

REDUCTION INTERPRETATION STRATEGIES ON CHURCH SERMONS: A STUDY OF KISWAHILI TO ENGLISH INTERPRETATION IN EVANGELICAL CHURCHES IN GATANGA SUBCOUNTY

Waraga Anne w. Kamau

Department of Languages and Humanities, School of social sciences, Mount Kenya University

Dr. Margret Njoki Mwhia

Department of Languages and Humanities, School of Social Sciences, Mount Kenya University

<https://doi.org/10.54922/IJEHSS.2023.0507>

ABSTRACT

This paper examined reduction interpretation strategies on church sermons. Currently, there is an increase need for interpretation in most of the Kenyan churches due to the increase in a number of evangelistic churches in the country. This study examined sermons preached in English and consecutively interpreted to Kiswahili. The study focused on the effect of reduction interpretation on the intended meaning. The study applied interpretive theory of Interpretation as propounded by Marianne (2003). The study was anchored on a descriptive research design where both interviews and questionnaires were used to collect data. Purposive sampling was used to select five churches that used interpreting, in which the sermons were preached in English and interpreted to Kiswahili. The study used a descriptive research design in collecting data from the respondents. The target population was drawn from each of the eight evangelical churches in Gatanga Sub County which consisted of pastors, interpreters and the audience. The study findings revealed that reduction interpretation strategy affect the interpretation of church sermons in Evangelical Churches. The study concludes that Reduction strategies did not meet the goal of interpreting church sermons instead they had a negative impact on the interpreted message. This study recommends that church interpreters should be brought to light to the works of other experienced interpreters as this will add to their knowledge.

Key Words: Interpretation, Reduction interpretation, church sermons.

1. INTRODUCTION

Interpretation is considered a form of passing information among the people who do not share a similar linguistic and cultural background (Qian, 2000). Interpretation is a multi-faceted activity: it involves a sender, a channel and a recipient. The source text sender transmits a message through the source language to the interpreter, who in turn resends it to the target language to the target audience. This implies that the interpreter is the transitional point between the sender and the receiver of the message. He is in direct contact with the sender and the receiver of the message. Hatim & Munday (2019) ascertains that this transfer of the meaning will include passing of the lexical meaning, relaying of grammatical meaning, rhetorical meaning and including also the inferred or the implied meaning. Angelelli (2000) also describes interpretation as a craft that attempts to replace a Word or message and/or a statement from a certain language by the similar message and/or statement into a different language. In other words, it is to render meaning of a word to a different language in such way that the author intends on a word. Gile (2001) describes interpretation as a craft which attempts and works towards replacing a word or message and any given statement in one language by a similar message and/or statement in a different language .In

other words, it is to render the word meaning into a different language in a way which the writer intends the word to be. Riccardi (2006) builds his definition on the concept of equivalence, describing interpretation as the replacing of a word in one language with a word that is similar in a different language.

There is dire need of interpretation needed in oral communication in most parts of the world especially where the congregation is from a different language group (Angelelli, 2000). In Kenya there is an influx of evangelical churches hence an increase in need for interpretation in most of the Kenyan churches. This is due to the increase in a number of evangelistic churches in the country. Some of these churches insist on the use of the local languages or Kiswahili. Some of them have ensured that church programmes are conducted in Kiswahili hence pastors and church speakers are required to deliver sermons in the Kiswahili language, while others use an interpreter. The goal of interpretation is that a message makes the same impact on the target audience that a speaker intends for an audience of the same language. Therefore, the interpreter must have skills of interpretation since the process of interpretation is multi-faceted activity. The interpreter is seen as a transitional point of contact between two languages. This task puts him in direct contact with the senders and receivers of the message. The interpreter has to assess the intention of the speaker and transform what is being spoken at all levels of communication, including intentions and implicature. Thus an interpreter holds a key position, in the field of communication (Herbert, 1978).

This paper focuses on reduction interpretation strategies on church sermons. Reduction interpretation is **the practice of simplifying a complex idea, issue, condition, or the like, especially to the point of minimizing, obscuring, or distorting it.** More often than not, the task of the interpreter is portrayed as one of “transcoding” - a simple changing of one code to another (Angelelli, 2000). However, this is not enough to meet the goal of interpretation since there is much more to communication than words or signs. Members of a religious community are expected to share certain community language expectations, for example, what Fairclough (1985) calls ‘knowledge base’. This incorporates the knowledge of the language norms and use, knowledge of situation, and knowledge of the world. This highlights the fact that, for appropriate interpreting, an interpreter has to be exposed to the community he is interpreting for and the knowledge of the targeted language. The strategies the interpreter uses closely depend upon the interpreter’s knowledge, organization and experience. There are those strategies that are as a result of implicit competence and those that are as a result of explicit knowledge application.

