

Intellectualization of Indigenous Languages of South Africa: Translation Twists and Turns

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the intellectualization of the indigenous languages of South Africa through a translation of academic texts and using isiZulu by way of example. The intellectualization of a language means the advancement, upliftment, and enrichment of a language, enabling it for use in different domains as a language of research, science and technology, and teaching and learning. The point of departure for this paper is the value of translation as an enabler for the intellectualization of languages. Using Nord's functionalist theory, this paper seeks to provide an overview of the process of translation of doctoral abstracts from English into isiZulu as a contribution towards the intellectualization of isiZulu at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), South Africa. The aim of this qualitative study, therefore, was to explore the intricacies involved in the journey to the intellectualization of languages that belong to different language families, specifically English and isiZulu. The data used were 12 doctoral dissertation abstracts randomly selected from a pool of abstracts from various disciplines submitted for translation from English into isiZulu at UKZN as part of the initiative of intellectualizing isiZulu. The study established an acknowledgment of the intricacies involved in the translation of academic texts and suggests possible practices to be followed to contribute successfully to the intellectualization of indigenous languages of South Africa, isiZulu in particular.

Keywords: functionalist theory, indigenous languages, intellectualization, translation.

1. Introduction

The Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions of South Africa (South Africa. Department of Higher Education and Training, 2020) encourages institutions of higher learning to develop a multilingual environment affording all 11 official languages of South Africa space to advance as languages of research, teaching, and learning. The emphasis in this regard is put on the indigenous African languages of South Africa which were previously marginalized and therefore underdeveloped. Institutions are encouraged to transform by developing their own language policy as well as the related implementation plan. To support the advancement of the

indigenous languages cause, institutions of higher learning in South Africa are currently working on innovative projects on terminology development models, lexicography, and translation of various works and orthographies. Prah (2017) affirmed the importance of translation in intellectualization and confirmed that “a major component of the organisation of an intellectualised language-based society is the creation of a translation industry” (p. 222).

Presently, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) is leading in South Africa among tertiary institutions in the implementation of the language policy. UKZN adopted its language policy plan in 2006, which was later revised in 2014. The revision was due to the introduction of the Use of Official Languages Act (No. 12 of 2012), as well as the restructuring of university colleges (Khumalo, 2017). This language policy confirms the use of English and isiZulu as the institution’s official languages, thus promoting bilingualism. One of the objectives of the language policy is to advance isiZulu so that it is used equally with English. It is UKZN’s strategy to develop isiZulu to become a language for both administration and academic activities in order to eradicate problems relating to language barriers (Khumalo, 2017). Furthermore, UKZN instituted a University Language Board (ULB) through a committee charter. The ULB’s mandate is to develop the university’s language policy and plan as well as implement, monitor, and in due course review the policy and plan. The ULB reports to the university senate and as a way of proving implementation of the language policy and plan, their report must be in both English and isiZulu.

Furthermore, UKZN established an office called the University Language Planning and Development Office (ULPDO), led by a director, who is a member of the ULB. The ULPDO’s mandate is to implement the university’s language policy through varied language initiatives in support of the advancement of isiZulu. Expectedly, the ULPDO director must report to the ULB on progress regarding language policy implementation initiatives. One strategic initiative, among many, was the approval of a new rule known as the Doctoral Rule (DR9b) in 2016, which talks directly to the translation of all doctoral abstracts from English into isiZulu. This is the impetus of this study. The paper starts off with an overview of how the translation of doctoral abstracts was planned and executed. Thereafter, using Nord’s functionalist theory and model, I highlight the intricacies involved in the translation of academic texts and provide possible practices to be followed to contribute meaningfully to the intellectualization of indigenous languages of South Africa, isiZulu in particular.

2. The concept of intellectualization

Intellectualization is a concept well associated with the Prague School of Linguistics. Basically, intellectualization is the development of a language from its current status to a status where it is used as language of scholarly discourse (Gonzalez, 1998). Hence, the transformation of indigenous languages into academic and scientific languages is known as intellectualization. Finlayson and Madiba (2002) were among the first South African scholars to write about intellectualization. Alexander (2005) further developed this concept, and other scholars, such as Kaschula and Maseko (2014), have also contributed to the refinement of this concept. Intellectualization of indigenous

languages is very important as it contributes to quality education that embraces diversity and allows learners to experience different worldviews while remaining true to their identities. Prah (2017) affirmed that “without the intellectualisation of our languages, there is little hope of Africans achieving sustainable development” (p. 215). According to Khumalo (2017), intellectualization within a South African context involves “a carefully planned process of hastening the cultivation and growth of indigenous official African languages so that they effectively function in all higher domains as languages of teaching and learning, research, science, and technology” (p. 252). Prah (2017) further contended that “our languages as intellectualised media are culturally the single most important instrument for the empowerment of society and the optimisation of human capital in Africa” (p. 215).

