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Meaning Shifts of Culture-Specific Expressions: A Case Study of Facebook

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Abstract

This research aimed to examine the effects of meaning shifts in culture-specific content on Facebook. Specifically, it sought to explore the linguistic, cultural, and grammatical similarities between English and Kiswahili, while highlighting the significant mismatches between these two languages. The study used the theory of Principle of Cultural Translation to provide the theoretical relevance. The target population comprised Facebook pages with a significant following and a focus on CSIs posted within the context of conversations on those pages. The study aimed to examine CSIs posted on Facebook pages based in Kenya on foods, fashion and cultural architecture where English-Kiswahili translations were assessed for errors. The study employed purposive sampling to select a sample of 11 Facebook pages for content analysis. Primary data was gathered through the content analysis method, which involved the systematic preparation, organization, and reporting of the data collected. The study found that lexical, rhetorical, and grammatical mis-matches contributed to misunderstandings and misrepresentations in a variety of domains, including food, fashion, and cultural architecture. Based on the analysis, 80% of the Facebook sources revealed food items like "ugali" and "Nyama Choma" were often reduced to overly simplified translations like "cornmeal" and "grilled meat," failing to capture their rich cultural significance. With regards of fashion, the study found that 70% of the Facebook pages mistranslated the garments such as "kanga" led to a loss of their deeper meanings, contributing to cultural appropriation. Similarly, architectural terms suffered from meaning shifts; 55% of the sources depicted that terms describing unique Kenyan architectural styles were reduced to words like "huts," ignoring the cultural and historical narratives they encapsulate. The study concludes that the meaning shifts of culture-specific expressions related to food, fashion, and architecture in Kenya on Facebook have various negative implications as it leads to misunderstandings that go beyond mere words. The study thus recommends that stickers that contain only the most basic information should be made more useful by scaling them down or making them smaller while figurative language, such as idioms, should be used to describe complex ideas.

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Keywords: *Culture-specific expressions, Meaning shifts, Mistranslation, Lexical mismatches, Facebook content*

1.0 Introduction

Social networking platforms are seen as a potential to open up teaching and learning. Social networking is perfect way to communicate and send and receive information and also a great chance to negotiate meaning (Dombek, 2014). However, surveys of the successful practice have seldom been conducted. Facebook- a case study in this project widely uses Machine Learning(ML) components that involve crowdsourcing for translation and can produce accurate translations but not fully accurate like human translations. The Source Culture of a text can vary greatly vary from the Target Culture. Snell-Hornby (2012) noted that the Translation Tool was totally blind when it came to transliterating or translating documents that had structure, grammar, meaning, and even ambiguity. This error is common when the Translation Tools are used to translate sentences. So this thesis demonstrates that there are different approaches to translating and every text has its own cultural aspect integrated into it by exploring the significant linguistic, cultural and grammatical mismatches in CSIs existing in two languages, English and Kiswahili. The study adopted descriptive research design anchored in a qualitative research method and content analysis.

Meaning shifts refers to when words and phrases in one language (the source) are used incorrectly when they are intended to be used in another language (the target). This stage has a strong connection to one's cultural awareness. Others believe that the process of turning a spoken or written dialogue into text is multidimensional, emphasizing that it is a "theory-laden process" that is informed by the research and interpretation of findings, which in turn informs decisions or choices made throughout that process (Snell-Hornby, 2012). Specific culture and general culture apply to two forms of knowledge and skills that enable people to understand and work effectively in other cultures. Cultural approaches promote a broad comprehension of one cultural meaning through a comprehensive knowledge of society (Hu et al., 2017). This induces asymmetry of how the same information is transmitted to the receiver. It can shift the way societies interpret and perceive a certain topic (Littau, 2016).

Language is an integral part of any culture, since it helps members of the society to accomplish many goals. English as a global language offers forums for communication for people who understand English. Because of linguistic globalization, bilingualism has become widespread today. In bilingual cultures all over the world, people switch from one language to another to communicate with one another. In this sense, over and above the micro level of language, the translators work at the macro level of cultural dimensions, including politics, religion, philosophy, art, and other external influences affecting the method and result of translation, such as mainstream politics, target markets, publishing houses or employers (Lefevere, 1992). Translation is a rewriting act, in other words (Lefevere, 1992). It is often connected to power and ideology is one of the main ways in which power is expressed. However, translation ideology is not transparent; it is still extremely complicated, complex and veiled. According to Lefevere (1992), it is important to adapt the translated product, even faithful translations serve a certain ideology as 'faithfulness is one translation technique, which can be motivated by the combination of a certain ideology and a certain poetic approach' (1992).

While the intention may seem sound, the prevalence of false news continues (Taylor, 2013). The belief that there continues to be a thin line between a reality and its alternatives is readily accepted today. In recent years, regulators and commissions have started to carefully determine how they

can treat publishers who intentionally distribute inaccurate information (Snell-Hornby, 2012). Machines can produce accurate translations, but not fully accurate translations like humans. Statistical machine translation systems use minimal grammar information and therefore translate low quality texts.

The most popular concepts for the development of equivalent problems are all cultural concepts that exist in the source language but are completely unknown in the target language. The source culture and source language can also vary from the target culture and target language in their context. A literal translation, word for text, would be entirely undecodable. The most difficult problem in translating literary texts is the question of culture (Desjardins & Desjardins, 2017b). Culture is the view from which the people look at things. There's a challenge in translating literary works when there are cultural gaps. This is a vital thesis on meaning shifts of Culture Specific Items (CSI) on Facebook. It aims at demonstrating that there are different cultural approaches to translation and that every text has its own cultural aspect integrated into it.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Social networking can promote means of enhancing social abilities in individuals. There are many examples of the usage of social media networks by different organizations (Snell-Hornby, 2012). Many people on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram use social media for communicating. In some parts of Africa, Facebook has the highest user penetration rate while YouTube is very popular in other places due to easy to use and more popular platforms. Societal and cultural factors remain as an intrinsic part of culture. Many of the contents of communications on the social media such as Facebook, Instagram etc. have elements of the foundations of claim, comparison, and pride and appreciation contexts. The aim of social media is to create exchange and connect with cultures. The great value of culture-specific products and social media in recent times has seen many mistranslated messages. The meaning shifts of Facebook posts can lead to confusion.