In Church sermons communication takes place in a discourse that is controlled by the preacher. Although communication in the church seems to be a monologue, evangelical preachers make use of various strategies to elicit responses from the audience. In interpretation there are differences that arise from a language system and they cannot either be translated at all or can only be translated either roughly or not adequately in terms of another language system. Misinterpretation of religious messages in most evangelical church services has become common. A speaker sends a verbal message with an aim to convey a message to his or her listeners. When the message is interpreted correctly the communication process becomes successful. However, if the listener misinterprets the message, then communication takes place but differently from the way the

speaker intended and the meaning is altered. Hence, the need to investigate how interpreters maintain the same message. The study was thus based on one objective:

- i) To examine the effect of reduction interpretation strategy on the interpretation of church sermons in Evangelical Churches.

The research is beneficial to the students of English in that it provides information on the strategies of interpreting words to English. It is also significant to the Evangelical Churches in Kenya because it has provided information on the challenges of interpreting Kiswahili words to English in their sermons and facilitated them to take appropriate action to enhance the interpretation of the same so as to further improve communication with the audience.

2. INTERPRETIVE THEORY OF INTERPRETATION

The research was guided by the interpretive theory of Interpretation by Marianne (2003). This theory posits that the process of interpretation entails understanding the message communicated from the source text also having the knowledge to interpret it and then being able to transmit what has been understood to the audience. This means that the interest is not on word for word but rather sense for sense. The theory identifies both the cognitive and the mental process which is necessary both in the oral and written interpretation. Also, the theory identifies the need to understand the text, deverbilise its language and re express the sense. This theory is important to this study because it posits that the message is interpreted by the interpreter and he or she communicates the concept to the audience but does not strive for a word for word translation. The Interpretive Theory is built upon four pillars: the Command of the native language, the Command of the source language, the Command of relevant world and background knowledge and the Command of interpreting methodology.

The first pillar is the command of an individual's native language. It is for all to agree that interpreters are expected to use their mother tongue in all its subtleties and nuance. The second pillar, which is the command of the second language, is a bit difficult to clearly assess. A person has to master all the systems either grammatical or phonological. However, there is limitless range of lexical items which is affected by an open-ended learning process that seems a lifelong. The case is similar for both the background knowledge and world which are said to be non-static but are as a result of an acquisition process that is both continuous and dynamic.

The fourth pillar which is command of interpreting methodology differs with mostly other theories because it argues that methodologically there is need to understand the process of translation by first understanding sense which implies the meaning of the language and other cognitive complements and the need to formulate translations on the basis of the principle of synecdoche. The full interpretive process will come to play when the interpreter adds his or her knowledge of the language concept to signs and also add the knowledge he has about his or her world. In this case interpreting will convey the meaning that is intended, this is to mean that the language independent here is the sense of the world. The study interrelated the four pillars in the analysis of the effect of reduction interpretation strategy on the interpretation of church sermons in Evangelical Churches

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The data was gathered within a period of three months starting from October to January 2023 in five evangelical churches. Qualitative approach makes available in-depth explanation and quantitative approach and also makes available the hard data required to meet the required objectives (Cresswell, 2003). The design was preferred because it ensured complete description of the situation, hence reducing bias in the collection of data (Kothari, 2008).

3.2 Sampling Design

Sampling is a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group

The study used purposive sampling procedure to obtain the study sample (Cresswell, 2012). Thus, the evangelical churches were sampled based on those who are using interpretation services and are interpreting sermons from Kiswahili to English. Based on this criterion 8 churches were identified from which one pastor; one interpreter and seven church adherents were selected from each. The purposive selection of the church audience was based on the criteria that they understood both English and Kiswahili languages. Therefore, the total sample size was seventy-two respondents.

3.3 Data collection methods

The study used interview guides and questionnaires to collect data from the preachers, interpreters and the audience. The interview guides were used on the preachers and interpreters so as to gather the information on the issues that are sought in the research objectives. Primary data was put together by using questionnaires that are structured. The questionnaires enabled the researcher to ask structured questions, administer and analyze. Each of the given questions was followed by alternative answers. The questionnaires had open ended questions. They were issued to the respondents and then picked from them after three days.