In simpler terms, intellectualization therefore means the development, upliftment, and enhancement of a language, enabling it for use across all spheres. Scholars working in the field of language development have agreed that translation is an important enabler for language intellectualization, hence the focus of this study using doctoral abstracts translated from English into isiZulu.

3. The concept of translation

There are so many definitions of translation provided by different scholars across the globe. Such definitions range from simple (e.g., translation being the transfer of text from one language into another) to more complex (e.g., translation being the process of manipulating language structures in order to transfer meaning from one language to the other in a way that the originator intended) (Newmark, 1988). More importantly, scholars have agreed that translation involves two languages wherein text, inclusive of its message and its intrinsic aspects, is moved from one language to the other. This process ranges from a simple one if the two languages belong to the same language family to a more complex one, both in terms of linguistic aspects as well as extra- and intra-textual factors, if the languages belong to different language families (Dlamini, 2021). The latter is the case with English and isiZulu, as the former belongs to the Western languages and the latter to the African languages.

Nord (2005) introduced two types of translations, the first being documentary translation, which is common with literary texts. Here, the reader is aware that they are reading a translated text and appreciates the exposure to concepts new to their language and context. Such translations are termed source-oriented translations. The other type is instrumental translation, where texts show no sign that they are translated. Doctoral abstracts, even though they are not literary in nature, fall under documentary translation, since they are recorded as translations and some technical words are transliterated, giving away the notion that the texts are indeed translations. Nord (2005) referred to these translations as target-oriented translations and called them function-preserving translations.

4. Overview of the translation of doctoral abstracts at UKZN

In 2016, the university senate of UKZN, approved DR9b as one of the strategic initiatives in support of the intellectualization of isiZulu. This rule basically requires

that every doctoral thesis has an abstract in both English and isiZulu before it is uploaded onto the university database. This meant that from 2017, the university had to follow the letter and spirit of the DR9b. The following actions were undertaken:

- The Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) – Teaching and Learning communicated the senate’s decision to all UKZN colleges.
- The ULPDO, an implementation arm of the ULB, developed a strategy to execute this initiative and presented it to the ULB.
- On approval of the strategy, the ULPDO further developed workflow with people assigned to different roles.
- The ULPDO issued a call to all academics who are PhD holders with a linguistics/isiZulu language background to serve as translators.
- Ten academics were selected, and their names presented to the ULB for endorsement.
- The DR9b translation team was constituted.

Subsequently, a briefing meeting was called by the ULPDO. The director outlined the task. The team put together the terms of reference as well as a style guide. Both these documents constituted the DR9b rulebook. This rulebook is revised continuously depending on new experiences and decisions taken. The ULPDO assigned batches of abstracts and translated research terminology to individual translators. Two members of the team were assigned an editorial role to edit all translations before submitting them to the office. When the first batch was finalized, a second meeting was called to review the process. Herein, the translators and editors shared their experiences. In this meeting, it was ruled that there should be translation retreats to precede each translation cycle. In light of this process, the ULPDO designed a translation model with stages facilitated by the ULPDO, editors, and translators. These stages are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows that the model starts with a three-day retreat attended by translators, editors, and the ULPDO staff. On Day 1, the team reflects on the previous cycle and the reflections lead to the updating of the rulebook. The latest version of the rulebook as well as other new resources, such as glossary lists, are shared. The ULPDO then allocates batches to translators and the translation begins. The translators are not expected to finish their batches during the three days, as this retreat is used as a support system for the team. When a translator has completed their batch, they submit it to the ULPDO, which sends the batches to the editors for editing. The editors also edit referring to the rulebook. When they finish, they send the batches back to the ULPDO and the ULPDO facilitates the uploading of the abstracts onto the university server.

This model relies on the submission of abstracts by colleges. There are four UKZN colleges, namely the College of Humanities, the College of Law and Management, the College of Health Sciences, and the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Sciences. The UKZN hosts two graduations a year with a total of around 150 doctoral graduates. This translates to 150 abstracts to be translated and edited each year. However, these abstracts must be submitted via the colleges’ postgraduate administrators. This

situation therefore renders this model cyclic, with improvement in every cycle as feedback and suggestions are incorporated into the rulebook.