Analysis reveals that Facebook is a major company that involves different users in the world. With more than 3 billion users from different socio-cultural background, it presents a good platform for effective translation need. Within the East African region, Kiswahili and English are common used by Facebook users. Despite this, translation is not common in this platform and this means there are misinterpretation of facts. Facebook debated how to make their website more international while avoiding the time- consuming and costly process of hiring professional translators and instead chose to reach out to their sizable and varied user base. It introduced crowdsourcing translation service that allowed users to provide translations from their original tongues for words on the platform, and other users could rate how accurate these translations were. This improved user engagement and made it possible for the website to be translated into other languages quickly and affordably. Meta (Facebook Inc.) admits that Typical Machine Translation systems require building separate AI models for each language and each task, but this approach does not scale effectively on Facebook, where people post content in more than 160 languages across billion of posts.

Advanced multilingual systems can process multiple languages at once, but compromise on accuracy by relying on English data to bridge the gap between the source and target languages. Facebook's crowdsourcing translation approach does not guarantee quality and effectiveness hence causing loss and harm to users on Facebook. Therefore, this study intends to explore linguistic, cultural and grammatical mismatches between English and Swahili, as well as significant distinctions between those respective languages. This study identifies a significant gap

in understanding meaning shifts and cultural expressions in the age of social media, particularly on platforms like Facebook. It is against this background that this study focused on finding out the effects of meaning shifts of culture-specific content on Facebook. The analysis involved review of data from 11 Facebook pages that have mass followers, and the meaning shifts of the cultural specific items in Kiswahili and English is provided.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To identify lexical, rhetorical and grammatical mis-matches in the meaning shifts of culture-specific expressions on Facebook.
- ii. To examine the extent to which Facebook has used natural equivalents to avoid meaning shifts of culture-specific expressions.
- iii. To determine discrepancies on culture-specific expressions mistranslated on Facebook.
- iv. To suggest strategies that can be adopted to mitigate the meaning shifts of culture-specific expressions on Facebook.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. What are the lexical, rhetorical and grammatical mis-matches in the meaning shifts of culture-specific expressions on Facebook?
- ii. To what extent has Facebook used natural equivalents to avoid meaning shifts of culture-specific expressions?
- iii. What discrepancies are there on culture-specific expressions mistranslated on Facebook?
- iv. What strategies can be adopted to mitigate the meaning shifts of culture-specific expressions on Facebook?

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This research was based on the Principle of Cultural Translation. The Principle of Cultural Translation was developed by Homi Bhabha (1990) The Principle of Cultural Translation states that when cultures come into contact or interaction, there is a dynamic process of negotiation and adaptation that takes place. This process involves the exchange of ideas, values, symbols, and practices between different cultures. The theory emphasizes that translation is not merely a linguistic act but a complex interplay of cultural meanings and contexts (Qing, 2019). The theory challenges the idea of a straightforward, unidirectional transfer of meaning from one culture to another, especially in the context of colonial encounters (Buden, 2006). The Principle of Cultural Translation posits that when different cultures come into contact, there is a constant negotiation and transformation of meanings, identities, and power dynamics. It suggests that cultural translation is not a mere act of linguistic conversion but a multifaceted process that involves adaptation, reinterpretation, and hybridization of cultural elements (D'hulst, 2008). This theory recognizes the inherent instability and ambiguity in the process of cultural translation, where meanings are always in flux and subject to contestation.

This framework indicates that the vocabulary used in culture-specific items (CSIs) is not universal but derived from the cultural environment, with Kenyan culture containing unique rhetorical elements. The study explores how cultural contexts can render language characteristics inappropriate when applied to a different language, particularly on platforms like Facebook, where English is the primary language used in social media machine translations. When content is presented in another language, readers unfamiliar with that language attempt to translate it, often resulting in meaning shifts. The growing efforts of non-professional translators, such as fansubbers, have been studied for their specific subtitling procedures and interventionist agendas. Christian Fuchs' theory (2007) was relevant to this study, providing a framework to analyze the relationship between language, culture, and meaning in the digital realm. This theory helped in examining how cultural aspects embedded in CSIs are subject to distortion or misrepresentation during translation, offering insights into cultural appropriation, miscommunication, and the preservation of cultural heritage in Kenya.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Understanding Meaning shifts s of Culture Specific Expressions

Younas, Pervaiz and Riaz (2022) conducted a study to examine the relationship between Lexical Meanings and Meaning shifts adopting an Analysis of English Translation of Munshi Premchand's Short Stories. The study was qualitative in nature and aimed at highlighting a genuine difficulty with the translation that many foreign translators have. The study found that idiomatic expressions and cultural terms cannot be translated easily. They need to be translated very carefully, keeping in view the intercultural subtleties. In this study, Munshi Premchand's three short stories originally written in Urdu and translated into English have been selected for qualitative analysis. These short stories are Eidgah, Qazaaqi, and Kafanres pectively translated into English by Khuswant Singh, Fatima Rizvi and Frances W. Pritchett. The study concluded that the translators, especially those whose own mother language is different the source language, have a hard time translating idiomatic expressions and cultural terms embedded in the very culture of the source language because they are not fully aware of the intercultural translational intricacies and the intercultural pragmatics. This is what creates meaning shifts and misleading meanings.

A study by Sajarwa, Khumairo, Ma'shumah, Arrasyid and Ediani (2023) on Identity struggle through the negotiation of cultural identity in the translation of French cultural references into Javanese indicated that, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve an effective transition if there are cultural differences among the two languages involved in translation. In the same line as the literary, religious, social, cultural and idiomatic expressions which are a chief field of translation, particularly when the translator belongs to a culture that is entirely different from that of the writer. According to the study, the only constant in digital culture is the transition that can sound cliché, but the underlying MT systems also change so that cultural patterns are difficult to grasp (Sabra, 2017a).

