

Transpositional Shifts in the Translation of Homophones from Mokpe into English Language in Cameroon.

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ABSTRACT:- Translators are constantly under the obligation of understanding the source language text and replicating meaning in the target language. In a bid to translate a functionally relevant text whose meaning comes across in the target language, there are bound to be some structural adjustments. These adjustments are what some scholars have termed ‘transposition,’ while others have merely referred to them as translation ‘shifts.’ The present study has combined the two terms hence, leading to the expression ‘transpositional shifts.’ It sets out to determine how shifts occur within the same language (Mokpe), especially with homophones, highlighting the fact that in translation, shifts occur both in monolingual and bilingual contexts. The study employed an exploratory and descriptive research design. Sixteen (16) homophone pairs were collected and analyzed using the descriptive translation studies (DTS) model. Sample sentences were provided to show how shifts occur during the process of translation. Findings reveal that that adjectives, nouns and verbs are the most recurrent categories in which shifts occur in Mokpe homophones and meaning between two homophone pairs is usually brought about due to changes in the voice pitch (especially with respect to adjectives and nouns). However, verbs do not usually undergo any shifts, no matter the change of voice pitch or tone. Translators are therefore urged to take note of these nuances when translating homophones from indigenous to non-indigenous languages.

Key Words: Transposition, Shifts, Translation, Mokpe, English

I. INTRODUCTION

The need for translation has become very crucial owing to the proliferation of languages on planet earth, at least to enhance cross-cultural communication. Catford (1978) defines translation as an art which consists in replacing source language (SL) textual material with equivalent target language (TL) textual material. Nida and Taber (2003), on the other hand, view translation as the process of producing the closest natural equivalent of the SL into the TL, which has a relationship with meaning and style. The question to ask is, how does one replace SL textual material with equivalent TL textual material as Catford opines? Also, how can the translator achieve the ‘closest natural equivalent’ according to Nida and Taber as s/he navigates through the iconic dimensions of the source and target languages? From these questions, one can safely submit that translation is not a mundane and marginal activity as the above definitions suggest. Rather, it is an art, an activity which is fraught with difficulties.

Commenting on difficulties, Hartono (in Widyadari, Ansas, Azizah, Widyana (2021:497) notes that there are three kinds of difficulties that translators usually face, namely linguistic aspects, cultural aspects and literary aspects. Thus, while linguistic difficulties relate to the translator’s inability to understand the sentence structure and long paragraphs with complicated grammar, the cultural difficulties refer to ‘when the translator encounters problems in finding equivalent terms related to material culture, cultural events, customs and sociocultural understanding, etc.’ Lastly, Hartono (in Widyadari et al 2021) notes that literary difficulties come into play ‘when translating idiomatic expressions, language style, word series containing alliteration or assonance, terms related to the setting and atmosphere in the story, and the names of the character owners.’

This study does not intend to over-emphasize or over-generalize on constraints faced by translators when translating literary texts or other text types. Rather, it sets out to look at shifts in the translation of homophones in Mokpe and how these shifts impact on the translation process when translating into another language. Homophones generally present constraints in their translation. They are said to be words that sound

the same but are different in meaning. Such words, when found in a text may pose problems of comprehension and consequently lead to mistranslation. The translator therefore, has to be very conscious of the meaning of homophones before rendering them into another language.

This study therefore proposes ‘transpositional shifts’ as an effective strategy to translate homophones from Mokpe into English. Thus, it is in sync with Hoed’s (2000) submission that “making a shift, whether shift in form or meaning is one way to overcome the problem of equivalence.” The term ‘transpositional shifts’ may be considered by some as a repetition and hence, misleading, since transposition is one of the techniques used in resolving structural difficulties when translating from one language to another. However, this term is deemed appropriate in the present study, which sets out to investigate how shifts occur in a monolingual context through changes in grammatical category, otherwise known as “transposition” in translational parlance. Homophone couplets have therefore been selected in the Mokpe language and shifts detected as these homophones are translated into English, hence drawing the attention of translators when translating especially from African indigenous languages to a non-indigenous language like English to be more careful with these word pairs.