Figure 1: The UKZN translation of doctoral abstracts model

5. Discussion: Intricacies involved in the journey to intellectualization

This study was formulated within the functionalist approach. Nord (1992), drawing from previous scholars' views, asserted that texts should be translated according to a purpose, that is, there must be a function that the translated text has to perform in the target language. Basically, Nord modified the functionalist theory to what she deemed as the fundamentals of translation tasks. Such fundamentals include the initiator, the translator, and the translation brief. This section provides an outline of these fundamentals and critically examines each fundamental in relation to the translation process of the doctoral abstracts.

5.1 Initiator

Every project has a person or something that initiates and drives it. In translation, the person who spells out the purpose of the text is called the initiator. Nord (1997)

affirmed that the initiator is the person who starts the translation process, defines the purpose, and monitors progress until the completion of a task. In some instances, the initiator is not the person who commissions the work. Dlamini (2021), in line with Nord (1997), claimed that sometimes in a translation task there is a primary initiator and a secondary initiator and in some cases even a commissioner. Mainly, the primary initiator determines the need and the purpose for a translation and the secondary initiator executes the translation task to meet the purpose. Taking the translation of doctoral abstracts into account, the role of an initiator seems to be spread over three different bodies working together to implement the language policy. The UKZN Senate approved DR9b with a clear purpose, which is to support the intellectualization of isiZulu. The UKZN Senate is therefore the primary initiator as it defined the purpose for the translation of doctoral abstracts. The ULB and the DVC are responsible for implementation, monitoring, and review of the language policy. The ULB and the DVC are therefore secondary initiators, as they monitor progress of the implementation and report to the primary initiator. However, the implementation of the policy is done by the ULPDO, rendering the ULPDO the commissioner of the project. It is also the initiator's role to commission suitable translators to perform the translation task. In this instance, the commissioning role sits with the ULPDO.

5.2 Commissioning of translators: Translator's role and competence

Nord (1997) affirmed that the role of the translator is very crucial in the translation process, that is, no translation can happen without a translator. Translation scholars have concurred that the translator is not just anyone who can speak the two languages involved in the translation process but someone with special characteristics and skills. Van Coillie and Verscheren (2006) argued that translators are an intrinsic part of the translation process. Nord (1997) clearly outlined the role of the translator, explaining that a translator must analyze the acceptability and viability of the translation brief in legal, economic, or ideological terms; check whether the translation is really needed; specify the activities required for carrying out the brief; and perform a translational action. Moropa (2012) also argued that selection of translators should be based on their linguistic competence, knowledge of translation theories, cultural expertise in both source and target language, as well as their general knowledge about the world at large. Furthermore, Nord (1997) asserted that it is the translator that decides on the suitable translation method to be used during the translation process, basing this decision on the intended purpose of the text. Clearly, this confirms that a translator is someone with specific expertise not only in language but translation theories as well.

Regarding the translation of abstracts, the call issued by the ULPDO for translators was specific concerning the qualification and expertise of the prospective translators. All the translators commissioned to translate doctoral abstracts are language specialists, having done their doctoral research on various areas of language. While some commissioned translators come from the African-languages discipline within the School of Arts, others come from the School of Education but within the isiZulu language discipline. Since it is doctoral abstracts that are translated, it is fitting that translators holding doctoral degrees are commissioned for this highly academic task. This directive came from the ULB, which oversees the implementation of the language

policy in the entire university. Besides holding a doctoral degree, the translators also have extra-linguistic competence (Beeby, 2000); for example, some are renowned authors of literary works as well as professional translators. Therefore, they possess the requisite linguistic competence, which includes knowledge of linguistic and/or translation theories and knowledge of how both English and isiZulu languages work in different contexts. The selected editors have editing experience over and above linguistic competence. The translators and editors were thus selected based on their special characteristics and skills (Nord, 1997).