3.4 Data Analysis

In order to analyze the collected data, two methods were applied i.e. quantitative and qualitative. Research questions were analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics. Descriptive information about the respondents was generated from frequency counts of the responses. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically following the objectives of the study. Findings were presented in tables. The collected data was analyzed using content analysis which involves a procedure for the categorization and indexing of verbal or behavioral data, for purposes of making sense of the data collected and to highlight the important messages, features or findings. Results of the data analysis were presented in form of descriptive notes and tables which provided ease of interpretation. In conclusion, there was the reviewing of the raw data, labeling, sorting and synthesizing. The researcher then utilized the data that was already ordered in order to note the main dimensions and draw inferences from this data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Response Rate

Out of the 72 issued questionnaires, 68 questionnaires representing 94.4% of the total questionnaires distributed were returned fully completed, while 4 questionnaires were not returned representing 5.6% of the total questions distributed to the respondents. It can be inferred that the response rate was good. According to Cresswell (2003) a response rate of 70% and over is excellent for analysis and reporting on the opinion of the entire population.

Table 1: Response Rate

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Filled in questionnaires	68	94.4
Unreturned questionnaires	4	5.6
Total	72	100

Source, Research Data, (2022)

4.2 Demographic Characteristics

The study on Table 2 below shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics

Demographic factors	Categories	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	22	32.4
	Female	46	67.6
Age Bracket	18-28	7	11.1
	29-39	20	29.2
	40-50	22	31.9
	51and above	19	27.8
Role in the Church	Pastor	8	11.1
	Interpreter	8	11.1
	Adherent	56	77.7
Highest Level of Education	Secondary	21	30.9
	College	39	57.4
	University	8	11.7

Length of association with the Church	Below 5 Years	14	20.6
	6-10 Years	22	32.4
	11-15	15	22.1
	16 and above	17	24.9

Source, Research Data, (2017)

The study findings on Table 2 above indicates that majority of the respondents were, female (67.6%), age bracket of between 40-50 years (31.9%) church adherents (67.6%), had college education, (57.4%) and had associated with the church for a period of between 6-10 years (32.4%).

4.2 Reduction Interpretation Strategy

The data analysis shown on Table 3 below sought to establish the effectiveness of the reduction interpretation strategy.

Table 3: Effectiveness of the Reduction Interpretation Strategy

Statement		SA	A	N	D	SD
The reduction strategies did not meet the goal of interpreting thus impacted negatively on the interpreted messages	F	32	25	3	6	2
	%	47.1	36.8	4.4	8.8	2.9
Loud applauses and the audience ‘cutting in’ encouraged the preachers to preach more since to them, the audience was alert and ready to be preached to.	F	31	23	1	10	3
	%	45.6	33.8	1.5	14.7	4.4
Message abandonment strategy caused overlapping which decreased accuracy in interpretation	F	28	27	1	10	2
	%	41.2	39.7	1.5	14.7	2.9
In using skipping strategy, the message was altered thus the interpreter did not communicate the intended message of the source text	F	27	24	2	5	12
	%	39.7	32.4	2.9	7.4	17.6
A semantic lexical item reduced the impact of the meaning, thus greatly influencing the intended source language meaning in the target language	F	24	25	4	6	9
	%	32.4	37.5	5.9	8.8	13.2
The use of the incomplete sentence strategy caused a lot of information to	F	29	23	2	7	7

be lost and the audiences who depend on the target language for meaning were at a loss	%	42.6	32.8	2.9	10.3	10.3
Filtering strategy was only effective when what was considered unimportant information by the interpreter was outside the speaker's main line of reasoning and involved comments, modifiers or digressions that were outside the main line of thought	F	33	24	1	4	6
	%	51.4	32.4	1.5	5.9	8.8

Source, Research Data, (2022)

The study findings on Table 3 above show that majority (47.1%), (45.6%), (41.2%), (39.7%), (37.5%), (42.6%) and (32.4%) of the respondents agree and strongly agree respectively that: reduction interpretation strategies did not meet the goal of interpreting thus impacted negatively on the interpreted messages; loud applauses and the audience ‘cutting in’ encourage the preachers to preach more since to them, the audience is alert and ready to be preached to; message abandonment strategy causes overlapping which decreases accuracy in interpretation; in using skipping strategy the message is altered thus the interpreter does not communicate the intended message of the source text; a semantic lexical item reduced the impact of the meaning, thus greatly influencing the intended source language meaning in the target language; the use of the incomplete sentence strategy causes a lot of information to be lost and the audiences who depend on the target language for meaning are at a loss; and finally filtering strategy can only be effective if what is considered unimportant information by the interpreter is outside the speaker’s main line of reasoning and involves comments, modifiers or digressions that are outside the main line of thought.