Objectives of the Study

This study has the following objectives:

1. To determine why shifts occur during the process of translation within a monolingual and bilingual context?
2. To determine how shifts occur during the process of translation, with particular reference to homophones in Mokpe and how they impact translation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Meeting the above objectives will involve probing the core concepts of the study. Thus, the concepts homophones, transposition and shifts are discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

Homophones

Homophones are words that have the same sounds but different meanings. They are usually pronounced the same with other words even though they differ semantically. A typical example is the English words ‘there,’ ‘their,’ and ‘there.’ These English words have almost the same sound but they differ fundamentally. The confusion posed by these homophones and others has been an encumbrance to many native speakers of English as well as to non-native speakers who are learners of English. The situation is even made worse when we consider the pitfalls of homophones in a cross-cultural context. Thus, they are said to be words that have simply been recycled with the same spelling and pronunciation but with multiple meaning. For example, words like ‘bank’ and ‘mouse’ mean different things at different times. Thus, a ‘mouse’ can be said to be a pest, while another type of mouse can be used to navigate the internet. One can therefore agree with the Oxford dictionary that ‘mouses’ is a correct plural form for a computer connected device, while it would be incorrect to refer to a group of small rodents. They may instead be referred to as ‘mice.’ These examples point to the difficulty in translating homophones from one language to another, especially languages that are linguistically distant like Mokpe and English.

Commenting on the dilemma that homophones pose to translators, Levick (2017:1) notes that the translator is “bound by an assessment of the importance of sound and that of semantics, seeking a creative compromise between meaning and wordplay.” To further buttress the twin dilemma that homophones pose to translators, Levick (2017:1) attempts to distinguish between “homophobic translation” and “the translation of homophones.” Thus, while the former is ‘akin to the recreation of sense,’ the latter involves the recreation of sound. What can be gleaned from Levick’s submission is the fact that translators have the arduous task of fulfilling the twin obligation of replicating both the sound and the meaning of the original text when translating homophones from one language to another.

For their part, Bourse-Beier and Holman (1999:10) note that the situation is further compounded because “there is no agreement on the level of intervention permitted to the translator.” They do not make a pronouncement whether the translator should focus on sound and/or meaning when translating homophones.

Perteghella and Loffredo (2006:10) equally note that “the source text offers the starting point for a journey and becomes the space into and through which the translator is given the opportunity to explore creatively and perform his/her subjectivity.” It can reasonably be said that the apart from Levick, the other authors above are sitting on the fence as far as commenting on the translation of homophones is concerned. Thus, Levick himself seems to offer only a tentative solution when he observes as follows:

It therefore seems reasonable to assert that what links homophonic translation with my own approach to translation and indeed, with all types of translation, is the steps all translators must necessarily take each time they undertake a translation: namely those of interpretation, and of expression, or of re-expression. When reading a text to be translated homophonically, the translator must privilege certain sounds or a combination of sounds of this original and identify within the abundance of possibilities to translate each sound unit or combination of sound units in the language of translation, the combination they find the most fitting...(2017:3)

Levick seems to suggest that a good interpretation of the source language text and re-expression into the target language are necessary in rendering homophones from one language to another. However, he fails to point out how this re-expression will occur. That is why the present study seeks to find out how transpositional shifts occur when translating within the same language or from one language to another. The study therefore continues by looking at the concept of 'shifts' in translation.

What are Shifts in Translation?

