

## **A Linguistic Analysis of Translation Errors on Selected Public Notices in Kenya**

**Macharia Daniel Maina**  
Laikipia University, Kenya  
Email: [machariadmm@gmail.com](mailto:machariadmm@gmail.com)

### **ABSTRACT:**

This paper purposes to analyse translation errors in selected Kenyan public notices. Specifically, it examines how translation faults possess unique linguistic resources. There is an extensive existence of this genre countrywide albeit without proper academic scrutiny to further interrogate fundamental linguistic concepts therein. It involves the application of the Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) which is unique to the analysis of this genre. Specifically, this research involves collecting data from the social media of the relevant public notices in Kenya. Generally, twelve signage were analysed. The sampling procedure was done purposively to include the diversity of Kenya. To qualify, the data collected had to reflect translation blunders. Then, the data was analysed for linguistic resources. The data was presented using a table showing the relationship between the components sought. Consequently, the study enriched translational linguistics, evaluated textual analysis and critiqued the linguistic concepts of performance and competence. Additionally, it provided useful insights into the cognitive mechanisms used during humour production and understanding.

**Key Terms:** Incongruity, Translation errors, Public notices, Script

\*\*\*

### **How to cite this article in APA (6<sup>th</sup> Edition)**

Macharia, D. M. (2019). A linguistic analysis of translation errors on selected public notices in Kenya. *Editon Cons. J. Lit. Linguist. Stud.*, 1(1), 1-12.

\*\*\*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Multi-nationals and government agencies spare no expenses for their commercial and civic objectives respectively: they seek professional consultants to deliver their messages across the designated consumers without a hitch (Barnes, 2012). Significantly, some multi-nationals may purposefully employ hilarity in their posters to enchant the target audience. This arouses considerable interest, creates proximity and strengthens the relationship with the audience. However, the government has no such obligation, and their language is not usually as rich.

Nevertheless, the majority of small-scale entrepreneurs cannot afford the professional services offered by consultants to produce error-free notices (Barnes, 2012). Thus, their resultant public notices: names of shops and schools, shop signs, hotel menus and warning signs, may contain a lot of errors. Since most of these notices are not written in the source language, translation gaps arise in the target language, thereby, creating funny signs posts that were not intended, and which eventually may not communicate. Significantly, a rich linguistic resource is clearly identifiable from these translational errors created on the public notices.

There is a big gap which has arisen where fundamental concepts in the linguistic field and other related academic disciplines has been denied an important opportunity to be further interrogated and scrutinised. These include linguistic concepts such as competence and performance, translational resources and script analysis among others. Therefore, this research highlighted these crucial issues and put them into a proper perspective, as well as, addressed the gap created therein. Furthermore, it attempted to fill the academic gaps created and to provide appropriate scholarly avenues for proper linguistic investigations and subsequent resolutions.

The paper sought to explore and subsequently analyse the unique linguistic resources elicited by translation gaps on selected public notices in Kenya. Specifically, for translational linguists, this paper aimed to scrutinise what might happen when language decoders, in everyday life, were engaged in an inter-lingual communication and what would be the conceivable repercussions. Even more importantly, commercial and public notice authors would also benefit from this paper. This would illuminate the unnecessary linguistic blunders that should be avoided in written advertisements and public notices, since they may affect the consumers' general perspective of the targeted businesses. In addition, educationists including learning institutions, especially at the basic level, might find this paper instrumental. While learning a second language, learners might encounter peculiar individual difficulties in translating important concepts, events, phrases, processes or words from the first language (especially mother tongue) to target language (English or even Kiswahili).

## **Literature Review**

Translational errors are effortlessly distinguishable from a closer analysis of the public notices in this paper. A translational error arises when a mistake is committed during the transfer of linguistic material from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL) (Hansen, 2008). These errors are mostly as a result of a lack of linguistic competence in the TL but may also occur because of a "misunderstanding", inaccuracies, mistakes and flaws of different linguistic components. The errors could occur at different linguistic levels including sound, word, meaning and style (Wu, 2013).