5.3 Importance of the translation brief

According to Nord (1997), the translation brief is a list of important instructions to guide the translation process. This is where the function/purpose of the end product is spelled out. Similarly, Dlamini (2021) explained that the translation brief becomes a guide or a tool and serves as a reference for the translator as they work on the translation. It is a very crucial document in such that if it is not well crafted or specific on critical issues, even the most professional translator can produce a translation of poor quality. A translation brief should also include issues relating to vocabulary, language, and graphics that the translator needs to pay attention to. Hence, each translation task needs to have its own translation brief. It is also important that the translation brief includes information such as timeframes, contracts, and remuneration. A translation brief needs to be prepared by the initiator beforehand and discussed with the translator in the briefing meeting, which must happen before the translation begins. Since the translation brief carries key information crucial to the translation task, it should be discussed with the translator point by point. A translation brief is critical in the production of translations of acceptable quality.

Regarding preparation for the translation of the abstracts, the ULPDO director invited the translators to a briefing meeting where he spelled out the translation task. Normally, the initiator prepares the translation brief and discusses it with the translator, yet in this instance, the director invited the team to discuss how the actual translation task will be executed. This is, however, not an uncommon practice. If an initiator is not well-versed in the field, they should acquire assistance from specialists, which is what happened in this instance. It should be noted that what is crucial is that a translation brief/rulebook is created for a translation project and discussed before the actual translation happens. The team, consisting of language and translation experts, put together a list of guidelines, and a style guide, to serve as a translation brief. These guidelines were discussed thoroughly and agreed upon by all the team members and adopted as a rulebook for the team and the ULPDO. Each translator was issued a copy prior to performing the translation task. As the project progressed and the first cycle was completed, the experiences of the translators and editors informed the review of the guidelines. Aspects such as the time assigned for translating the English abstracts, the quality and length of the abstracts, the format, as well as the technical nature of some of the abstracts were main contributors to the review of the translation guidelines. The review of the guidelines is continuous. This review process takes place during the DR9b translation retreat which runs over three days (see Figure 1). Day 1 is always allocated to editors to share their experiences during the

editing process and to highlight challenges encountered or issues that need to be addressed. At this time, the translators also share their experiences, and all this informs the continuous review of the rulebook.

Nord (2005) provided a model that highlights three aspects of the functionalist theory relating to textual analysis. These are the importance of the translation brief, the role of the source text analysis, and the function hierarchy of translation problems. The translation brief has already been discussed above. For the benefit of this study, only the role of the source text analysis will be discussed below. Before the discussion, the methodology is outlined.

6. Methodology

This section addresses the data collection method and how the data were used in this study to demonstrate the “twists and turns” of translation.

6.1 Data

It was mentioned earlier in the paper that the doctoral abstracts come from all the colleges within the UKZN. For this study, 12 doctoral abstracts were used, that is, three from each college. The three abstracts were randomly selected from each college and extracts from these abstracts are used in the discussion below. It is important to note that abstracts were collected from all the colleges, since each college has a specific text composition and lexis that could provide a unique experience to the translation process.

6.2 Procedure

The randomly selected abstracts were read carefully and key features relating to source text analysis were identified. The identified key features were: long sentences, italicized words, abbreviations, formulae, and names of concepts. In the discussion, extracts from the abstracts showing these relevant key features are used for illustration purposes.

7. Discussion: The role of source text analysis

Source text analysis is crucial before the actual translation task begins. Scholars within translation have agreed that before translators translate, they need to read the text and analyze it comprehensively in order to understand what they are dealing with and plan accordingly. Several factors demand the need for source text analysis. Nord (2005) provided a model for analyzing the source text before translation. She even went further to say that such an analysis is not a mere source text analysis but a translation-oriented source text analysis. The model starts with reading the source text repeatedly and it includes observing intra-textual factors such as the subject matter, content, presupposition, text composition, non-verbal elements, lexis, syntax, and supra-segmental features. In the context of this study, this means that the translators must read each English abstract and analyze it according to intra-textual factors before embarking on a translation. This is known as the median stage of translation (Dlamini, 2021). At this stage, the translator reads the text repeatedly, analyzes the text, decides on the translation method, and gathers resources for translation. It is important to

highlight here that all the UKZN abstracts that are translated are written in English and are translated into isiZulu and that all the translators speak isiZulu as a first language and English as a second language. English and isiZulu come from different language families and are different in terms of grammar and linguistics. This on its own means that the translator must also ensure grammatical correctness in the target translation besides all the other translation factors to be considered.

This section presents and discusses the intra-textual factors observed in the translations. The approach in this section is a more practical one in the sense that the focus is more on the texts than on the theoretical framework. As a result, the discussion, using real-life examples, shows how the intra-textual factors caused challenges during the translation process. Only the intra-textual factors relevant to this study are discussed. Examples are drawn from the data collected.