Translation is a somehow complicated task that usually involves linguistic changes in the source language text. These changes are inevitable as a result of structural changes in language. Different scholars have used different appellations to describe the grammatical changes that occur when translators perform their operation. Catford (1965) talks of 'shifts' to describe the changes that are caused by the different features of the source and target languages while Nida (1969) terms as 'adjustments,' certain changes that are prompted by the different semantic setup of the source and target languages. Nida and Taber (1969) equally talk of 'restructuring' to describe a wide variety of discursal changes in the target language. For his part, Newmark (1982) talks of 'shift' or 'transposition' to talk of any changes that translators undertake on a regular basis to create the target texts.

Commenting on transposition, Newmark (cited in Nurmala and Alfitriana 2017)) equally notes that 'transposition is a form shift,' and argues that it is a translation process that occurs because of differences of grammatical structures between languages. Meanwhile, Sumatupang (1999) observes that meaning shifts occur as a result of differences in the view point and culture of speakers of different languages. The arguments of these scholars can be true to a very large extent, given that grammatical shifts are bound to occur when we move from one language to another. However, they fail to mention the fact that shifts may equally occur in a monolingual context. That is why this study looks at homophones in Mokpe, to show how shifts occur within the same language, not only in terms of meaning but equally in terms of grammatical categories, and how these shifts impact the translation process, especially when translating from an indigenous language like Mokpe into a non-indigenous language like English.

Klaudy (2005) proposed one of the most meticulously developed systems to describe changes that occur during the process of translation. He termed these changes 'transfer operations.' Klaudy bases his thesis on a contrastive approach and claims that these operations possibly involve the 'replacement' of the source language lexical units by target language ones, the restructuring of sentences, the changing of word order as well as the omission and addition of certain grammatical and/or lexical elements in the target language. The present study therefore seeks to operationalize on the above submissions by looking at how grammatical shifts occur in homophones within the same language, as far as meaning and grammatical categories are concerned. The study urges translators, especially those involved in translating from an indigenous language like Mokpe, to take these "transpositional shifts" into consideration in order to produce a functionally relevant text in the target language.

Theoretical Framework

Translation shifts or in the case of this study, 'transpositional shifts' are shifts that occur when translating a text from one language into another language either due to differences between the two languages or the translator's choice. It is therefore clear that shifts in translation occur either consciously or unconsciously. The theories that underpin this study are therefore reflective of the conscious and/or unconscious decision that the translators make when translating homophones from Mokpe into English. Thus, this study is guided by the sociolinguistics and communication theories as well as the skopos theory respectively. They are the focus of the ensuing discussion.

The Sociolinguistic and Communication Theories

Although carrying distinct designations, both theories are concerned with language as it is actually used by individuals in given communication situations rather than with language systems. Both are interested in

the participants involved in the communication process. According to two exponents of these theories Hymes (1974) and Gumperz (1982), the relationship between sociolinguistics and translation is a very natural one, since sociolinguistics deals primarily with language as it is used by society in communicating.

The major focus of the sociolinguistics and communication theories is meaning and how it is derived in the target language. For example, Reiss (1972) has highlighted the communicative aspects of translation by drawing attention to the use of functional equivalence. That is why in these theories, reference is usually made to the receptor language rather than the target language. The sociolinguistics and communication theories analyze language not so much in terms of structure but in terms of meaning and its communication function. The relevance of these theories to the present study can be explained by the fact that they seek to explain the communicative intent of the target language text (homophones), as inevitable shifts occur during the process of translation. This logically leads to the net theory, the skopos theory.

The Skopos Theory

This approach to translation studies championed by the German scholar Vermeer in the 1970s, represents a shift from formal equivalence-based translation theories to a more functional and sociolinguistic perspective to translation. Thus, by viewing translation as an action with a purpose, the skopos theory ushers in a new perspective on such aspects as the status of the source text and the target text, their relationship, the concept of translation, the role of the translator, standards and strategies.

