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Relevance Meaning in Malay and Spanish Text

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Abstract

One of the obstacles in translating process is the grammatical structural difference between source language to target language. Therefore, this paper discussing meaning relevance in text translation in order to discover similarities and differences meaning between Malay and Spanish. The researcher has focused on four sentences from Malay to Spanish by using A1, A2, A3 and A4 label involving ten students from Universiti Putra Malaysia who taking Spanish as an elective course. The Relevance Theory (1986 and 1995) by Sperber and Wilson's is use in this paper. The objectives are to discuss translation equivalents for textual verb expressions from Malay to Spanish, and to analyse the translation equivalents based on their fuctional similarities and differences to ensure the meaning conveyed remain the same to the original text. Findings from this research can assist the teaching and learning of Spanish as a foreign language specifically in verb formation.

Keywords: Relevant Meaning, Similarity, Difference, Malay, Spanish.

Introduction

Translation is the process of changing the information of one language into another language retaining the same meaning. The translation occurs in verbal and written communication. Conflict and confusion often occur in the process of translation due to preserving semantic meaning in the target language. According to Novriyanto and Rifal (2019), translation is merely transferring the ideas from the source language to the target language, not changing the content or the purposes of the text. This is even more so when the source and target languages belong to different language families that have different grammatical structures. For example, in Malay *rumah cantik* but in Spanish refer as *la casa bonita*. The adjective in Spanish *bonita (cantik)* is placed after noun *casa (rumah)*. Therefore, the relevance of any meaning in translation is very important so that the message conveyed is exact. Through this concept of translation, the researcher will investigate whether the equivalence in meaning from the source text to the target text can be preserved or differentiated. This is viewed as an important process because the purpose of translation is to give

space to readers who do not understand the source language to read in the target language without affecting the intended meaning (Salina, 2011).

According to Lado in *Linguistics across culture: Applied linguistics for language teacher* (1957), there are several grammatical problems when we learn a foreign language. The problems occur because learners will transfer sentence form, gender and others from their first language to the target language. The transfer process will eventually create confusion among learners when learning a foreign language. In this research, Malay is referred to as the source language while Spanish is referred to as the target language. In Malaysia, Spanish is considered as the third or fourth foreign language learned. In his research, Fauzi (2003) viewed translation as a very complex task because it involves not only two grammatical and vocabulary systems but also elements of two cultures. Drabernet (1958) defines translation as a process of matching that can be used when the referred context in the source language does not exist in the target language. This means that due to the complexity of translation, not everything that is translated is equivalent and appropriate to be used in the target language. Therefore, equivalent translation plays a major role in preserving the intended message. Other than equivalent meaning translation, Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory states that success in communication between the speaker and listener depends on optimal relevance.

According to Fauzi (2002), optimal relevance in utterances can be achieved when the listener understands the intent and the intended meaning of the speaker. Thus, it can be said that when a teacher communicates with students, the teacher needs to use examples that relate to the students' lives in order to achieve optimal relevance so that the communication is easily understood. In addition, ostensive stimulation is also stressed in the translation process as the meaning conveyed by the speaker must be parallel to the meaning understood by the listener. Furthermore, the speaker must provide sufficient information to the listener so that relevant assumptions can be made by the listener in order to understand the context easier. Consequently, translation process will be efficient and closer to the intended, meaning that when the speaker and the listener achieve optimal relevance, sufficient ostensive stimuli and relevant assumptions are made. Evidently, it has also been found that the learners' first language also interfered with the translation. According to Galasso (2002), learners would strategically derive their first language parameter setting resulting in errors in learning the target language. Therefore, we can say that translation also can be a part of learning strategy to understand new language. This is because learning strategies play significant roles in acquisition of a language (Tian, 2019). According to Chen & Zhang (2019), the target language readers can get the communicative intention from all the linguistic features of the target language depending on the cognitive context of the target language readers is consistent or similar to source language.

Methodology

This research uses Sperber and Wilson (1986) Relevance Theory to unravel the research problem that is to identify equivalent in sentence translation. Ten translation scripts were selected and each script has four sentences written in the Malay language as the source language and translated into Spanish as the target language. The objectives are:

- to discuss translation equivalents for textual verb expressions from Malay to Spanish

- to analyse the translation equivalents based on their functional similarities and differences in order to preserve the intended meaning of the original text.

The researcher has labeled A1, A2, A3 and A4 to refer to the first, second, third and fourth sentences, respectively. Similarly, for analysis purpose, all the ten respondents were labeled as R1, R2, until R10.