## **Translation and Text**

There is a remarkable difference between translation and interpretation. Whereas translation deals with written texts, interpretation considers spoken texts (Cohen, 1986). The current paper dealt with translation. Translation deals with the communication of the implication of an SL text

using a corresponding TL text (Wilson, 2009). According to Cohen, (1986:12), the term translation derives from the Ancient Greek's term called *metaphrasis*, which means "a speaking across". Furthermore, it derives the English terms meta-phrase and paraphrase. Thus, meta-phrase refers to a word-for-word translation, i.e. formal equivalence; whereas paraphrase is a way of saying in other words, i.e. dynamic equivalence.

Therefore, a translation can either be considered faithful or idiomatic (Cohen, 1986). Faithfulness, also called fidelity, refers to the accurate translation of a text without any distortion; whereas transparency, also called idiomatic translation, deals with how a translation truly conforms to the grammar and syntax of a language according to the native speaker (Cohen, 1986). Thus, on the one hand, critically considering the fidelity of a translation varies according to the topic, form and application of the text including qualities related to its literariness, social or historical setting. On the other hand, judging the transparency of a translation is more straightforward because a non-transparent translation sounds incorrect, e.g. machine translations. Schleiermacher (cited in Cohen, 1986; Shibles, 2001) distinguishes between transparent translation approaches (directing the writer towards the reader) and fidelity (directing the reader towards the author) to the foreignness of the source text. Moreover, dynamic or functional equivalence conveys the essential thoughts expressed in a source text while formal or literal equivalence attempts to render the text literally (Cohen, 1986).

Importantly, to enable apt translations, essential attributes are required. According to Wilson (2009), capable translators need to possess unique characteristics: they require an excellent command and knowledge of both the written and spoken SL and TL. Similarly, they must be conversant with the theme of the translated text. Then, they must possess a deep comprehension of the

"etymological" and transparent equivalents concerning the languages in question. Finally, they need to know when to translate literally and when to paraphrase to get an accurate and not false equivalent between the two texts. Moreover, a proficient translator needs to be fluent in two languages, as well as understand both cultures, because any proper understanding of language combines both aspects of language and culture whose mastery is very important (Cohen, 1986). From the above, it appears as if most of the authors of public notices were ignorant of these basic, translational features resulting in erroneous signage.

#### **Text as a Script**

Ideally, the concept of a script is crucial in understanding all the possible meanings elicited by a text. Thus, the text is understood from a context which includes all possible lexical and encyclopaedic knowledge (Attardo, 2001). However, Katz and Fodor (1963) divorce encyclopaedic knowledge from linguistic semantics. Nevertheless, Attardo (2001) questions the amount of knowledge that the speakers should have about the "extra-linguistic entity" designated by a word that should be represented in a lexicon.

Altogether, Attardo (2001) by using Raskin's (1985) analysis, argues that there is a big difference between linguistic and encyclopaedic knowledge. He gives the distinction as being more quantitative rather than qualitative, in relation to the proximity in which the scripts are associated. Persuasively, he proves that a huge quantity of contextual information has to be stored in the lexicon to be retrieved during the processing of sentences, as in the following example: *John stacked the beer in the fridge*. Accordingly, the word *beer* gives the semantic feature of "+Liquid", but the word "stack" includes the feature "- Liquid" (Attardo, 2001). Therefore, for someone to understand the above sentence, the person needs to have the encyclopaedic knowledge that "beer" may occur packaged; otherwise it would not make sense to use the

word "stack" in this context. Consequently, the information relating to words (lexical knowledge) and that pertaining to the world (encyclopaedic knowledge) must be consistently fused to derive meaning.

### **Language Resources in Public Notices**

Thus, Farghal (2006) and Al-Kharabsheh (2008) argue that public notices consist of rich translation resources which are linguistically viable. They identify different important translation resources including "semi-translation", ambiguity, semantic accuracy and semantic overlap among others. This paper analysed the translational gaps found on the selected public notices in Kenya and considered their linguistic viability.