Skopos is the Greek word for 'aim' or purpose and was introduced in the 1970s by Vermeer as a technical term for the purpose of translation and the action of translating. Vermeer believes that the purpose of the text should determine the translation strategies to be employed. It therefore goes without saying that the skopos theory focuses on the purpose of translation, which determines the translation method that are to be employed in order to produce a functionally relevant result, which is the target language text. Thus, in a nutshell, the skopos theory focuses on the purpose, the process and the product of translation. If one were to consider the fact that translation shifts occur as a result of the choice of the translator, then the relevance of the skopos theory to this study cannot be gainsaid, since this theory typifies a conscious choice or decision taken by the translator to produce a text that is deemed appropriate in the target language.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed an exploratory, descriptive, analytical and explanatory research design. Thus, to fully understand the concept of "shift," which is the main variable, the works of some prominent scholars, who researched on the area, has been examined. The work is placed within the framework of Nida's 'alteration' shift, which shows changes in grammatical categories during the process of translation. A coupled-pair of sixteen (16) ST and TT homophones were selected in Mokpe and translated into English to show how shifts occur when translating from one language to another.

The data for this study was collected qualitatively, mainly through focus group discussions with some persons who are very knowledgeable in the Mokpe language. Data was analyzed using Toury's descriptive translation studies (DTS) approach. The appropriateness of this approach can be explained by the fact that it enabled the researcher to identify the coupled-pair of homophones, describe their grammatical category and explain how changes occur within the same language (Mokpe) as well as during the translation process.

The research procedure involved making a series of field trips and engaging in focus group discussions with some persons who have a keen mastery of Mokpe. This culminated in the collection of 16 coupled-pair of homophones and running a tentative analysis to identify their different grammatical categories. Thereafter, they were classified according to their categories to ease understanding. Sentences were proposed, transcribed and then translated. The intention was two-fold: firstly, to enhance the understanding of even non-native speakers of Mokpe and secondly and most importantly, to show how shifts occur during the translation of homophones from one language into another. The data was presented in a tabular form to ease comprehension. The following table represents a five-point analysis grid

Table 1: A Sample Analysis Grid

S/N	Identification
1.1	ST1 TT1
1.2	ST2 TT2
	Description
1.3	Proposed Sentence 1 Proposed Translation 1
1.4	Proposed Sentence 2 Proposed Translation 2

1.5 Explanation: The occurrence of a shift within the Mokpe language and as one translates from one language into another is explained.

After having presented the methodology and the analysis grid, the ensuing section focuses on data presentation and analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of sixteen (16) homophone couplets were collected from the field. An analysis of the homophones indicates that they are essentially made up of grammatical categories, which include adjectives, nouns and verbs. They are presented in the following tables:

Category A1: Transpositional (Grammatical) Shifts from Adjectives to Nouns)

Table 2: Excerpt 1

S/N	Identification
1.1	ST1: Mòlònga TT1: Beautiful; Handsome
1.2	ST2: Mòlònga TT2: Bucket
	Description
1.3	Proposed Sentence 1: Mònjowà à hwéli molonga Proposed Translation 1: Mònjowà is beautiful
1.4	Proposed Sentence 2: Onò mgbé mongò mòlònga Proposed Translation 2: Give me that bucket

1.5 Explanation: The homophone couplet “mòlòngà” and “mòlònga” are adjectives and nouns respectively, even though they sound the same. The adjective has low tones in all the syllables while the noun has a high tone in the last syllable. The high tone in the last syllable of the noun constitutes the shift and brings about a semantic change, which translators should be aware of when embarking on their profession.

Table 3: Excerpt 2

S/N	Identification
2.1	ST1: ηmerze TT1: Daytime
2.2	ST2: ηmèrzè TT2: The pick of a bird
	Description
2.3	Proposed Sentence 1: Waànà hwa rza nànga o ηmerze Proposed Translation 1: Children don't sleep in the daytime
2.4	Proposed Sentence 2: Ingi ìnòni i hwawi ηmèrzè Proposed Translation 2: That bird has a long beak

2.5 Explanation: The homophones “ηmerze” and “ηmèrzè” are presented as adjectives and nouns respectively. While the adjective represents a particular period of the day, the noun represents an object (even though the latter can equally be used as an adjective to describe something). The shift is as a result of the high tone in the two syllables of the adjective. Whereas the noun (ηmèrzè) has low tones hence, resulting in a change in meaning.

