Despite the numerous problems earlier mentioned, and with adequate coordination of relevant terminological research work, translation of medical terms in Tiv language has bright future. Moreover, this work will also encourage others to do more in the area of translation of medical terms into Tiv language. This will eventually result into the production of a large number of books and reference materials.

There will be accurate dissemination of information in medical domain. This is because, there will be correct medical terms with correct usage which will enhance communication. Medical practitioners and health workers would relate to their patients better, particularly on confidential matters for there will be no interpreter or translator.

There will be accurate interpretation of prescription and administration of drugs to avoid catastrophic end or death. This is because these medical terms will be understood now by both medical workers and patients for easy interpretation and administration of the drugs in the community. The misinterpretation and administration of drugs could be disastrous and irreversible.

There will be reduction in the spread of HIV/AIDS. This is because there will be accurate terms on HIV/AIDS in Tiv language and accurate dissemination of information on the dreaded disease in the language will greatly help to reduce its spread. All these help to show that there are prospects for translating medical terms into Tiv language.

Conclusion

Medicine is an area that has a large number of terms that need to be translated into Tiv language. For the people to have a successful health care delivery there must be effective communication between the health care provider and the consumer. The success of this communication therefore, depends on the understanding of the medical terms consequently there is every need to make available in Tiv language vocabularies and expressions that are commonly used in medicine. If this is done, it will reduce the problems that patients and medical workers have in understanding each other in Tiv language.

Recommendation

Owing to the fact that accurate and appropriate translation or creation of medical terms into Tiv language is of great importance in communication in the language, the paper therefore, suggests that;

The Tiv people should speak and use their language. Parents should expose their children to the language and should encourage them to use, speak and write the language. This is to ensure that there is intergenerational transmission so that the terms will not disappear gradually.

Translation and creation of medical terms should not be left into the hands of translators or linguists alone, but it should be the collaborative efforts of all including medical experts and health workers, herbalists, native speakers and linguists, so that they will come up with acceptable terms.

Finally, there is every need that registers for different professions should be taught in the mother tongue (Tiv language). This is to help members of such professions to be familiar and current with local terms in order to succeed in such profession.

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