Gorea, (2012:3) gives an anecdote about a computer that is designed to translate between Russian and English. Thus, an English expression "*The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*" was first translated into Russian and subsequently retranslated back to English. The resultant erroneously expression was *the wine is good, but the meat is rotten* (Gorea, 2012:4). This was due to translation mistakes arising out of indiscretions and inconsistencies that occurred during the process of translation as a result of the translator's obliviousness, and the "untranslatability" of the text because of differences in language or culture. Similarly, a translator's incompetence of TL may yield unprecedented vagueness to the subsequent message (Gorea, 2012). This translation faults may alter the original meaning of the source to the point of preposterousness; this augured very well with what happened to the public notices in this paper.

### **Linguistic Errors on the Social Media**

Chagemma (2018) comments on grammatical errors on social media. He argues that there are "common mistakes" not limited to "rambling sentences", "mixture of tenses", "confusion in words" among others. To him, homophones and homonyms further exacerbate the already bad

situation and contribute to this confusion. To explain this, Chagemma (2018) attributes the following reasons for this phenomenon. Significantly, he argues that the majority of Kenyan languages are mostly phonetic; thereby, allowing authors to write words from how they are enunciated. Similarly, he blames teachers of language for their failure to not only insisting on the phonetic aspect of language but also for failing to overcome interference and negative transfer during the acquisition of the second language.

Furthermore, Chagemma (2018) complains that authors fail to observe concord in sentences thereby allowing errors in agreement. This is especially where there are extra words between the subject and verb which may create some confusion. Likewise, he laments on the numerous erroneous usages of reference in sentences, especially with regard to the relative clause. Moreover, he grumbles about the challenges encountered by authors while undertaking pluralisation in nouns and pronouns, e.g. news and politics. In addition, Chagemma (2018) argues that omitted and improper punctuation in sentences may distort the message that the author intends to communicate. Notably, the arguments that Chagemma (2018) propounds refers to the authorship in social media. Nevertheless, the errors he identifies are akin to those found in public notices in this paper; especially regarding erroneous referencing, the omission of punctuation, lack of coherence and faulty concord resulting in miscommunication.

### **Computerised-Mediated Communication (CMC)**

#### **Approach**

When humans communicate with one another through the use of modern technology, especially a computer which is connected to the internet, it leads to Computer-Mediated Discourse (Herring, 2004). This is domiciled in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) which employs procedures associated with discourse analysis in linguistics. Simply, this involves an internet user who types or posts a comment (usually text-based) on the screen of a computer

monitor to be read by another user using another computer in a different vicinity; henceforth, allowing communication to take place between them.

CMC gives birth to CMDA which considers the structure, meaning, interaction, social behaviour and participation patterns of discourse as fundamental levels of analysis language (Herring, 2004). CMD draws its methodology from linguistics, including pragmatics (Androutsopoulos, 2008), which is proposed to be applied for this current paper. There are concerns with regard to the methodology to be used for CMD which are different from the normal verbal discourse. Furthermore, there are interesting concerns about CMDA as a theory since even Herring (2004) in her own words does not consider it as a theory but a discourse approach. CMDA studies both "micro-level" and "macro-level" linguistic phenomena where the former is interested in the normal linguistic levels of analysis while the latter deals with other aspects of the language outside the linguistic structures. The justification for utilization of CMDA in this paper is premised by Herring (2004:2) assertion that: "It follows that scholars of computer-mediated behaviour need methods for analysing discourse, alongside traditional social science methods such as experiments, interviews, surveys, and ethnographic observation".

### **Theoretical Brief**

The paper is guided by Computerised-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) by Herring (2004). Herring (2004) insists that it is really not a theory but an approach to discourse analysis; however, she goes ahead to give important theoretical foundations as will be discussed below. By and large, CMDA allows the researcher to analyse any behaviour online. Here, the researcher is offered an opportunity to partake in a scientific methodological approach which contains fundamental theoretical foundations. Consequently, the researcher is allowed to make relevant observations and correctly interpret the

resultant scientific results. To conduct an effective CMDA, the researcher is required to meet certain conditions, just like any other form of content analysis:

- i) Pose answerable research questions
- ii) Select appropriate research methods related to research questions
- iii) Apply these research methods to sufficient and appropriate corpus data
- iv) Interpret findings responsibly in relation to research questions

(Herring, 2004)

The procedure must be hierarchically sequenced in the order in which it appears above without any alterations. Otherwise, the approach is rendered inconsequential and therefore null and void. The current study contains relevant and answerable research questions, comprises appropriate research methods and is proposing to apply them to the relevant corpus of data as well as interpret findings responsibly.