Table 4: Excerpt 3

S/N	Identification
3.1	ST1: ηmàna TT1: Proverb or wise saying
3.2	ST2: ηmanà TT2: Child
	Description
3.3	Proposed Sentence 1: Meàna me Mòkpè Proposed Translation 1: Mòkpè proverbs/wise sayings
3.4	Proposed Sentence 2: Ngòmba à hwelì ndi ηmanà mòrzàlì Proposed Translation 2: Ngomba is a little child

3.5 Explanation: The homophone couplets “ηmàna” and “ηmanà” are adjectives and nouns respectively. Thus, while the adjective (ηmàna) describes a discourse type/genre, the noun (ηmàna) designates a person. There is a fundamental tone switch between them, which has brought about the grammatical and semantic shift. While the adjective has a low tone in the first syllable and a high tone in the second syllable, the reverse is true with the noun (that is, high tone in the first syllable and low tone in the second syllable). Translators should be very conscious of these “transpositional shifts” as they translate from one language into another, or run the risk of mistranslation.

Table 5: Excerpt 4

S/N	Identification
4.1	ST1: Ngàndò TT1: Christmas
4.2	ST2: Ngàndo TT2: Crocodile
	Description
4.3	Proposed Sentence 1: Ngàndò è hwelì ndi è hvonda yà mòmnyèngì Proposed Translation 1: Christmas is a time of joy
4.4	Proposed Sentence 2: E ngàndo è liyà o tenì yà màlihwa Proposed Translation 2: The crocodile lives in the water

4.5 Explanation: The adjective (ngàndò) describes a particular period of the year while the noun (ngàndo) designates a sea animal. While the adjective has low tones in both the first and the second syllables, the noun has a low tone in the first syllable and a high tone in the second syllable, hence, necessitating the shift as we translate from one language into another. This equally has a semantic impact, given the fact that the meaning of the word changes completely with this shift.

Table 6: Excerpt 5

S/N	Identification
5.1	ST1: Ng`òndò` TT1: Young Lady
5.2	ST2: Ng`òndò TT2: Groundnut
	Description
5.3	Proposed Sentence 1: Mèli à hwelì ndi è ng`òndò` yà gbamù Proposed Translation 1: Mary is a nice young lady
5.4	Proposed Sentence 2: O nò ηmbe ng`òndò na le`e Proposed Translation 2: Give me some groundnuts to eat

5.5 Explanation: The adjective describes a person, particularly a lady, while the noun designates an edible item or object. The fundamental shift occurs in the second syllable of the noun, which has a high tone, while the adjective has a low tone, hence, equally resulting in a change of meaning. The next set of transpositional shifts occur from adjectives to verbs. They are presented below.

Category A2: Transpositional (Grammatical) Shifts from Adjectives to Verbs

Table 7: Excerpt 6

S/N	Identification
6.1	ST1: Hvēndà TT1: Argument/argumentative
6.2	ST2: Hvēnda TT2: To close/shut
	Description
6.3	Proposed Sentence 1: Dàyiti à hweli hvèndà Proposed Translation 1: David likes to argue; David is argumentative
6.4	Proposed Sentence 2: Nà begì, hvènda liòhva Proposed Translation 2: Please, shut the door

6.5 Explanation: In Mokpe, the first homophone couplet (hvèndà) is used to describe someone who likes to argue (an argumentative person). That is why it is considered in the language as an adjective. The second couplet (hvènda) is an action word and therefore, a verb. Being an action word, there is a high tone in the second syllable of the verb as opposed to the adjective, which has low tones in both syllables. This explains the grammatical and semantic shift as one translates from Mokpe into English.