7.1 Subject matter

It is highlighted above that the abstracts come from all the colleges at UKZN, hence the subject matter for the abstracts being broad beyond measure. It is also stated above that the DR9b team are linguists and/or language experts, meaning that their specialization is in the humanities. They are also translation experts in their own right and therefore understand translation principles. However, it would be naïve to believe that the team fully understood the subject matter contained in each individual abstract irrespective of the discipline. The issue of subject matter was immediately reported as a challenge in the first cycle of translation. The ULPDO advised translators to put aside abstracts that they found incomprehensible and/or untranslatable. Untranslatability is a common concept among translation scholars, and it simply refers to text or vocabulary that has no equivalent in the target language and thus various translation techniques are proposed to address this phenomenon. The notion of untranslatability was coined to refer to those translation challenges difficult to solve and, again, untranslatability could be seen as a matter of degree, where certain texts seem to be more translatable than others (Mohammadi & Keshavarzi, 2016). Although this concept is used mainly when reference to culture is made, it was found to be quite prevalent in the discussion of the subject matter of abstracts. Below are topics of some of the abstracts that fell into this category.

Example 1: Topics of abstracts

Topic 1: Phytochemical and antiplasmodial studies of five ethnobotanically-selected South African medicinal plants (Tajuddeen, 2020, College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science).

Topic 2: Design, synthesis and pharmacological evaluation of novel fused pyrimidine analogues as anticancer agents (Cherukupalli, 2018, College of Health Science).

Topic 3: Gene polymorphisms of uric acid related proteins and the angiotensin receptor IV (AT4) in pre-eclampsia (Khaliq, 2020, College of Health Science).

Looking at the three topics above, each contains vocabulary that is technical and could fit into the category of untranslatable text. To mitigate the untranslatability challenge, the ULPDO came up with a three-tiered strategy, which involved training,

commissioning, and consultation. First, a workshop on translation methods and techniques used in translating different types of texts was run for the DR9b team. Second, a team of experts from schools identified to have technical abstracts was commissioned by the ULPDO. This team, called a technical content team, is available for consultation by translators to assist in understanding the text to enable translation, that is, to address untranslatability. In this instance, it was clear that there are two forms of untranslatability. These are linguistic untranslatability, which is resolved by exposure to various translation techniques, and conceptual untranslatability, which refers to the non-existence of equivalents in the target language, which is resolved by consultation with the technical content team. Interestingly, some of the concepts found to be untranslatable were not English concepts but concepts specific to the field. Decisions of use of terms in their original form due to untranslatability are also discussed with this team. Third, editors provide feedback and facilitate discussion on translation issues of concern on the first day of each translation retreat, that is, at the beginning of each translation cycle. Editors and the technical content team are available throughout and beyond the translation retreat for consultation.

7.2 Text composition

Text composition refers to the structure of the text and includes both macro- and micro-structures. Most of the abstracts, mainly from the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science, abound in formulae, abbreviations, and foreign (non-English) names of concepts. Although abstracts from other colleges contain less of these formulae, they also still pose their own challenges, especially when it comes to names of theories and models.

Example 2: Text with formulae

“We consider the groups of isometries of metric spaces arising from finitely generated additive abelian groups. Let A be a finitely generated additive abelian group. Let $R = \{1, \%$ where $\%$ is a reflection at the origin and $T = \{t_a : A \rightarrow A, t_a(x) = x + a, a \in A\}$. We show that (1) for any finitely generated additive abelian group A and finite generating set S with $0 \in S$ and $-S = S$, the maximum subgroup of $\text{Isom}X(A, S)$ is RT ; (2) $D \in RT$ if and only if $D \leq T$ or $D = RT^0$ where $T^0 = \{h^2 : h \in T\}$; (3) for the vector groups over integers with finite generating set $S = \{u \in \mathbb{Z}^n : |u| = 1\}$, $\text{Isom}X(\mathbb{Z}^n, S) = O_n(\mathbb{Z})\mathbb{Z}^{n''}$ (Lei, 2020, College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science).

This example extract from an abstract abounds in formulae. Besides the fact that these formulae are untranslatable, the agglutinating nature of isiZulu adds a further spanner in the works. As the translator reads this text in preparation for translation, a lot of questions arise, the main question being, How do these get presented in isiZulu? This is discussed under syntax below.