In addition to the above conditions and procedures, Herring (2004) proposes the following three theoretical foundations necessary for conducting a successful CMDA:

- a) discourse exhibits recurrent patterns
- b) discourse involves speaker choices
- c) CMD may be, but is not inevitably, shaped by the technological features of computer-mediated communication systems.

Consequently, this paper considers the major research question: "what linguistic resources emerge from translational errors on selected public notices in Kenya?". Similarly, collection of data from social media is appropriately done to fulfil the second requirement above. Lastly, the adequate application of research methods to sufficient and appropriate corpus data is done as required as well; above all, findings are interpreted responsibly in relation to the research question.

### Methodology

This paper is based on a descriptive research design which basically involves describing the errors during translation emerging from selected public notices around the country. Notably, the study used qualitative techniques in its description. Therefore, erroneous public notices sought for this study consisted of words, pictures and photographs which needed vivid description. This involved, specifically, describing creative and salient features of linguistic nuances.

The population was finite and included all erroneous but humorous notices; specifically, posters and signage in shops, hotels and other enterprises which gave warning, information and advertisements and placed in the media, hung in public or bound for purposes of public consumption. The sample sizes included a minimum of twelve erroneous notices and signage from social media. The choice of the sample size was adequately based on this being a descriptive design; whereby the number of notices was only limited to its appropriateness of addressing the objective of the study.

Data collection was conducted online and the paper employed Computerised-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) to analyse the online data from the social media, specifically *Facebook*. Translational errors were identified and categorised appropriately and linguistic resources were analysed. Generally, errors were described in terms of translation blunders manifested in the author’s language in the public notice.

### FINDINGS

Table 1 below summarises the 12 public notices realised in this paper and the translational errors that were produced, as well as the insightful linguistic resources exhibited.

Table 1: Summary of the Linguistic Resources.

|    | Public Notice   | Translation error           | Linguistic Resource                |
|----|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1  | <i>In trust we God</i>  | <i>Faulty structure</i>     | lexical gap, word order            |
| 2  | <i>Gloz gate with “badlok”</i>                                    | <i>Gloz, badlok</i>         | Misspelling, Lisping               |
| 3  | <i>Sony erection</i>  | <i>Erection</i>             | homophone, Misspelling malapropism |
| 4  | <i>Male Girls High School</i>                                     | <i>Male</i>                 | Ambiguity, irony, paradox          |
| 5  | <i>No swimming if you can’t swim</i>                              | <i>Repetition</i>           | Tautology                          |
| 6  | <i>10 No finying mayembe’s</i>                                    | <i>Finying</i>              | lexical gap                        |
| 7  | <i>Car no. 8 : Total Mariakani Turners Gikomba Weavers Mgongo</i> | <i>Turners</i>              | Homophone, Misspelling             |
| 8  | <i>Vacant room suspicious bedsitter</i>                           | <i>Suspicious</i>           | Homophone, Misspelling             |
| 9  | <i>Youraino</i>   | <i>Youraino</i>             | Lisping, Misspelling               |
| 10 | <i>Nyaribo butherey</i>   | <i>Butherey</i>             | Lisping, Misspelling               |
| 11 | <i>We do... man cure... penicure</i>                              | <i>man cure... penicure</i> | Homophone, Misspelling             |
| 12 | <i>wild animals please remain in your vehicle</i>                 | <i>No punctuation</i>       | Coherence, modality                |

### Discussion of Linguistic Resources

There are different linguistic resources realised in the public notices analysed in this paper. They are discussed in this section by scrutinising the individual notices

identifying the various resources. Notably, one public notice may yield more than one language resource.