Lim (2023) while studying italicization of translated Korean literature and Korean diasporic literature indicated that in social, religious, geographic, political, and literary and media texts, cultural expressions represent an important problematic field in translation, especially if the translator belongs to a culture that is entirely different from the author's. Cultural terms involve a proper understanding of a cultural context and thus pose translation problems (Holt & Haller, 2017). The problems of translation and the variety of translation techniques used to clarify their significance by analysing the lexis of the cultural field of cuisine have been discussed. These issues

are due to various linguistic phenomena, including the difference between semanticized words in the source and target languages, the absence of a cultural term in the target language, the lack of meaning, and the metaphorical significance transmitted by numerous cultural words.

2.2.2 Meaning shifts of Cultural Specific Expressions of Foods on Facebook

Amenador and Wang (2022) evaluated the translation of culture-specific items (CSIs) in Chinese-English food menu corpus a study of strategies and factors. This study investigated how culture-specific items (CSIs) are translated in the Chinese-English food menu corpus. This overarching aim was divided into two specific objectives: identifying which procedures prevail in translating cultural items and determining what factors impinge on the selection of specific procedures. .. Using "Sketch Engine," a descriptive analysis of the corpus was conducted. The study tackled several theoretical concerns, such as the definition and extent of CSI, the classification of methods found in the data for CSI translation, and the classification of food items under CSI. The study's findings showed that, in descending order, neutralizing strategy is used more frequently than foreignizing and domesticating tactics. The primary characteristics found were the brand, the degree of cultural markedness, the multidimensional nature of the source CSI, the metonymical/metaphorical use of the CSI, and the false link between the ST and TT items.

Food is a central culture feature that has made it an important field of cultural study, linked to identity and socio-economic status (Cuesta et al., 2016b). Pierre Bourdieu (2007) observed in his ground-breaking research that "similar structural opposites of those found in cultural practises are often seen in eating habits." His work developed deep relationships between food culture and taste more generally, social classes and other identity aspects, showing the economic and social factors that influence the taste and its role in making differences between the groups possible. Many societies hold special status events and festivals that are sacred and that are linked to the present and the future. These events, whether cultural, educational or social, are without doubt bound to reinforce people's ties. In particular, Kenyan people attach great importance to these events and urge the participants to celebrate their marriages, graduations or the birth of a new baby by eating sweets and food to reinforce their relations.

Facebook, has a multiple of functions in the food industry as many people post links to their favorite recipes, cooking advice, and food-related articles. Food preparation-related groups and sites have grown in popularity, where fans share their recipes and interact with one another. It is in Facebook that users frequently discuss their dining experiences. Consumer reviews of online restaurants are significant. Around a third of customers use online feedback when selecting a restaurant and over half of the 18-34-year-olds review food choices. These reviews are relatively brief but expressive, however helpful they are, are an important aspect. Food bloggers and influencers also use Facebook as a forum to discuss their experiences, rate restaurants, and advertise food-related goods. For sponsored content, these influencers work with brands frequently. Depending on the language, some ingredients may go by a different name. An ingredient's name being mistranslated might cause confusion or result in the use of the wrong ingredients in a recipe.

2.2.3 Meaning shifts of Cultural Specific Expressions of Fashion on Facebook

Hegy (2023) assessed symbol preaching in the digital age: from symbol recognition to symbol interpretation in Facebook ads. The study distinguished between objective symbols as in mathematics, and cultural symbols as in poetry and religion. The study indicated that students must learn to move from recognizing the objective rules of language to internalizing the norms of

culture, according to the analogy of learning. The study adopted Ricoeur's theory of interpretation which explains the passage from recognition to interpretation in the cultural sciences. This passage is not only cognitive but also implies the discovery of an experiential dimension, as in poetry and worship. This theory was applied to the findings from religious ads on Facebook. By creating new audiences by trial and error, the number of viewers increased from 1 K to up to 100 K. The analysis revealed that viewers showed little interest in informational and moralistic ads, but favored symbolic presentations of the Passion, the Resurrection, the Transfiguration, the Eucharist, the origin of evil, etc. The conclusion offers guidelines: the need to advertise, to adapt to audiences, to get feedback, and to preach through symbols rather than concepts.

Facebook is the world's second most popular social media platform (Alexa, 2018). More than two billion monthly active users (Facebook, 2018) have made 60 million Facebook pages for company transformation (Vladlena et al., 2015) and an extra marketing contact platform. More than two billion people have been active monthly (Burton & Soboleva, 2011). The novelty of this channel is that companies can use it to communicate and work with their customers to promote sharing and to spread positive feelings, thus improving visibility of the company (Smith et al., 2012). Research shows four key reasons for Facebook pages: socializing, entertainment, searching for self-status and looking for facts (Park et al., 2009). Since consumers can now create and share their own content, they can now monitor the discussion (Abedin & Jafarzadeh, 2013). Consumers who participate in brand content on Facebook communicate their own ideal selves rather than real themselves in their online activities (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012; Kytö & McGookin, 2017). This means that users form their actions in a way they think is the perfect way to show themselves.

As companies build their Facebook contents, they are mainly involved in five kinds of businesses: direct selling of goods or services, promotion of supported activities, polls, information and fun posting (Dekay, 2012). Whenever you log into Facebook, consumers who liked the site are informed about business messages on the site (that is, news feeds). It is understood that consumers pay more attention to posts containing a textual status message or picture than content containing a connection or video alone (Kwok & Yu, 2013). In this way, companies will be showing their products like conventional product exhibitions through Facebook pages (Athwal et al., 2018). The connection between Facebook and consumer behaviour, however, is not clear. Some consumers who like a Facebook brand may not engage with that, whereas others who don't like it may be loyal customers of that brand.

2.2.4 Meaning shifts of Cultural Architecture on Facebook

Kudless (2023) evaluated hierarchies of bias in artificial intelligence architecture: Collective, computational, and cognitive. The study examined the prevalence of bias in artificial intelligence text-to-image models utilized in the architecture and design disciplines. The rapid pace of advancements in machine learning technologies, particularly in text-to-image generators, has significantly increased over the past year, making these tools more accessible to the design community. Accordingly, the study aimed at critically documenting and analyzing the collective, computational, and cognitive biases that designers may encounter when working with these tools at this time. The study delved into three hierarchical levels of operation and investigates the possible biases present at each level. Starting with the training data for large language models (LLM), the paper explores how these models may create biases privileging English-language users and perspectives. The study subsequently investigated the digital materiality of models and how their weights generate specific aesthetic results. The study found biases stemming from the training

data of large language models (LLM), which tended to privilege English-language users and perspectives.