7.3 Non-verbal elements

Non-verbal elements relate more to the make-up of the work than the content. Language orthographies provide guidance in the handling of these elements. While some orthographic rules are generic, that is, apply to all languages, most are language specific. Non-verbal elements include diagrams, figures, graphics, and tables, as well

as the use of italics, bold, capital letters, and to a certain extent font. Very few abstracts, if at all, have graphics, figures, and diagrams, so these elements will not be discussed. Regarding the use of italics, a universal rule says that if a word/text is in a language other than the one the text is written in, that word is written in italics. Now, some abstracts, obviously in English, include words from other languages, for example Italian, Latin, French, etc.; these words are therefore written in italics. During the translation process, some abstracts when translated end up with borrowed English words and such words are written in italics. This means that when the abstract is presented in isiZulu, it ends up with borrowed English words in italics as well as the words that were already in italics in the original abstract. Such instances have been queried by some authors of the abstracts.

The use of capital letters also poses problems. IsiZulu, being an agglutinating language, has prefixes for every noun used in a sentence. For nouns written in capital letters when translated into isiZulu using transliteration or the borrowing technique, the issue of capital letters becomes a problem. IsiZulu orthography is clear in this regard; however, sometimes the isiZulu rule must be overturned to accommodate the concerns of the technical content team and/or authors who would like to see the capital letters maintained for specific reasons.

Example 3: Text with words that start with capital letters

“The aim of this research study was to analyse the Critical Success Factors (CSFs) and barriers in the supply of essential medicines; and propose solutions that can be adopted to overcome the identified barriers in order to attain excellence in the public healthcare delivery system in Malawi. Insight into the failings of the national supply chain agency, the Central Medical Stores (CMS), that led to the transformation of CMS into Central Medical Stores Trust (CMST) is provided. The study also includes a brief overview of some concepts, performance measurements and CSFs of Supply Chain Management (SCM) and relates the same to pharmaceutical supply chain management (PSCM) in Malawi” (Kaupa, 2020, College of Law and Management).

7.4 Lexis

The biggest challenge for translation of technical text is always the lack of vocabulary in the target language. This is also the case with the translation of abstracts. Fortunately, the ULPDO has several projects focusing on the intellectualization of isiZulu. One of the projects is terminology development. A number of disciplines, for example architecture, anatomy, computer science, physics, psychology, and research, already have their terminology in isiZulu. This is a great enabler in the translation of abstracts from these disciplines. For the other disciplines which do not yet have their terminology in isiZulu, the technical content team plays a big role in facilitating translation.

Example 4: Text with highly technical words

“Ionized calcium binding adaptor molecule 1 (IBA1) and Excitatory amino acid transporter 1 (EAAT1), and oligodendrocyte transcription factor 2 (OLIG2) expression in the cortex and cerebellum were analysed by immunohistochemistry. Additionally,

cortical and cerebellar tissues were homogenised for further biochemical analysis of oxidative stress such as Nitric oxide (NO), lipid peroxidase superoxide dismutase (SOD), glutathione (GSH), lipid peroxidase (LPO) and purinergic enzyme activities at PND 60" (Ijomone, 2020, College of Health Sciences).

7.5 Syntax

Syntax is another important element in translation. Translators need to be clear about the syntax of the target language. It is for this reason that the ULPDO commissioned translators who are linguistics/language specialists. The biggest issue here, as already highlighted above, is that English and isiZulu belong to different language families. This means that similarities in terms of linguistics are minimal. The obvious difference is that while English is disjunctive, isiZulu is agglutinative. This poses two big problems.

Problem 1: Because of the agglutinating nature of isiZulu, every isiZulu word in a sentence links to the other using concords. This becomes an issue if English sentences are too long, as concordial agreements could get distorted.

Solution: English sentences are cut into two or even three sentences for translation into isiZulu.

Problem 2: In isiZulu, every noun, including abbreviations and acronyms, takes a prefix when used in a sentence. The problem arises when the noun is an abbreviation or acronym, as the prefix interferes with the acronym.

Solution: A hyphen is used between the acronym and the abbreviation. This is an orthographic rule. However, a hyphen in an abbreviation or a scientific formula could look like part of the formula/abbreviation, thus rendering the formula incorrect or the abbreviation distorted.