#### a) Tautology

Tautology refers to the repetition of the same concept twice over in the same sentence by using different words. A semantic incompatibility arises since the repeated concept does not add any value to the meaning of the script. Consequently, to grasp the concept of repetition requires the reader to understand that the author has not added anything novel. For example, in (1) below, the public notice seems unnecessarily repetitive. Obviously, nobody can swim if they do not know how to do so (seems even more tautologous!) thus creating some rather ridiculous meaning. Understandably, the notice did not come out as clearly as the author may have wished. The inadvertent meaning seems to include a very ludicrous sense: one can swim without knowledge of how to swim! There appears no logical explanation because the author seems to ignore the obvious: swimming requires some previous knowledge. Importantly, the notice should have been cautioning patrons of “not entering” or “not jumping into” the pool but not of “not swimming”. The script “swimming” is very specific and can only elicit a single meaning when combined with the other scripts in the notice.

#### (1) *No swimming if you can't swim*

By critically analysing the whole script, it becomes clear that the author's intention must have been to caution those who do not have the ability of swimming to stay away from the pool in order to avert any disaster. However, the author fails to understand that the script "swimming" is very specific about its sense which contradicts the other scripts in the notice. Therefore, the problem seems to originate from the author's translation from his first language.

#### b) Coherence

Appropriate coherence is crucial in the comprehension of any piece of script. Indeed, cohesive markers/devices, conjunctions and correct punctuation make up for the cohesion component. Lack of the appropriate punctuation

creates a semantic incompatibility which hinders the reader from grasping the original envisioned meaning of the script in the public notice. Unless the reader appropriately places either a pause (comma) or exclamation (exclamation mark) or any other appropriate cohesive marker, the reader will not appreciate the intention of the public notice as exemplified below.

#### (2) *wild animals please remain in your vehicle*

Thus, (2) lacks the proper cohesive markers; therefore, distorting the anticipated meaning. Certainly, there should be a pause after the first noun phrase to allow the reader to understand that the rest of the notice refers to the visitors and not to the "Wild animals". The lack of a proper punctuation mark, specifically an exclamation mark, to emphasise the gravity of the situation is bound to create a strange meaning which derives a distorted sense. Possibly, the author lacks proper linguistic knowledge of the requirements of the target language with matters punctuation creating translation errors.

#### c)

#### ord Order

An appropriate arrangement of words in a sentence is fundamental for the eventual derivation of the precise intended meaning of any given text. Accordingly, in case lexical items are reordered wrongly, the eventual meaning of the sentence is bound to be distorted, thereby, creating conflict in a sentential construction as shown in (3) below:

#### (3) *In trust we God*

Here, the correct order of lexical items should have been "InGod we trust" to imply that they have a strong conviction about a certain supreme being. Thus, when "trust" and "God" are interchanged, the meaning is distorted, and a syntactic incongruity produced. From a translation point of view, the author may not have taken into consideration the target language prerequisites with regard to the structure of a sentence consequently producing a silly translation error.

#### d) Semantic Overlap

Semantic overlap (semantic accuracy) occurs whereby senses of related words give a different overlapping sense semantically. As a result of translation problems, some of the authors of public notices could not observe the presence of overlaps in the meaning of semantically-related words thereby creating some incongruous meanings. All the public notices in this paper contain semantic overlaps as a result of the translation errors within, but few will be considered as the rest are analysed with the other linguistic resources.

(4) *Male Girls High School*

(5) *Youraino*

(6) *Nyaribo butherey*

(7) *Vacant room suspicious bedsitter*

In (4) above, there is confusion as to how a “girl’s” school could also have “male” students and this creates a semantic overlap. Similarly, (5) does not seem to make any sense in the target language (English) from which it is supposed to mean “urinal”; thereby creating a semantic overlap. Other public notices that contain some form of semantic overlap include (6) where “butherey” is supposed to mean “butchery” and (7) where “suspicious” is to mean “spacious”. Clearly, these are translation-related errors where the author seems to lack competence in English (target language).