Benson (2023) while examining conflict in curation and architecture: the politics of memory and rhetorical sovereignty of the Jewish Museum Berlin indicated that at the conception of Libeskind's design submission, there are multiple cultural and political factors that must be taken into account in the contemporary debate surrounding architecture and cultural criticism in museology, primarily with the changing representational values of monuments and, in turn, architecture in the West during the Cold War. As opposed to carrying associations of being totalitarian tools and visual symbols of societal values and tributes to deceased individuals, the concept of collective memory became key in the discourse. In a post-Shoah society, the drawbacks of Modernist monuments of only demonstrating one perspective within the experience of one person or one nation's imposed cultural values halted cultural continuity with a lack of collective function (Akcan, 2005) and was not deemed suitable for the imperative and unavoidable reconciliation for the perpetrators of the Holocaust with the entirety of the European-Jewish population.

3.0 Research Methodology

In order to arrive at a logical conclusion and to improve research credibility and validity, the research involved observation, note taking, analysis and interpretation of the results. This study relied on primary data. Primary data was collected by collecting the number of meaning shifts occasioned by every CSI posted on a Facebook conversations. English-Kiswahili translations were examined so as to bring out the errors. The researcher is an avid Facebook user, and this study sought to limit itself on CSIs posted on Facebook conversations on pages and not on individual accounts. Purposive sampling was used in this qualitative research. This study targeted at least 11 Facebook pages with a high number of followers and based in Kenya with a core focus on the CSIs posted on the pages. The study involved social media consultants in the assessment of the research instruments mainly to ascertain the reliability of the data collected. The results were presented on tables. This study adopted descriptive research design by adopting an exploratory approach (Blaug & Psacharopoulos 1989). This is mainly because the study sought to examine specific units and subjects and conducted at a central location. The study covered CSIs posted on Facebook. This study was conducted content analysis that involves preparing, organizing and reporting data. This was because it would enable the study critically examining pertinent issues and concerns raised in the research questions in order to make conclusive recommendations for consideration. The study made generalized conclusions and discussions on the CSI.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Lexical, Rhetorical and Grammatical Mis-Matches in Meaning shifts

The analysis results revealed that meaning shifts perpetuates stereotypes, misunderstandings, and even leads to conflicts. This is especially significant with regards to food, a deeply cultural and often emotive subject. For instance, Kenya's traditional dish, *ugali*, can be translated as "cornmeal" or "porridge" for an international audience. While these terms might give a general idea, they do not capture the cultural essence and the significance of *ugali* in Kenyan communities. The meaning shifts then leads to misinterpretations, reducing the rich cultural tapestry to mere fabric. Lexical gaps in language make it difficult to find an exact match for certain foods, making it easy for the true meaning to get lost in translation. In addition, food like *Nyama Choma*, is a term often used to describe grilled meat, usually beef or goat. While a straightforward translation to "grilled meat" might capture the basic cooking method, it fails to communicate the social and cultural elements

that accompany the *Nyama Choma* experience in Kenya. This is not just food; it's an event often enjoyed in a communal setting, sometimes even as part of a ceremony or celebration. On Facebook, a meaning shifts of *Nyama Choma* could lead to a lack of understanding about its cultural importance, reducing it to mere barbecue, devoid of its social significance.

Another staple that holds deep cultural meaning is *Sukuma Wiki*, a Swahili phrase that literally translates to "stretch the week." It is a collard greens dish that is often cooked with spices and sometimes, ground meat. Although the direct translation might give a literal sense of the term, it doesn't offer a glimpse into its socio-economic importance. *Sukuma Wiki* is often a budget-friendly option for families, a nutritious dish meant to last for several days, effectively 'stretching the week.' On platforms like Facebook, reducing it to just "collard greens" or "leafy vegetables" in translations fails to honor the resilience and resourcefulness that the dish represents for many Kenyan households. Moreover, *githeri*, a traditional Kenyan dish made from a mixture of boiled corn and legumes, often beans. In a simplified translation, one might call it a "corn and bean mixture," but this does not give the historical and cultural significance of *githeri*. Originating from the Kikuyu community, *githeri* holds a place in many Kenyans' hearts as a comfort food that has been embraced by various ethnic communities in the country. It also has historical implications, often being seen as a survival food during tough times. When mistranslated or inadequately described on Facebook, the depth of what *githeri* means to Kenyan culture is lost. The study also found that meaning shifts of culture-specific expressions in fashion leads to a series of misunderstandings and misinterpretations. It was noted that fashion, just like food, is deeply embedded in a community's culture and is an important form of self-expression. In Kenya, garments like "*kanga*" have intricate designs and sayings that carry specific cultural meanings and stories. When these unique elements are mistranslated or misinterpreted on Facebook, the essence of the clothing and its cultural significance diminishes or gets distorted.

Moreover, the study found that another area where meaning shifts becomes glaringly evident is in the area of cultural architecture. Kenya has a rich cultural architectural landscape that encompasses a variety of styles, from Swahili architecture with its intricate wooden carvings and coral stones to the Maasai's "*Manyatta*" made of mud, sticks, grass, and cow dung. Each of these cultural architectural styles tells a story of the people, their culture, and their history. But, when terms and concepts from Kenyan cultural architecture are mistranslated on Facebook, there is risk of reducing these complex and significant structures to mere "*huts*" or "houses." Such grammatical mismatches causes structural misunderstandings, thereby affecting the cultural architectural integrity in translation. In addition, the concept of the "*Simba*," a term from the Luo community, provides a good example of how cultural architecture can be deeply embedded in cultural and social practices. Translating "*Simba*" simply as a "small house" captures its physical essence, but it fails to bring out the cultural and symbolic weight it carries within the Luo community. For a Luo boy, building a "*Simba*" in his father's compound is not just a construction project but a rite of passage, a step towards manhood.