4.2.1 Discussion

The quantitative data above reveal that the reduction strategies did not meet the goal of interpreting thus impacted negatively on the interpreted messages. The quantitative data demonstrates that 32(47.1%) participants strongly agreed while 25(36.8%) agreed that reduction strategies did not meet the goal of interpreting thus impacted negatively on the interpreted messages. The commonly used reduction strategies included message abandonment, skipping, incomplete sentences, approximation and filtering. Through interviews the respondents noted that preachers various responses to elicit responses from the audience. In this vain, their messages were interjected by unsolicited comments, noise and clapping from the congregation which in most cases interrupt the line of thought of the interpreter. The findings revealed that 31(45.6 %) participants strongly agreed that while 23(33.8%) agreed that loud applauses and audience cutting in encouraged the preachers to preach since to them the audience was alert.

Another problem that was identified by the audience was message abandonment by the interpreter. In the current study 28(41.2%) participants strongly agreed, 27(39.7) agreed that message abandonment strategy caused overlapping which decreased accuracy in interpretation.

Thus, message abandonment as a strategy of reductions affects their understanding of the purported message by the preacher. Tarone (1983) defines message abandonment as a case where the learner begins to talk about a concept but is unable to continue and stops in mid-utterance. Message abandonment in interpretation refers to cases where the interpreter abandons the entire utterance and moves on to interpret the following utterance or makes an effort to interpret but stops almost immediately. This strategy in most cases the audience do not receive complete message. Cumulatively, 80.9% of the participants are of the view that message abandonment has a negative impact on message delivery.

Skipping is another reduction that negatively affect the fidelity of the interpretation process. 27(39.7) % of the participants strongly agreed while 24 (32.9) agreed that in using skipping strategy, the message was altered thus the interpreter did not communicate the intended message of the source text. This implies that skipping has negative impact on delivery of the interpreted message. Skipping is defined by Al-Khanji, El-Shiyab and Hussein (2000) as a strategy where the interpreter avoids or skips single words or a group of words. It is a case of lexical simplification, which is an attempt to express meaning while avoiding certain lexical items. Through interviews with the audience skipping results to different meanings in the source language and the message in the target language. However, the interpreters indicated that they resorted to skipping some words since they could not easily come up with appropriate words in Kiswahili language.

The study also revealed that Incomplete Sentences as a form of reduction strategy leads to loss of intended meaning. The data collected revealed that while 29(42.64%) participants strongly agree 23(38%) agreed that the use of the incomplete sentence strategy caused a lot of information to be lost and the audiences who depend on the target language for meaning were at a loss. The incomplete sentences strategy is used when the interpreter omits large units of the text in the targeted language. In this strategy, the interpreters attempt to interpret but stop midsentence (Al-Khanji, El-Shiyab and Hussein 2000). This occurs when the interpreter begins to interpret but does not complete the utterance. Hence, portions of the original text at the end of the utterance are not interpreted in the target text. Incomplete sentences strategy is also different from message abandonment because in message abandonment, the interpreter only makes an attempt and gives up while in incomplete sentences strategy, the interpreter attempts to interpret the sentence. Only the first portion of the utterance is interpreted.

The use of incomplete sentences when the input has a problem, or when it is a lot and time is limited. The use of the incomplete sentence strategy is considered as a reduction strategy, because it is ineffective in relaying the message in the target language. In such circumstances, a lot of information is lost and the audience who depend on the target language for meaning are at a loss. Mazza (2000) asserts that the interpreters are aware (consciously or subconsciously) that their processing capacity is stretched to the limit and therefore are likely to adopt on-line strategies, which reduce cognitive load, and this leads to loss of information.

The analysis on the impact on semantic lexical reduction as a reduction strategy on interpretation also impacts negatively on the intended meaning. The findings show that while 24(32.4%) participants strongly agreed while 25(37.5) agreed that a semantic lexical item reduced the impact of the meaning, thus greatly influencing the intended source language meaning in the target

language. Interpreters use this strategy when they attempt to reconstruct the optimal meaning by giving less precise meaning of a word or an expression in the target language instead of the required lexical expression in the source language. This strategy is used as a mean by which interpreters try to solve semantic problems directed to them by developing an alternative plan. Which in turn influences the meaning of the intended source language while, in other cases, the semantic lexical item provided reduce the impact of the meaning, thus greatly influencing the intended source language meaning in the target language.