#### e) Lexical Gap

Lexical gap involves the inaccurate analysis of word structure creating “lexical holes” eliciting an extensive semantic interpretation (Dagut 1981, cited in Farghal, 2006) or the use of non-existing words. Thus, the public notices may contain faulty words or some ridiculous lexical items which do not exist in English as shown in (8) below:

(8) *We do... man cure... penicure*

In (8) above, an impression is created that the author is involved in some sort of clandestine, mysterious or seemingly notorious impotence-remedy services for men. Hence, by using “man cure”, the author erroneously substitutes the correct word “manicure” to produce a

translation error. Amusingly, it has nothing to do with the male species but everything to do with the feminine fashion-related paraphernalia. As for \*penicure above, it is not an acceptable lexeme in English, and the reader is therefore lost while trying to solicit for its meaning. Similarly, (5), (6) and (7) contain lexical gaps since the words “Youraino” (5) and “butherey” (6) are not English words (even though they originate there) and may not communicate. Similarly, “suspicious” (7) does not mean “spacious” as a result of translation errors committed by the author.

#### f) Ambiguity

Ambiguity is a common and an important linguistic translation resource whereby the interpreter draws two senses of a word from a single lexeme. Ambiguity arises where a lexicon has a similar spelling (homograph) or pronunciation (homophone) with another word and is either interpreted from two related meanings (polysemy) or from different meanings (hyponymy).

For instance, in (4) above, is a straight forward case of ambiguity which exhibits homography and homonymy. Notably, the lexeme “male” has a single similar spelling, but two different senses and these multiple senses are completely unrelated to each other. In this notice, it is a proper noun which denotes a girl’s high school located in a place called Male /malɛ/. However, it can obviously be inadvertently misinterpreted, if assessed from a non-resident’s point of view, since “male” (/meil/, a homophone of mail /meil/) is a common English antonym of “female”. This interpretation is as a result of translational errors since a \*male (/meil/) girl’s high school is obviously faulty, incongruous and hitherto unknown.

#### g) Malapropism

Malapropism refers to the application of an incorrect word that sounds similar to the intended word but distorts the intended meaning by creating a sound incongruity. Notably, a word may resemble another word in its morphological composition and phonological configuration leading to the confusion of the intended meaning. This

resemblance is a common case of a rich linguistic translational resource. Remarkably here, the author uses an incorrect yet unintentional lexicon resembling the originally intended one thus creating a sound and word incompatibility, thereby distorting communication in the process.

In Kenya, it is a common practice to find quite a peculiar and idiosyncratic manner of pronunciation, whereby words are pronounced inclusive of the silent letter(s) even though they ought not, e.g. the 'h' is pronounced in words like honour, hour and honest. It equally is a common practice to include the /h/ sound in word-initial even when it is not the acceptable norm, e.g. heir, air and hallowed.

(9) *Sony erection*

Hence, "Sony erection" in (9) is ridiculous since "erection" implies either the sense of "building" or some sexual connotation; thereby creating a form of translational error. Furthermore, the lexical incongruity identified above is therefore converted to a phonological incongruity since the confusing words appear to sound alike to "Sony Erikson" as the required combination. Other forms of malapropism include "man cure" in (8) instead of "manicure" and "penicure". All the above are errors produced during translation since the author is not competent in English.

#### h) Misspelling

This error is a key linguistic translational resource which is involved when a word is spelt wrongly, thereby changing the original intention of the author. Normally, it occurs at the level of the word but subsequently creeps to the semantic/pragmatic level as well, since it affects the original intended meaning of the public notice as shown in (10) below:

(10) *Gloz gate with "badlok"*

Misspelling involves at least the presence of some of the original letters of the intended accurate word; or at least one sound substituting another one. For example, a voiced consonant /b/ replacing an unvoiced consonant /p/ (\*badlock), and voiced /g/ replacing voiceless /k/ (\*gloz)

thereby creating a phonetic or phonological incongruity as in (10). Others include "man cure" instead of "manicure" and "penicure" instead of a pedicure (8), "Sony erection" instead of "Sony Erickson" (9).