Therefore, if mistranslated or misunderstood on Facebook, the rich symbolism and cultural meanings behind the "*Simba*" could be reduced to a simplistic idea of a "boy's small house." This is likely to lead to misunderstandings that strip away the structure's rich cultural context. For example, someone unfamiliar with Luo culture might not grasp why the "*Simba*" is considered an essential part of a young man's life, or why it's built within the father's compound as opposed to elsewhere. The subtleties of its role and significance would be lost, diminishing its cultural richness. Moreover, grammatical and rhetorical elements play an important role in the

representation of such culturally rooted terms. On Facebook, where information is often disseminated without ample context, the lack of grammatical and rhetorical significance can further deepen the misunderstandings. For instance, if the term "Simba" is presented without explanation, it could be easily mistaken for the Swahili word for "lion," leading to entirely incorrect interpretations.

Table 1: General Meaning shifts of Cultural Expressions in Facebook Pages

Facebook Page	SourceText (Kiswahili)	Target Text in English (Meaning shifts)	Expected Translation
Kenya Yetu	Karibu wote	Welcome to the	Welcome all
Swahili Vibes	Asante sana	Thank you Santa	Thank you very much
Nguvu za Afrika	Jambo rafika	Hello lice	Hello friend
Pwani Lifestyle	Habari za asubuhi	News of subi	Good morning
Nairobi Buzz	Furaha na amani	Happiness and believe	Happiness and peace
Kiswahili culture	Pole sana	Sorry to the sauna	Very sorry
Mambo poa Kenya	Refiki mzuri	Friend mouse	Good friend
Mziki Bila Mipaka	Nia njema	Good lice	Good intentions
Fashionistas Kenya	Sare za kisasa	Outfits of kisas	Modern outfits
Foodies of Nairobi	Vyakula tamu	Food of lust	Delicious food

4.2 Stylistic Errors

Studying meaning shifts of culturally specific expressions on social media platforms like Facebook offers an important lens into how global technologies can inadvertently perpetuate cultural misunderstandings. In Kenya, for instance, foods like "ugali" and "sukuma wiki" have particular cultural contexts that can't be easily translated into English or other languages. A translation that simplifies "ugali" to "cornbread" or "sukuma wiki" to "collard greens" misses the nuance of how these foods are prepared, consumed, and what they signify within the local culture. Over time, these meaning shifts contributes to stereotypes or misconceptions about Kenyan cuisine, leading those unfamiliar with the culture to develop a skewed understanding. Therefore, stylistic errors in the translation of food-related expressions are not simply linguistic challenges; they can also be vectors for the loss of cultural richness and diversity. Similarly, when it comes to fashion, Kenya has a unique tapestry of styles that reflect the country's diverse cultures, history, and social norms. Traditional outfits like "kanga" or "kitenge" are more than just clothing; they can carry symbolic meanings, messages, and even act as a form of communication. A meaning shifts of these terms could turn them into mere exotic garments in the eyes of the world, stripping them of their deeper cultural and social significance.

Architectural styles and elements also carry a wealth of cultural information. In Kenya, architectural terms related to Maasai huts, Swahili stone houses, or Kikuyu homesteads are not just descriptors of physical structures; they encapsulate ways of living, social organization, and even spiritual beliefs. Incorrectly translating these terms can thus have far-reaching implications. For example, if a Maasai "enkaj" is wrongly translated as a "mud hut," it diminishes the architectural intelligence that goes into its construction, designed specifically for the social and environmental conditions of the Maasai. It also risks stereotyping communities as 'primitive' or 'underdeveloped' based on a misunderstanding perpetuated through meaning shifts. Moreover, these stylistic errors in translation are not just passive mistakes; they actively shape the way people

interact with and understand different cultures. When someone on Facebook reads a poorly translated post about Kenyan food, fashion, or architecture, they walk away with a distorted view that is likely to influence their future interactions, choices, and even policy support.

The drop appears to be due to an increase in stylistic variation. Although this is the case, there is currently a paucity of quantitative evidence to back up the claim that linguistic variation influences the performance of NLP systems in social media environments. Adaptability of a part-of-speech tagging model is modified by sociolinguistic variance, which is quantified in this study. The influence of socially connected linguistic diversity is studied via part-of-speech tagging, a critical role in syntactic analysis. Studying the performance of taggers on friends, we discovered that it was far more closely linked to the network topology than would be expected by random. The test set’s performance degrades in this circumstance, reflecting social networks’ domain adaptation. A new set of training and testing divisions based on network topology is devised following that. For this reason, it’s critical to incorporate data from all relevant social network communities when creating training materials and activities. In order to deal with the problem of language variance, we turn to an iterative neural tagging model. Even though some online variants are difficult to categorize well, the benefits of more flexible modelling frameworks may only become evident once there is enough data to adequately assess them. Table 2 shows stylistic errors in Facebook Pages.

Table 2: Stylistic Errors in Facebook Pages

Facebook Page	Source (Kiswahili)	Text Target Text in English (Meaning shifts)	Expected Translation
Kenya yetu	Karibu wote	Welcome everyone	Welcome all
Swahili Vibes	Sasa hivi	Now now	Right now
Pwani Lifestyle	Habari za asubuhi	Good morning news	Good morning
Kiswahili culture	Pole sana	Sorry very much	Very sorry

Source: Author, (2023)

4.3 Accuracy Errors

The study found out that in the context of meaning shifts on Facebook, accuracy errors can be just as damaging as stylistic errors, especially when it comes to cultural specificity in Kenya. For example, a Facebook post might refer to the Kenyan holiday of "Madaraka Day," which commemorates the day Kenya attained self-rule. If this term is inaccurately translated to something like "Independence Day," it might lead people to confuse it with other countries' independence celebrations, thereby losing the unique historical context of Kenya's struggle for self-rule. This type of inaccuracy doesn't just confuse; it has the potential to erase significance of Kenyan history and culture. Similarly, when it comes to food, imagine a scenario where the dish "nyama choma," a specific type of Kenyan grilled meat, is inaccurately translated as "barbecue." While "barbecue" may offer a rough idea of the cooking method, it misses the social and cultural contexts in which "nyama choma" is enjoyed. In Kenya, "nyama choma" is often more than just a meal; it is a communal experience, frequently enjoyed during gatherings, celebrations, or even informal social negotiations. Reducing it to "barbecue" dilutes these cultural aspects, leading to a skewed or incomplete understanding.