Discussion

Ten translation scripts with four expressions in each were analysed. This study does not discuss similarities between the Malay and Spanish sentence structure but focuses on similarities and differences in the sentence structure while preserving the meaning.

Table 1: Sentence A1

Sentence	Language	Sentence structure
A1	Malay	<i>Natalia dan Camila tiba di universiti pada pukul 8 pagi.</i>
	English	Natalia and Camila arrived at the university at 8 a.m.
	Spanish	<i>Natalia y Camila llegan a la universidad a las ocho de la mañana.</i>

Based on the above sentence, eight respondents successfully translated the Malay sentence to Spanish with correct grammar while retaining the meaning. The verb *tiba* (arrived) has been translated to *llegan*, which means 'they have arrived' referring to 'Natalia and Camila' as the subjects. With reference to Spanish grammar system, the verb is arranged corresponding to the subject- whether human or amount (Perez Saldanya, 2012). Henceforth, the verbs in Spanish go through a conjugation process, which is a process of combining the verb and the subject in order to convey intended messages. Natalia and Camila here refer to the third person plural which 'they' is.

The following are examples of the *tiba* (arrive) *llegar*.

Table 2: Conjugation of Verb '*tiba*' (arrived) *llegar*

Subject	' <i>tiba</i> ' (arrived) Verb Conjugation	Meaning in Malay
<i>Yo (saya - I)</i>	<i>Llego</i>	<i>Saya tiba.</i> I arrive
<i>Tú (awak -Your)</i>	<i>Llegas</i>	<i>Awak tiba.</i> Your arrivae
<i>Él/ella (dia -he/she)</i>	<i>Llega</i>	<i>Dia tiba.</i> He/she arrives
<i>Nosotros (kami - we)</i>	<i>Llegamos</i>	<i>Kami tiba.</i> We arrive
<i>Vosotros (awak semua - you)</i>	<i>Llegáis</i>	<i>Awak semua tiba.</i> You all arrive
<i>Ellos/ellas (mereka - they)</i>	<i>Llegan</i>	<i>Mereka tiba.</i> They arrive

Therefore, the choice of the *llegan* conjugation form is very relevant because it represents the meaning 'They arrive' that refers to the subjects 'Natalia' and 'Camila'. It is clear that the *llegan* conjugation achieves optimal equivalent relevance because the meaning conveyed has a connection to the actions of the refered subject.

For the same exercise, two respondents committed errors in their translation that affects the original message. R5 has wrongly chosen *llegais* that means 'you all arrive'. The error occurs because of the confusion in choosing the subject of the pronouns. 'They' refers to the third person pronoun while 'you' refers to second person collective pronoun. On the other hand, R6 committed errors in choosing the suffix 'in' (*en*) which has a different and irrelevant meaning with the 'to' (*a*) preposition. Additionally, the expression *...en la universidad...* means 'in the university', while the correct translation should mean 'to the university'. In this case, the equivalent translation has affected the meaning because the context of the sentence does not achieve optimal relevance. R6 also committed an error in translating the preposition (*a*) 'at' to the *be* verb 'is', which in Spanish is (*son*). As a result, 'at eight in the morning' is translated to *son las ocho de la mañana* (is eight in the morning), while the correct translation should be *a las ocho de la mañana* (at eight in the morning). Although the error committed is small, the translation has become irrelevant and does not fulfill the context of the original text because it affects the intended meaning of the speaker. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986), relevance is identified as a relationship between assumptions and context.

In a nutshell, almost all translations, with the exception of the two respondents, R5 and R6, who committed minor errors, achieved Sperber and Wilson's (1986) optimal relevance signifying successful teaching and learning process. The errors committed by the two respondents signify ostensive stimuli failure because the meaning conveyed differs from the intended meaning.

Table 3: Sentence A2

Sentence	Language	Sentence structure
A2	Malay	<i>Mereka pergi bersarapan di kafeteria terlebih dahulu.</i>
	English	They went to have breakfast in the cafeteria first
	Spanish	<i>Primera ellas van a desayunar en la cafetería.</i>

It has been found that almost all of the respondents have committed errors in translating sentence A2, making it difficult for the researcher to identify equivalent translations that are closest to the intended meaning. The translation errors can be seen in the following table.