#### i) Reference

There is a possibility of using an incorrect reference in a public notice thereby distorting the anticipated meaning. For example, in (11) below, the word which should refer to the guest seems to refer to the wild animals thus creating a conflict in meaning. Consequently, the reader has to revisit the interpretation of the exophor "your" which may erroneously be confused to refer anaphorically and endophorically to "wild animals".

(11) *wild animals please remain in your vehicle*

Thus, the meaning created by the distorted form is incongruous to the author's intention and the reader is forced to re-establish the correct referencing of "your" as an exophorical reference to the visitor but not endophorically to the "wild animal" as earlier decoded. This confusion is a result of inadequate knowledge of English and results in a translational error.

#### j) Lising

Lising is a linguistic resource based on the sound incongruity found in the scripts of public notices. It is phonetic in nature and occurs either where someone has learned the wrong manner of articulating sounds or the wrong enunciation is habitual or even where the author possesses a certain problem creating specific sounds correctly. Majority of the examples of the scripts in this category involve a substitution of sounds which alter the meaning of the public notices. For example, in (10) above, the velar plosives /k/ for /g/ and the labial stops /p/ for /b/ are substituted, as well as, the velar stop /k/ for /g/ (10) to create a sound-related incongruity producing a totally different interpretation. Specifically, in (10), \*gloz and \*badlock are not English words leading to some lexical and subsequently semantic incongruity.

Similarly, the translation errors "uraino" (5) and "buthery" (6) can be considered under this linguistic resource. This is

because they sound similar to the original words “urinal” and “butchery” respectively and it is just a case of mixing and confusing the letters of the words.

#### **k) Homophony**

Related to the concept of sound are homophones which refer to words having similar sounds thus having similar pronunciation. It can be in the form of heterographs (where the word is spelt differently) or homographs (where the word is spelt the same). For example in (9) above, the faulty word “erection” sounds similar to the intended word “Erickson” which elucidates the translation error. Similarly, “man cure” (8) sounds similar to “manicure”, thus the ensuing confusion in the notice. Also, the translation errors “uraino” (5) and “buthery” (6) sound similar to their originally intended words allowing the confusion. Besides, “suspicious” in (7) sounds like “spacious” allowing the author to make a translational error. Likewise, it is the confusion in (4) where “male” appears to resemble by appearing to sound similar to the antonym of “girl” in English that elicits a sort of translational error.

#### **l) Paradox**

A paradox is a self-contradictory statement which can only be true if it is false and vice-versa. Also, it lays the claim that two apparently contradictory ideas are true. Generally, a paradox exists where two lexical items exist next to each other resulting to some initial contradiction. Therefore, a further reinterpretation has to be sought in order to arrive at the appropriate and intended meaning.

Therefore, in (9), “male” and “girls” while describing a “secondary school” appears contradictory. “male” traditionally contains a semantic component [+male]; therefore, it does not allow a syntagmatic relationship with “girls” which contains [-male] unless there is conjunction separating them. Indeed, only a paradigmatic relation seems viable in this context where one substitutes the other.

#### **o) Irony**

Irony revolves around the concept of contrasting expectations, i.e. what is realised is different from what is expected. It usually operates either at the word level or at the meaning level; therefore, it creates a lexical or semantic/pragmatic incongruity. In (9), it is contrary to the normal expectation that a “girl’s” school could contain “males” as the notice seems to imply originally. Similarly, the meaning arising from (11) without proper punctuation appears as if it is addressing wild animals. Therefore, irony arises where notices are addressed to animals, yet we know they have no mental and intellectual capacity to read and appreciate the notice.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

An attempt has been made in this paper to analyse some of the linguistic resources that are found in some public notices in different parts of Kenya. However, this paper is not a report of a comprehensive and systematic investigation of this phenomenon. It should be seen more as an attempt at hypothesis forming rather than an attempt to formulate theories to explain this phenomenon.