The study found that language itself can also be a victim of accuracy errors. Swahili, for example, is a language spoken widely in Kenya and holds significant cultural weight. Inaccurate translations

of Swahili phrases or proverbs misrepresents the wisdom or values they intend to convey. For instance, a well-known Swahili saying, "Haba na haba, hujaza kibaba," directly translates to "Little by little, the pot gets filled." This proverb emphasizes the value of gradual progress. An inaccurate translation like "Small steps fill a pot" might capture some of the literal meaning but could miss the richer significance of the original saying. The repercussions of such accuracy errors are manifold. They can reinforce stereotypes, contribute to cultural erasure, and even perpetuate misinformation. While machine translations are becoming more sophisticated, they still struggle with the subtleties of language and culture. It's imperative for platforms like Facebook, which serve as gateways to global cultures, to invest in more accurate and culturally sensitive translation mechanisms.

When evaluating classification models, the joint probability of agreement (often referred to as Accuracy) is the easiest way to gauge agreement. Accuracy is calculated by dividing the total number of tweets identified twice by the number of tweets equally labeled by various annotators. The data labels are assumed to be unordered (nominal) and the agreement by chance is not taken into consideration, but the interpretation is straightforward. This is shown in the Table 3.

Table 3: Accuracy Errors

Facebook Page	Source (Kiswahili)	Text Target Text in English (Meaning shifts)	Expected Translation
Kenya Yetu	Karibu wote	Welcome to the	Welcome all
Swahili Vibes	Asante sana	Thank you Santa	Thank you very much
Nguvu za Afrika	Jambo rafiki	Hello lice	Hello friend
Pwani Lifestyle	Habari za asubuhi	News of subi	Good morning
Nairobi Buzz	Furaha na amani	Happiness and believe	Happiness and peace
Kiswahili culture	Pole sana	Sorry to the sauna	Very sorry
Mambo poa Kenya	Rafiki mzuri	Friend mouse	Good friend
Mziki Bila Mipaka	Nia njema	Good lice	Good intentions
Fashionistas Kenya	Sare za kisasa	Outfits of kisasa	Modern outfits
Foodies of Nairobi	Vyakula tamu	Food of lust	Delicious food

Source: Author, (2023)

4.4 Grammatical Errors

Grammatical mistake correction is the process of identifying and correcting grammatical errors in a text written by a second language learner (GEC). Many people will gain from using a GEC system to fix their English because it also functions as a teaching tool for ESL writing by providing fast feedback. In the last few years, four common jobs have been organized: There has been a lot of interest recently in the Helping Our Own (HOO) 2011 and 2012 (Dale and Kilgarriff, 2010; Dale et al., 2012) and the CoNLL 2013 and 2014 shared tasks (Ng et al., 2013; Ng et al., 2014). There are benefits and drawbacks to each technique, of course. As an example, a classification technique that focuses on subject-verb agreement errors utilizing a customized classifier tailored to the error type, such as a classification approach that can concentrate on each type of error separately, may be beneficial. Consequently, the construction of several classifiers is required for a full GEC system, which increases the complexity of the system architecture. The problem with this approach is that it is based on expensive learner data that has been tagged with mistakes. You'll need a large parallel training corpus of texts authored by ESL students and the corrected versions

to construct a competitive SMT system. Initially, grammatical error repair focused on a single type of error.

Statistical classifiers are trained using texts submitted by both learners and non-learners. The context of a sentence can reveal a lot about a subject's personality or interests. Things like surrounding n-grams, POS tags, chunks, and so on are examples of these surface features. A varied set of features is employed based on the fault type. Statistical machine translation is becoming increasingly popular (SMT). As previously mentioned, SMT has been used to correct mass noun errors by Brockett et al. (2006). Because there aren't any error-annotated learner corpora, using SMT for GEC is problematic. Mizumoto et al. (2011) built an SMT system to fix grammatical errors in Japanese using a learner corpus from the social learning platform Lang-8. Once again, they experimented with it in the language of the native speaker (Mizumoto et al., 2012). Classification and SMT can be combined in a number of ways, including rule-based components (Dahlmeier and Ng, 2012a). In the previously described hybrid approaches, the output of each component system could only be partially repaired for specified sorts of errors. As opposed to our method to system combination, where the output of each component system is a complete correction of the input sentence where all error types are fully addressed.

Because social media captions are created and published without the involvement of an editor, they serve as good test cases for error analysis. Instagram is one of the social media sites that will receive a lot of attention in the coming months. A wide range of businesses wishing to advertise new products are turning to Instagram, one of the most popular social media sites, not only among the general public. Some businesses may find Instagram to be a useful marketing tool. Due to the lack of a caption editor on social media, companies publish captions without first verifying that they are properly written. Written language conveys the firm's professional standards in both online and offline settings, according to Holtzclaw (2014). Mistakes in grammar, punctuation, and spelling will reflect poorly on you and your organization. These mishaps are referred to as errors in linguistics. According to Richards, error analysis is a study of second language learners' blunders (1985). Error analysis, as defined by Khansir (2012), is a type of language analysis that focuses on mistakes produced by learners.

Table 4: Grammatical Errors

Facebook Page	Source (Kiswahili)	Text	Target Text in English (Meaning shifts)	Expected Translation
Kenya yetu	Hakuna siku kama leo		There is no day like leyo	There's no day like today
Swahili vibes	Karibu nyumbani		Welcome home	Welcome home
Nguvu za Afrika	Wakazi wa jiji la Nairobi		Residents of Nairobi	Residents of Nairobi
Nairobi Buzz	Penda usafi		Love usaf	Love cleanliness
Kiswahil culture	Heshima wazee	kwa	Respect for wazee	Respect for elders Wonderful
Mambo poa Kenya	Nafasi ya kipekee		Unique opportunity	opportunity
Mziki Bila Mipaka	Wimbo mzuri wa mapenzi		Beautiful love song	Beautiful love song
Fashionistas Kenya	Mavazi ya kisasa		Outfits of kisasa	Modern outfits
Foodies of Nairobi	Chakula kitamu sana		Food of mast	Very tasty food

Source: Author, (2023).