Table 4: A2 Sentence Translation

Respondent	Spanish	Meaning in Malay	Meaning in English
R1	<i>Ellas desayunan en la cafetería primero.</i>	<i>Mereka bersarapan di kafeteria dahulu.</i>	They have breakfast at the cafeteria first.
R2	<i>Ellas van a la cafetería para desayunar primera.</i>	<i>Mereka pergi ke kafeteria untuk mereka bersarapan dahulu.</i>	They went to the cafeteria so that they can have breakfast first.
R3	<i>Antes de que se van a la desayunan en la cafetería.</i>	<i>Sebelum pergi untuk mereka makan sarapan pagi di kafeteria.</i>	Before they went to them have morning breakfast at the cafeteria.
R4	<i>Van a desayunar en la cafetería antes des.</i>	<i>Mereka pergi bersarapan di kafeteria sebelum. (des: tidak wujud)</i>	They went to have breakfast at the cafeteria before. (des: does not exist)
R5	<i>Van a desayunar.</i>	<i>Mereka pergi bersarapan.</i>	They go breakfast.
R6	<i>Ellos van desayunan en la cafetería temprano.</i>	<i>Mereka pergi mereka bersarapan awal di kafeteria.</i>	They went they have breakfast early at the cafeteria
R7	<i>Ellas van a desayunar en la</i>	<i>Mereka pergi bersarapan di kafeteria dahulu.</i>	They have breakfast at the cafeteria first.

	<i>cafeteria primero.</i>		
R9	<i>Ellas van desayunar en la cafetería primero.</i>	<i>Mereka pergi bersarapan di kafeteria dahulu.</i>	They have breakfast at the cafeteria first.
R10	<i>Van a el cafetería por desayunan en primer lugar.</i>	<i>Mereka pergi ke kafeteria untuk mereka bersarapan di tempat pertama.</i>	They went to have breakfast in the first place.

There are several errors committed in the above translations that have affected the original meaning of the original text. The researchers believe that all the errors committed were due to the ostensive stimuli of the Relevance Theory that were not practised. Sperber and Wilson (1986) explain that ostensive stimuli are the most effective stimuli to be used by native speaker when communicating. The more the native speaker uses ostensive stimuli, the more relevant the assumptions become. The errors committed in choosing the correct translated vocabularies illustrate the mastery level in learning Spanish of the respondent is still limited. Other than that, the respondents exhibit the inclination in transferring the Malay grammar into their Spanish translation. As a result, the translations lack in grammar and accuracy in meaning.

Among the obvious errors committed are in choosing the *van* (they go) and *desayunan* (they have breakfast) verb conjugations. In Spanish, if there are two consecutive verbs in an expression, the first verb must be conjugated (having gone through the process of conjugation). That's why the words *desayunar* must be retained because the first verb *van* has already gone through the conjugation process (*ir* – to, *van* - they go). For instance, sentence A2 has two verbs- *ir* (go) and *desayunar* (have breakfast) while the subject refers to Natalia and Camila. The sentence should be written as *van a desayunar* (they went to have breakfast) not *van a desayunan* (they went them have breakfast). Thus, it can be said that the relevant equivalent meaning has not fulfilled ostensive stimuli as prescribed in the Relevance Theory (1986). The errors are due to the influence Malay language was influenced during the translation process.

As for R8, there is no indication from the translation that indicates that the respondent's ostensive stimulation is very low. Although Relevance Theory (1986) stresses the semantic-pragmatic meaning, it does not guarantee that the respondents may change the sentence structure to the point it loses the original meaning or incompatible with the intended meaning.

Table 5: Sentence A3

Sentence	Language	Sentence structure
A3	Malay	<i>Kemudian mereka pergi ke kelas ekonomi.</i>
	English	Then they went to economy class.
	Spanish	<i>Entonces/luego ellas van a la clase de economía.</i>

For A3, the researcher observed the relevance in meaning of the translated sentences. However, errors in choosing the correct vocabularies are still evident in every translation although the meaning conveyed can be understood. The choice of sentence relevant to the context plays an important role in translation because not every literal translation is acceptable. In translation process adjustments must be made to suit the grammar system of the target language.

Examples of translated sentences can be seen in the following table.