Table 8: Excerpt 7

S/N	Identification
7.1	ST1: Kumbà TT1: Proud
7.2	ST2: Kùmba TT2: To hit or knock
	Description
7.3	Proposed Sentence 1: òngo mòtò à hweli kumbà Proposed Translation 1: That man is very proud
7.4	Proposed Sentence 2: Mònjimbo à hweli à kùmbà liòhva Proposed Translation 2: Monjimbo is knocking on the door

7.5 Explanation: It is evident from the homophone couplets (Kumbà, the adjective and Kùmba, the verb) that there is a switch in tone in the grammatical categories, hence, giving rise to the shift. However, what translators should be conscious of is the fact that the verb takes two forms. Thus, in the infinitive form, the low tone is only in the first syllable. But the low tone is in both the first and the second syllables present continuous) at the time the action is being performed as seen in proposed translation 2. The next category of homophones to be looked at are the nouns.

Category B1: Transpositional (Grammatical) Shifts from Nouns to Adjectives

Table 9: Excerpt 8

S/N	Identification
8.1	ST1: Mbòkò TT1: Chair
8.2	ST2: Mbokò TT2: Cripple
	Description
8.3	Proposed Sentence 1: Mbuà à liya o mbòkò Proposed Translation 1: Mbuà is sitting on the chair
8.4	Proposed Sentence 2: Ehvorsi à hweli ndi mbokò Proposed Translation 2: Eposi is a cripple

8.5 Explanation: The noun (mbòkò) designates an object while the adjective (mbokò) describes the state of a person. The shift occurs as a result of the fact that with the noun, there is low tone in both syllables of the word while with the adjective, the first syllable has a high tone while the second syllable has a low tone. This slight difference can lead to mistranslation if not well handled.

Category B2: Transpositional (Grammatical) Shifts from Nouns to Verbs)

Table 10: Excerpt 9

S/N	Identification
9.1	ST1: Hv`ongɔ` TT1: Seed
9.2	ST2: Hv`ongɔ TT2: To choose
	Description
9.3	Proposed Sentence 1: ò oni tɛ hv`ongɔ` ò lùwà eèye Proposed Translation 1: When you plant a seed, you will get a tree/A seed begets a tree
9.4	Proposed Sentence 2: O ma hv`ongɔ e yaàng`ɔ? Proposed Translation 2: Have you chosen/Have you made your choice?

9.5 Explanation: The noun (hv`ong`ɔ) designates an object (seed) whereas the verb describes an action (to choose). Though both words sound and are spelt the same, the slight difference that brings about the grammatical and semantic shift occurs at the second syllable of the second word (ST2), which has a high tone, as opposed to ST1 where both syllables have low tones. This may prove a dilemma in translation if not well understood.

Table 11: Excerpt 10

S/N	Identification
10.1	ST1: Kɔ̀tɔ TT1: Fence
10.2	ST2: Kɔ`tɔ TT2: To rescue/To save
	Description
10.3	Proposed Sentence 1: è ngòwa è hweli o kɔ̀tɔ Proposed Translation 1: The pig is in the fence
10.4	Proposed Sentence 2: Yerzù ndi à jò k`ɔ̀tɔ Proposed Translation 2: Jesus is the one who saves (us)

10.5 Explanation: The homophone couplets (kɔ̀tɔ and k`ɔ̀tɔ) have much in common, in terms of sounds and number of syllables. However, the slight difference and hence, the shift that translators are bound to observe while translating is at the level of the second syllable of ST2, which has a high tone as opposed to ST1, which has low tones in both syllables. A shift further occurs when we do a reformulation of proposed translation 2, as in “Jesus is our saviour” instead of “Jesus is the one who saves us.” Thus, there is a shift from a verb (saves) to an adjective (saviour).