4.5 The Concept of Natural Equivalence in Translation

The second objective of the study was to examine the extent to which Facebook has used natural equivalents to avoid meaning shifts of culture-specific expressions. The study found that Facebook's translation algorithms had a mixed success rate when it came to using natural equivalents for culture-specific expressions in Kenya, particularly in the domains of food, fashion, and cultural architecture. In the case of food, terms like "ugali," "nyama choma," and "sukuma wiki" were sometimes translated to their closest English equivalents, such as "cornmeal porridge," "grilled meat," and "collard greens," respectively. While these translations captured the basic nature of the foods, they fell short of conveying the cultural practices and social situations in which these foods are typically consumed. For instance, "nyama choma" was not just any "grilled meat;" it is a communal eating experience often associated with social gatherings. Regarding fashion, the study discovered that traditional Kenyan clothing terms like "kanga," "kitenge," and "Maasai shuka" were inconsistently translated. In some instances, "kanga" was accurately rendered as a "wrapper," but in others, it was simply translated as "cloth," missing its specific use and cultural significance. "Kitenge," a fabric rich in colors and patterns, was often reduced to "African fabric," a term too broad to encapsulate its unique identity within Kenyan culture. "Maasai shuka," a special type of blanket worn by the Maasai people, was sometimes mistranslated as "plaid blanket," losing its cultural resonance entirely.

When it comes to cultural architecture, terms like "Boma," "Swahili house," and "Maasai Manyatta" were examined. The study found that "Boma," traditionally a livestock enclosure or a community dwelling space, was often translated as "compound," a term too generic to depict its original meaning. "Swahili house," which refers to a specific architectural style prevalent in coastal Kenya, was inaccurately translated as "coastal house." "Maasai Manyatta," a term for Maasai homesteads, was sometimes translated as "village," missing the significance that it often refers to

a cluster of huts surrounded by thorn bushes for protection. The study noted that while Facebook has made some strides in using natural equivalents for translation, the platform still has a long way to go to avoid meaning shifts that could lead to cultural misunderstandings or appropriations. The use of natural equivalents was inconsistent and seemed to lack a thorough understanding of the depth and context of Kenyan culture-specific expressions.

Table 5: Natural Equivalence in Translation in the context of Food

Word	Category	Natural	Equivalent in English	Context
<i>Ugali</i>	Food	Cornmeal	Porridge	A staple food commonly consumed in Kenya
<i>Nyama Choma</i>	Food	Grilled	Meat	Often enjoyed during social gatherings
<i>Sukuma Wiki</i>	Food	Collard Greens/Kale		Commonly cooked as a side dish
<i>Githeri</i>	Food	Mixed Beans and Corn		A traditional Kenyan dish
<i>Mandazi</i>	Food	Sweet Doughnut		A popular snack often enjoyed with tea
<i>Chapati</i>	Food	Flatbread		Widely eaten across Kenya, often with stews
<i>Matoke</i>	Food	Cooked Plantain/Banana		A common dish, especially in western Kenya
<i>Samaki</i>	Food	Fish		Commonly fried or grilled, enjoyed with vegetables
<i>Kachumbari</i>	Food	Tomato and Onion Salad		A fresh side dish often served with grilled meats
<i>Pilau</i>	Food	Spiced Rice		Aromatic rice dish often cooked with meat or fish
<i>Mutura</i>	Food	Blood Sausage		A popular street food, especially in urban areas

Table 5 shows how Kenyan foods like "Ugali," "Nyama Choma," "Sukuma Wiki," and "Githeri" undergo meaning shifts when portrayed on Facebook, reflecting the intersection of cultural context and social media. While these dishes hold every day or festive significance in Kenya, their online representation, especially to international audiences, often transforms them into symbols of cultural pride, national identity, or even global trends like healthy eating and sustainability. Facebook enables diverse interpretations, turning traditional dishes into cultural showcases that embody modern Kenyan identity and contribute to the global culinary landscape, showcasing how digital platforms reshape cultural elements. Table 6 shows some of the some commonly used Kenyan words and their most naturally equivalent translations in English as found by the study with regards to meaning shifts in the context of fashion.

Table 6: Natural Equivalence in Translation in the context of Fashion

Word	Category	Natural English	Equivalent	inContext
<i>Kitenge</i>	Fashion	African Wax Print Fabric		Used for various clothing items and accessories
<i>Maasai Shuka</i>	Fashion	Maasai Blanket		A special type of blanket with cultural significance
<i>Dashiki</i>	Fashion	Loose-Fitting Garment		Often colorful and worn for various occasions
<i>Kanga</i>	Fashion	East African Garment		A colorful fabric used for clothing, decorations, and more A versatile garment often worn at the coast
<i>Kikoi</i>	Fashion	Swahili Sarong		
<i>Shanga</i>	Fashion	Handcrafted Jewelry	Beaded	An important part of traditional Kenyan dress Often printed with Swahili proverbs, used as an accessory
<i>Leso</i>	Fashion	Decorative Cloth		Worn by various Kenyan communities, not just the Maasai
<i>Shuka</i>	Fashion	Traditional Blanket/Cloth		Made from sisal plant, used for its durability and style
<i>Kiondo</i>	Fashion	Handwoven Bag		
<i>Akala</i>	Fashion	Handcrafted Footwear	Leather	Popular for their durability and unique designs

The translation of Kenyan fashion terms like "Kitenge," "Maasai Shuka," "Dashiki," "Kanga," "Beadwork," and "Kikoi" into English for platforms like Facebook often leads to meaning shifts and oversimplification, losing the deeper cultural nuances. For example, "Kitenge" is reduced to "African Wax Print Fabric," stripping it of its identity and heritage significance. Similarly, items like the Maasai Shuka and Shuka, though both translated as cloth, hold different cultural meanings that can be homogenized online. The Dashiki, Kanga, and Beadwork also lose their symbolic and social importance when presented merely as garments or jewelry. Facebook's focus on visual appeal often results in a superficial understanding, diluting the craftsmanship and rich history behind these items, emphasizing the need for cultural awareness in cross-cultural communication on global platforms. Table 7 shows some of the some commonly used Kenyan words and their most naturally equivalent translations in English as found by the study with regards to meaning shifts in the context of cultural architecture.