Example 5: Text with technical words and long sentences

"It was found that leaf gaseous exchange (photosynthetic rate (A), stomatal conductance (gs), transpiration rate (T), internal carbon dioxide concentration (Ci) and the ratio of intercellular carbon dioxide and atmospheric carbon dioxide (Ci/ Ca)) parameters were higher in plants fertigated with ABR effluents than the other treatments. Leaves of tomato plants fed with NUC obtained high chlorophyll fluorescence (electron transfer (ETR), photochemical quenching (qP), non-photochemical (qN) quenching maximum quantum efficiency of photochemistry (Fv'/Fm) and the effective quantum of efficiencies of PSII photochemistry (ΦPSII)) parameters" (Magwaza, 2020, College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science).

This text in the example above might look straightforward to translate; however, with the addition of prefixes and concords when it is translated into isiZulu, it easily becomes a very complex text.

Other problems relate to tense and gender. While English is gender sensitive, isiZulu is not. The translator then needs to ensure that the translation is not distorted in this regard. Another problem is the acronym or abbreviation of a concept, which is written

in brackets in the English abstract. What makes this problematic is that as the text continues, the abbreviation/acronym is used. This results in two problems.

Problem 1: The translator cannot create an isiZulu acronym/abbreviation as such will be unknown.

Problem 2: The translator cannot merely put the acronym/abbreviation in brackets, since what is in brackets should mirror in some way what is outside the brackets.

Solution to both problems: The translator needs to ensure that even if the concept is translated, it is also morphologized in order to have the abbreviation in brackets. Another decision taken is to keep popular acronyms in the translation, for example, SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation), HAART (highly active antiretroviral therapy), ADHD (attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder), etc.

7.6 Supra-segmental features

Supra-segmental features include the use of punctuation. Punctuation is part of orthographic rules and therefore could be language specific. It is possible that where there are commas in English, such punctuation would be different in isiZulu. In instances where inverted commas are used, this poses a problem in translation. For example, a noun in English is placed within inverted commas, whereas when it is translated into isiZulu using the borrowing technique, this noun will have a prefix. The question is, Where do the inverted commas go?

Example 6: Text with words in inverted commas

“This study applies the concept of ‘nostalgia’ as a complex conceptual and analytical tool within recent debates in postcolonial literary study. In my investigation, I draw especially on Boym’s (2001) distinction between ‘restorative’ vs ‘reflective’ nostalgia, as well as on Medalie’s (2010) differentiation between ‘evolved’ vs ‘unreflecting’ nostalgia. I have also made intensive use of related postcolonial concepts – such as ‘space and identity’ and ‘trauma and haunting’ – to inform my analysis” (Cornelius, 2019, College of Humanities).

The text above is a good example of text with words containing inverted commas. The reason why these words are in inverted commas is known to the author and the supervisor, who are unfortunately not part of the translation team.

8. Results: Modified model for translation

In the discussion above, it is clear that a number of decisions were necessarily taken as more and more translation cycles occurred. The latest model (modified from that described in section 4 above) used in the translation of abstracts as part of the intellectualization of isiZulu initiative is presented in Figure 2.