Table 12: Excerpt 11

S/N	Identification
11.1	ST1: mbàngù TT1: Tusk
11.2	ST2: Mbàngu TT2: Tailoring
	Description
11.3	Proposed Sentence 1: è nɔ̀`òkù è ohvì mbàngù Proposed Translation 1: An elephant has a tusk
11.4	Proposed Sentence 2: Mòkake à gbèyà ewòlo ya mbàngu Proposed Translation 2: Mokake is doing tailoring

11.5 Explanation: The homophone pairs differ slightly only in terms of tone at the second syllable. This difference causes a major shift in grammatical category, from noun to verb. In the event of a reformulation, (for example, Mokake is a tailor), we may observe a further movement from verb (tailoring) to noun (tailor). The translator is called upon to be conscious of these little nuances in order to avoid mistranslation. There are instances where no shifts occur at all in the homophone pairs as seen in the third category of nouns.

Category B3: Transpositional (Grammatical) Shifts from Nouns to Nouns

Table 13: Excerpt 12

S/N	Identification
12.1	ST1: Lìya TT1: Hand
12.2	ST2: Lìyà TT2: Palm tree
	Description
12.3	Proposed Sentence 1: Lìya l' amì li ohvi hwè`òno hweta Proposed Translation 1: My hand has five fingers
12.4	Proposed Sentence 2: O hwelì gbàhwa o mwanỳù yà lìyà Proposed Translation 2: There is a snake on top of the palm tree

12.5 Explanation: The difference between the homophone pairs is very minimal. Thus, there is a high tone in ST1 and a low tone in ST2. This surely explains the zero shift in grammatical categories, as the two pairs are said to be nouns, even though there is a semantic shift.

The next category of “transpositional” shifts focus on verbs and are presented below.

Category C1: Transpositional (Grammatical) Shifts from Verbs to Verbs)

Table 14: Excerpt 13

S/N	Identification
13.1	ST1: Lì inda TT1: To gossip or speak behind somebody's back
13.2	ST2: Lì indà TT2: To take long
	Description
13.3	Proposed Sentence 1: Lì rzà l'ò lì inda Proposed Translation 1: It's not good to gossip
13.4	Proposed Sentence 2: ò zra indà o èlùwà Proposed Translation 2: Do not take long in the market

13.5 Explanation: The homophone pairs are only slightly differentiated by the second syllable of the first pair, which has a high tone as opposed to the second pair with a low tone. This brings about a difference in meaning, which translators must heed to, though both remain verbs.

Table 15: Excerpt 14

S/N	Identification
14.1	ST1: Hvànja TT1: To chop something (usually with a machet)
14.2	ST2: Hvanja TT2: To jump
	Description
14.3	Proposed Sentence 1: Hvànja iìjà nà è hvaò Proposed Translation 1: chop the cone with the machet
14.4	Proposed Sentence 2: Hvanja o munayu yà è tehwlèlì Proposed Translation 2: Jump over the table

14.5 Explanation: Though there is an absence of grammatical shift, both pairs are different in meaning. This is brought about by the change in tone in the first syllable of both pairs. One has a high tone whereas the other has a low tone.

Table 16: Excerpt 15

S/N	Identification
15.1	ST1: Rzèle TT1: To lean
15.2	ST2: Rzèle TT2: To burn
	Description
15.3	Proposed Sentence 1: Rzèle likàlà o erzù Proposed Translation 1: Lean the ladder on the wall
15.4	Proposed Sentence 2: Rzèle luùtù Proposed Translation 2: Burn the refuse/dirt

16.5 Explanation: Though fundamentally different in meaning, both pairs of homophones only differ slightly in terms of tone in their first syllables (that is, high and low tones respectively). Both however, remain verbs.

Table 17: Excerpt 16

S/N	Identification
16.1	ST1: Rzòrzà TT1: To wash
16.2	ST2: Rzorzà TT2: To suck
	Description
16.3	Proposed Sentence 1: Rzòrzà lihwàtò koi koi Proposed Translation 1: Wash the dress clean
16.4	Proposed Sentence 2: è mwanà à rzorzà lihwè Proposed Translation 2: The child is sucking breast

16.5 Explanation: Like excerpt 15 above, both homophones can only be differentiated by the high and low tones in the first syllables, although they remain verbs. However, there is a noticeable change of meaning between the two words that translators must be conscious about.