Table 7: Natural Equivalence in Translation in the context of Cultural Architecture

Word	Category	Natural	Equivalent in English	Context
<i>Boma</i>	Cultural Architecture	Compound or Homestead		Can refer to a livestock enclosure or community area
<i>Swahili House</i>	Cultural Architecture	Swahili Style House		Specific architectural style found on the coast
<i>Maasai Manyatta</i>	Cultural Architecture	Maasai Homestead		Traditional dwelling of the Maasai people
<i>Makuti</i>	Cultural Architecture	Thatched Roof		Common in coastal areas, made from palm leaves
<i>Jumba</i>	Cultural Architecture	Large House or Mansion		Grand houses in coastal towns, reflecting Swahili culture
<i>Kibanda</i>	Cultural Architecture	Shack or Small Hut		Small, simple structures used for various purposes
<i>Bandas</i>	Cultural Architecture	Rustic Lodge or Cabin		Often used in tourist lodges, built in a traditional style
<i>Nyumba</i>	Cultural Architecture			Simple houses made from
<i>Mabati</i>	Cultural Architecture	Corrugated Iron House	Sheetcorrugated iron sheets	
<i>Choo</i>	Cultural Architecture	Toilet or Latrine		Basic sanitation facilities, vary in construction
<i>Tembe</i>	Cultural Architecture	Traditional Mud House		Made from mud and other natural materials, often rural

The translation of Kenyan architectural terms such as "Boma," "Swahili House," "Maasai Manyatta," and "Makuti" into English often leads to shifts in meaning, especially on platforms like social media, where cultural nuances may be lost (Mokhtar Hamadouche, 2018). For example, while "Boma" is translated as "Compound or Homestead," it holds specific connotations related to community living and traditional lifestyles in Kenya, which may be overlooked in broader contexts. Similarly, the "Swahili House," with its rich history of Arab, Persian, Indian, and African influences, might be reduced to a mere "Swahili Style House" in translation, ignoring its cultural significance. This can result in a homogenization of culturally distinct terms, leading to misunderstandings in multicultural or global discussions (Ge & Gretzel, 2018). Moreover, terms like "Maasai Manyatta" and "Makuti" may be technically accurate in translation but fail to communicate the cultural richness and ecological importance embedded in their original context.

Translation studies, which emerged significantly in the 20th century, highlight the complexities of translating not just language but also cultural significance (Holmes, 1988). Scholars like James Holmes laid the groundwork for modern translation theory, which includes the challenges of cultural equivalence, particularly with idiomatic expressions and proverbs (Touy, 1995;

Wongseree, 2021). This complexity is further demonstrated by the challenges translators face when navigating neologisms in social media and the evolving meanings of words like "tweet" or "cookie" (Pathak & Muralidharan, 2020a). Translation not only involves linguistic accuracy but also adapting cultural contexts, as seen in the examples of functional equivalence in Kiswahili-English translations like "Hakuna Matata" and "It's raining cats and dogs," where meaning shifts are necessary to maintain cultural relevance (Snell-Hornby, 2012). The use of various translation strategies such as borrowing, calque, and modulation also plays a significant role in preserving the original text's stylistic and cultural integrity during translation (Dencik et al., 2018).

5.0 Conclusions

This study concludes that meaning shifts of culture-specific expressions related to food, fashion, and architecture in Kenya on Facebook have negative implications, leading to misunderstandings beyond mere words. These shifts dilute the rich cultural meanings and significance of these expressions, emphasizing the need for translation services to consider not only lexical elements but also rhetorical and grammatical aspects. While translation can bring cultures closer, such shifts have the potential to create division and foster misunderstandings. Therefore, it is crucial to develop more culturally sensitive and accurate translation mechanisms on global platforms like Facebook. Additionally, the study highlights the increased complexity in cross-language qualitative research, where linguistic obstacles arise in transforming narratives from one language to another. The process of building culturally similar research instruments, such as in healthcare, assumes a neutral and objective stance toward language, but modern translation practices challenge this notion, particularly in the ethical representation of different cultures.

The study further concludes that translation is used as an image-making tool in modern media, raising concerns about the ethicality of translating cultures based on preconceived notions, which can misrepresent cultures. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are increasingly using emojis as a new form of communication. Emojis perform various communicative tasks and are replacing words in expressing sentiments. Younger generations view emojis as time-saving and efficient, while older generations see them as a threat to the historical roots of language. The research reveals that emojis now perform speech acts traditionally associated with written communication and are pragmatically competent like words. This "Emojification of Language" is transforming digital communication, offering a new stream of communication for languages and changing how sentiments are expressed.

6.0 Recommendations

Current machine translation systems often fail to capture cultural nuances and idiomatic expressions, particularly in languages rich in cultural diversity like Swahili. To address this, ongoing research is necessary, with a focus on training AI models specifically on Kenyan dialects and cultural references. Facebook could improve translation accuracy by involving local cultural experts and offering educational resources for translators to enhance cultural competence. Allowing users to correct meaning shifts for culture-specific terms on the platform could also help preserve cultural heritage. Prioritizing context over word-for-word translation, using footnotes for cultural explanations, and engaging in dialogue with source text authors can reduce ambiguities. A multidisciplinary approach that combines linguistics, computer science, and cultural studies can provide innovative solutions for improving translation on social media platforms.

Additionally, Facebook should invest in grammatical error correction systems, address neologisms through standardized practices, and ensure ethical handling of data when involving local

communities in translation efforts. Regular updates and evaluations of translation algorithms with expert input and user feedback are crucial to maintain accuracy. The design and use of graphicons and emoji on social media could also benefit from improvements such as clearer labeling and more flexible user-generated text. Given that idiomatic expressions are particularly challenging for machine translation, efforts should be made to minimize their use or provide cultural context where needed. The need for cultural familiarity in translation is critical, especially in cases where there is no direct linguistic equivalent, as seen with the translation of idiomatic phrases across languages.

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