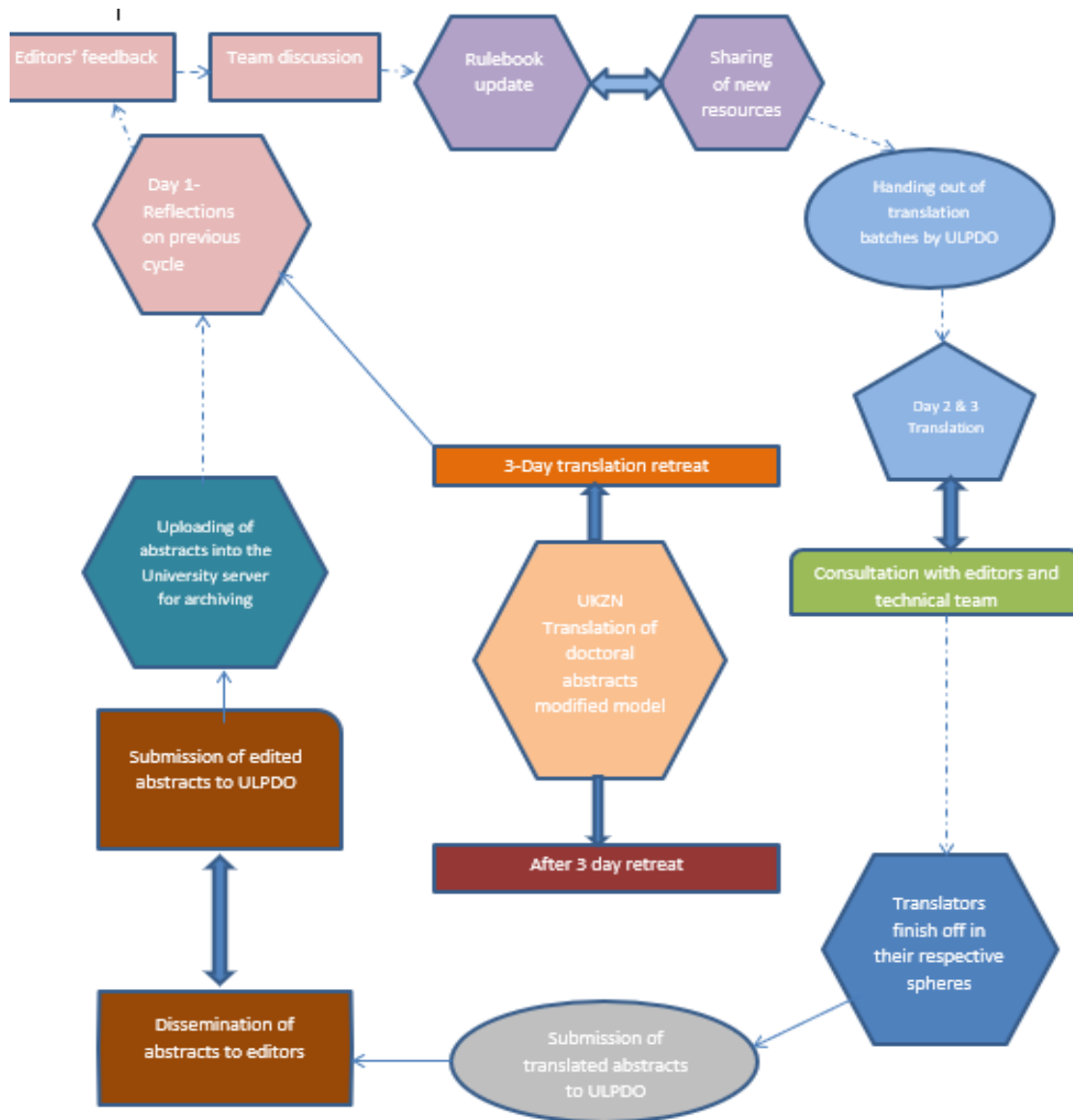


Figure 2: Modified UKZN translation of doctoral abstracts model

Figure 2 shows the modified model. This model also starts with a three-day retreat. In addition to the translators, editors, and ULPDO staff, the technical content team is also invited for consultation. On Day 1, the editors lead the discussion by giving feedback on editing and highlighting areas of concern. This is followed by open discussion by the entire team focusing on challenges experienced during the previous cycle. These challenges are discussed and the technical content team also contributes. The rulebook gets updated by the editors as per the discussions and decisions taken. Just like in the previous model, the latest version of the rulebook as well as other new resources, such as glossary lists, are shared. The ULPDO then allocates batches to translators and the translation begins. The technical team and the editors are consulted continuously over the three days. Translators are encouraged to go through their batches and to consult with the technical team and editors. Translators translate their abstracts and finish in their respective spheres. From here, the model is the same as the one presented in Figure 1.

9. Conclusions

This paper argues that numerous intricacies exist in the translation of academic texts. This is exacerbated when translating between English and isiZulu, simply because English and isiZulu belong to different language families and are thus different both linguistically and lexically. The paper promotes the use of Nord's translation-oriented source text analysis model during the median stage of the translation process as a way of mitigating the challenges of translating across language families. It also demonstrates how this model assists in revealing common challenges of translation in academic contexts and how such challenges can be addressed. The scarcity of academic concepts in indigenous languages is often cited as the biggest challenge in the translation of academic and/or technical texts. UKZN's diverse initiatives to promote the intellectualization of isiZulu are a great enabler in promoting the successful translation of abstracts from English into isiZulu. The terminology development process has produced glossary lists for a number of academic disciplines, and such lists are an invaluable resource during the translation process, that is, they address the issue of the lack of vocabulary. Moreover, having an office and experts available who are dedicated solely to this cause is important as this office also attends to the administration involved in the entire intellectualization process. Allowing this team to exchange views on the challenges faced via an iterative process produces more robust results. The paper presents the model used by UKZN in translating doctoral abstracts as a contribution towards the implementation of the UKZN Language Policy and intellectualization of isiZulu. It also describes common problems (the twists and turns) faced by translators and suggests potential solutions to address them.

10. References

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