After having presented some homophones in Mokpe and portrayed how shifts occur in the homophone pairs, the study continues with the presentation of findings and discussions.

Presentation of Findings and discussions

A total of 16 homophones pairs have been presented in this study. After a thorough examination, it was discovered that the grammatical categories under which these shifts occur in Mokpe include adjectives, nouns and verbs respectively. The homophone pairs were therefore classified under these three broad grammatical categories and the shifts observed accordingly. The findings are summarized in the following table, according to their frequency (that is, percentage) of occurrence.

Table 18: Frequency (Percentage) of Occurrence of Transpositional (Grammatical) Shifts of Homophones in Mokpe

S/N	Transpositional Shift	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage of Occurrence	Observation
1	Adjectives to Nouns	5	31.25	68.75 % of shifts
2	Adjectives to Verbs	2	12.5	
3	Nouns to Adjectives	1	6.25	
4	Nouns to Verbs	3	18.75	
5	Nouns to Nouns	1	6.25	31.25 % of no shifts
6	Verbs to Verbs	4	25	
	Total	16	100	100

Findings reveal that out of the 16 homophone pairs collected, the highest percentage of shifts (31.25 %) occur from adjectives to nouns, with 12.5 % occurring from to adjectives to verbs, 6.25 from nouns to verbs, and 18.75 % from nouns to verbs, giving a total percentage of 68.75 of transpositional or grammatical shifts in homophone pairs in the Mokpe language. The question that begs for an answer is, how do these shifts occur?

The shifts usually occur as a result of change of pitch or voice tone. It should be observed that the Mokpe language, which is spoken by the Bakweris who hail from Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon is a tonal language, like other Bantu languages across the country. The language (that is, Mokpe) uses two tones predominantly, that is, the high and low tones respectively. The high tone is not usually indicated in the syllables of words, whereas the low tone is indicated. Thus, from the homophone pairs collected, changes in the meaning of homophone pairs occur as a result of movement of the pitch of the voice, which results in either a high or low tone in one of the syllables of the words or at times in both syllables. For example, the adjective “kumbà,” which means “proud” in Mokpe becomes a verb, “kùmba” (to hit or knock) when the voice pitch rises from the first syllable to the second syllable.

It should be observed that these shifts usually occur only in adjectives and nouns, hence, bringing about a complete change of meaning. Thus, it is evident from the table above that despite the change in voice pitch and the meaning of the words, the homophone couplets, which are verbs do not observe any transpositional shifts. This is probably due to the fact that they are action words. Hence, once an action has been engaged, it is difficult to change.

Another important question is, does these shifts have any bearing on translation? This seems to be a rhetorical question as the answer is very obvious. A lack of understanding of homophones and the shifts that occur between them will ultimately lead to the pitfall of mistranslation and by implication, misrepresentation of a concept or an entire text to the target language community. Translators, especially those working from and into their local languages, are therefore called upon to have a rich repertoire of homophones and other word series, master the shifts that occur between them as they move between the iconic dimensions of languages.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study has examined “transpositional” shifts in homophones hence, cautioning translators to take these into consideration during the process of translating. A total of sixteen (16) homophone couplets were collected mainly through focus group discussions, and classified according to their grammatical categories. Findings reveal that shifts usually occur in homophone pairs involving adjectives, nouns and verbs. Thus, while shifts occur in adjectives and nouns, this is not the case with verbs where no shifts usually occur with the homophone pairs. The shifts are usually triggered by changes in the pitch of the voice, which may either be high tone or low tone. This brings about a complete change in the meaning of the word. Translators are therefore called upon to observe these changes or run the risk of mistranslation and consequently miscommunication.

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