It is sad that some of the public notices do not communicate as was intended which paints explicitly a pretty grim picture of the authors themselves and generally condemns the educational standards of education in the country.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- a) Public notice authors should purpose to seek a second opinion about whether their notices do indeed communicate.
- b) The local governments should purpose to ensure that all public notices have to pass through them for standardisation marks to make them communicate appropriately and subsequently boost their collection of taxes.

- c) There is further need to analyse the types of linguistic incongruities that are found in the translational errors on the public notices.
- d) The thematic aspects that result from the translational errors made by the authors need further interrogation which may shed light into some fundamental concerns that affect the society.

#### REFERENCES

- Al-Kharabsheh, A. (2008). Unintentional Humour in the Translation of Jordanian Shop Signs. In *Journal of Intercultural Communication* 17-34. Retrieved from <http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr17/kharabsheh.html>
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2008). Introduction: Data and methods in computer-mediated discourse analysis. In *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. Hamburg: Hamburg University.
- Antaki, C. (2003). The Basic Ideas of Discourse Analysis. In M. Achard & S. Kemmer (Eds.) (2004) *Language, Culture, and Mind*. Cambridge: CSLI. Productions.
- Attardo, S. (2001). *Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis*. Trento: Youngstown State University Povo.
- Attardo, S., & Raskin V. (1991). Script Theory Revis(it)ed: Joke Similarity and Joke Representation Model. *Humour: International Journal of Humour Research*, vol.4, no.3-4, 293-347. Retrieved from ISSN Online 1613-3722 DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1515/humr.1991.4.3-4.359>
- Barnes, E. (2012, January 23). Public Notices Have Important Role. *The Daily News* p.8.
- Chagemma, A. (2018, April 9). Ghastly grammatical mistakes that we make ‘accidentally’. Retrieved from <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke>
- Chomsky, N. (1965). *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Cohen, J.M. (1986). Translation. *Encyclopaedia Americana*, vol. 27, p. 12-15. New York: Glolier Inc.
- Farghal, M. (2006). Accidental Humour in International Public Notices Displayed in English. In *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, (12), 2. Retrieved from <http://immi.se/intercultural/nr12/farghal.html>
- Gáll, L.K. (2010). Special Today-No Ice Cream: Accidental Humour in International Public Notices. In *Translating Humour across Cultures*. Oradea: Partium Christian University Press.
- Godwin, W. (1946). *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on Morals and Happiness*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Gorea, L. (2012). *Lost in Translation*. Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council. Retrieved July 17, 2017 from <http://www.cttic.org/ACTI/2012/Actes/Lucia%20Gorea.pdf>
- Halliday, M.A.K. & Hassan, R. (1990). *Language, Context and Text: Aspects of Language in A Social-Semiotic Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Katz, J.J., & Fodor, J.A. (1963). The structure of a semantic theory. *Language*, 39 (2), 170-210. Retrieved from <http://link.jstor.org/sici?sici=0097-85007%28196304%2F06%2939%3A2%3C170%3ATSOAST%3E2.o.CO%3B2-J>
- Partridge, B. (2006). *Discourse Analysis: An Introduction*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

- Raskin, V. (1985). *Semantic Mechanisms of Humour*. Boston: D. Reidel.
- Shibles, W. (2001). *Humour Reference Guide: a Comprehensive, Classification and Analysis*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Simpson, J. & Weiner, O. (Ed) (2012). *Oxford English Dictionary*. London: Oxford University Press
- Wilson, A., (2009). *Translators on Translating: Inside the Invisible Art*. Vancouver: CCSP Press.
- Wu, Z. (2013). *The Laughter-eliciting Mechanism of Humour*. Zhengzhou Institute of Light Industry, No 5: China URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/el.r.v2n1p52>
- Zabalbeascoa, P. (2005). Humour and Translation: an Inter-discipline. In *Humour-International Journal of Humour Research*, 18(2), 185-207
- Zalta, E. N. (eds.) (2012). *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy: The Metaphysics Research Lab Centre for the Study of Language and Information*; Stanford University; Stanford, CA.