The study further revealed that 33(51.4%) of the participants strongly agreed while 24 (32.4%) that filtering strategy was on only effective when what was considered unimportant information by the interpreter was outside the speaker's main line of reasoning and involved comments, modifiers or digressions that were outside the main line of thought. Filtering strategy is a kind of summarization displayed in lengthy utterance. In filtering, the interpreters compress the length of an utterance in order to find an economic way of expression while attempting to retain the semantic content by selecting what they considered to be important and finding a way of expressing it using their own terms. The interpreters in the case of skipping are faced with a semantic problem while in the filtering strategy the challenge is on the length of the utterance.

The participants reported that when interpreters use filtering they rendered the original message in different ways. This may have been due to the pressure placed on interpreters to internalize the meaning of long utterances. In this vain filtering strategy is applied by the interpreter where he/she understands the meaning in the lengthy utterance and renders the message in summary in the target language. This then means that the interpreters interpret what they consider to be important only. Interpreters resort to filtering strategy to avoid devoting too much capacity to production and leaving too little for the listening and analysis (Gile, 1999). The interpreter has to accommodate listening, analyzing and production within a given time span and the three require what he refers to as 'processing capacity'. Thus, to avoid saturation based errors, the Interpreters compresses the input to give themselves time to listen to the incoming information.

Smith (1999) argues that too much summarization or compressing the message) leads to omitting important information. Participants reported filtering leads to much summarization omitting very important information. The participants felt that what the interpreters considered to be unimportant message and left it out in the interpreted version, distorted the message in the interpreted version. This implies that the meaning in the first party (source speaker) is not transferred into the second party (target language). Seleskovitch and Lederer (1989) argue that the goal of interpretation is to transfer into the language of the second party to produce the same effect they would have produced in an audience who shared the first party's language. Therefore, when the full message is not delivered in the target language, then, interpretation is ineffective.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that reduction strategies did not meet the goal of interpreting church sermons instead they had a negative impact on the interpreted message. Using skipping strategy causes the message to be altered thus the interpreter does not communicate the intended message of the preacher. Semantic lexical items on the other hand reduce the impact of the meaning, thus greatly influencing the intended source language meaning in the target language. The study shows that

the use of incomplete sentence strategy causes a lot of information to be lost and the audiences who depend on the target language for meaning are at a loss. Therefore, reduction strategies used interpretation are not successful and they do not achieve the interpretation goal which demands that the message makes the same impact on the targeted audience by the target language that a speaker intends for an audience of the source language.

REFERENCES

- AL Khanji, R. EL Shiyab S. and Hussen R. (2000). On the Use of Compensatory Strategies in Simultaneous Interpretation, *Meta*, XLV, 3, 548-557.
- Angelelli, C. (2000). Interpretation As a Communicative Event; A Look through Hymes' Lenses' *Meta* XLV, 4, 580-592.
- Fairclough, N. (1985). Critical and Descriptive Goals in Discourse Analysis; *Journal of Pragmatics*, 9, 739-763.
- Gile, D. (2001). Consecutive versus Simultaneous. Which is more accurate? *Interpretation Studies* 1 (1), 8-20
- Herbert, J. (1978): "How Conference Interpretation Grew." In, D. Gerver and H. Sinaiko (eds.) *Language Interpretation and Communication*. New York/London: Plenum Press, pp. 5-10.
- Hatim, B., & Munday, J. (2019). *Translation: An advanced resource book for students*. Routledge.
- Marianne, L. (2003). *The Interpretive Model*. Manchester: St Jerome.
- Mazza, C. (2000). Numbers in Simultaneous Interpretation, Unpublished thesis, DDLMTT. Università degli di forli.
- Qian, H. (1994): "Looking at Interpretation from a Communicative Perspective," in *Babel* 40/4, pp. 214-221.
- Riccardi, A. (1998). 'Interpreting Strategies and Creativity' in a journal on Translators strategies and Creativity. Amsterdam: John Benjamin, P. 171-179
- Seleskovitch, D. et and Lederer, M. (1989) *Pedagogie Raisonnee de l' interpretation*. J Brucelles Didier Erudition Coll, 'Traductologie' 4.
- Smith, H. (1999). *Interpreting Services in the Pharmacy of the Kalafong Hospital in South Africa* in Erasmus, M. (1999) *Liaison Interpreting in the community*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers, 165-174.
- Tarone, E. (1981). Decoding a primary language, the Crucial Role of Strategic Competence. Paper presented at the Conference on Interpretive Strategies in language learning. University of Lancaster.