

Impact of Ambiguity on Administrative Translation; With Special Reference to Selected Administrative Documents

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Administrative translation refers to the translation of administrative texts used in administration and management procedures. It is observed that certain features that adhere to source texts can produce ambiguous meanings in administrative translations between English and Sinhalese. Accordingly, the main objective of this research is to study the impact of ambiguity on administrative translation. This qualitative approach employed Content -Analysis technique and the classification of ambiguity in English proposed by Jha (2017) in order to analyze primary data collected from selected 10 English administrative documents and their Sinhalese translations done by the researcher and the Department of Official Languages (DOL). Translations by the researcher were compared with the translations by DOL, assuming translations by DOL are most accurate versions of translations. This assumption was based on the expertise in the administrative translation the institute has obtained. Results showcase mainly the phenomena of ambiguity encountered in administrative translations due to uncertain referents, vague placement of the prepositions, complex syntactic organization, pragmatic meanings when the tone or the emphasis in a sentence is unclear, multiple interpretations for jargon, clause, or a phrase, and wrong placement of modifiers. This study identified that anaphoric ambiguity, attachment ambiguity, coordinating ambiguity, homonymous ambiguity, polysemous ambiguity, structural ambiguity, and pragmatic ambiguity are the ambiguity categories encountered in administrative translation, out of the 10 categories of ambiguities in English proposed by Jha (2017). This research revealed that ambiguity results in mistranslations, poor sentence constructions, less-meaningful texts, uncertain meanings, and different interpretations in target documents. Acquisition of background knowledge on administrative language and application of translation techniques are recommended to overcome such issues. This study recommends compiling a study guide on administrative language as reference materials.

Keywords: Administrative Language, Administrative Translation, Ambiguity, Error-Analysis, Translation