Table 6: Sentence A3 Translation

Respondent	Spanish	Meaning in Malay	Meaning in English
R1	<i>Luego van a la clase de economía.</i>	<i>Kemudian mereka pergi ke kelas ekonomi.</i>	Then, they went to the economy class.
R2	<i>Después, ellas van a la clase de la economía.</i>	<i>Selepas, mereka pergi ke kelas ekonomi itu.</i>	Then, they went to that economy class.
R3	<i>Después de que ellas van a la clase de economica.</i>	<i>Selepas mereka, mereka pergi ke kelas ekonomi.</i>	After them, they went to the economy class.
R4	<i>Entonces van a la clase la economía.</i>	<i>Kemudian mereka pergi ke kelas ekonomi itu.</i>	Then they went to that economy class.
R5	<i>Después van a la clase la economía</i>	<i>Selepas, mereka pergi ke kelas ekonomi itu.</i>	Then, they went to that economy class.
R6	<i>Después de ellos van economía clase.</i>	<i>Selepas mereka, mereka pergi ekonomi kelas.</i>	After them, they went to economy class.
R7	<i>Después de van a la clase de economica.</i>	<i>Selepas daripada mereka pergi ke kelas ekonomi.</i>	After they went to the economy class.

R8	<i>Ellas van a la clase en economía.</i>	<i>Mereka pergi ke kelas di ekonomi.</i>	They went to the class at economy.
R9	<i>Después de van a la clase de económica.</i>	<i>Selepas itu, mereka pergi ke kelas ekonomi.</i>	After from, they went to the economy class.
R10	<i>Van a la clase de el economía más tarde.</i>	<i>Mereka pergi ke kelas ekonomi sangat lewat.</i>	They went to the economy class very late.

In A3 translation, there are evidences that indicate equivalent meaning in translations despite minimal degree of errors committed. Nevertheless, the errors made are deemed acceptable in the learning process because they do not affect the intended meaning. For example, the choice of the article *el* and *la* in Spanish are used to determine the gender of the word. Article *el* is referring 'male' and *la* refer to feminine words. The matching article for word *economía* is *la*, which means 'itu' (that) in Malay. Thus we can see that gender is not applicable in the Malay language. This situation can make students confused in cases to translate grammar structure. The choice of the word *luego* and *entonces* on the other hand is seen as fulfilling the meaning equivalent of the word (after) and both translations do not affect the overall meaning of the sentence. Meanwhile, the translation of the word *economía* is directly related to economy class. Thus, R1 and R4's equivalent translation is seen as fulfilling relevant semantic-pragmatic meaning.

The researcher observes English interference in R6's translation that follows English grammar form when *economía clase* is translated to (economic class). This translation is an error as it does not follow to the Spanish grammar rule. In this case we can say that R6 was thinking in English while translating.

Table 7: Sentence A4

Sentence	Language	Sentence structure
A4	Malay	<i>Dalam kelas ekonomi, mereka belajar bersama-sama dengan kawan yang lain seperti Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, dan Susana.</i>
	English	In the economy class, they learn with other friends like Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, and Susana
	Spanish	<i>En la clase de economía, ellas estudian juntas con otros amigos como Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos y Susana.</i>

A4 is a continuation of sentences A1 to A3, and the researcher observes that the clause *mereka belajar* (they learn) is translated correctly to *estudian*. Although the subject in sentence A4 is not stated, the reader can predict it from sentence A1 to A3 sequence. The translations for sentence A4 are in the table below.

Table 8: A4 Sentence Translation

Respondent	Spanish	Meaning in Malay	Meaning in English
R1	<i>En la clase de economía, ellos estudian juntos con otros amigos como Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos y Susana.</i>	<i>Dalam kelas ekonomi, mereka belajar bersama-sama dengan kawan lain seperti Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, dan Susana.</i>	In the economy class, they learn together with other friends like Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, and Susana.
R2	<i>En la clase de economía, ellas estudian juntos con los compañeros como Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos y Susana.</i>	<i>Dalam kelas ekonomi, mereka belajar bersama-sama dengan rakan-rakan seperti Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos dan Susana.</i>	In the economy class, they learn together with friends like Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, and Susana.
R3	<i>En la clase de economía, estudian junto con los amigos como Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos y Susana.</i>	<i>Dalam kelas ekonomi, mereka belajar bersama-sama dengan kawan-kawan seperti Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos dan Susana.</i>	In the economy class, they learn together with friends like Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, and Susana.
R4	<i>En la clase de economica, ellas estudian con el amigas de atras como Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos y Susana.</i>	<i>Dalam kelas ekonomi, mereka belajar dengan kawan-kawan di belakang seperti Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos dan Susana.</i>	In the economy class, they learn with friends at the back like Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, and Susana.
R5	<i>En la clase la economica, ellos estudian con sus amigos como</i>	<i>Dalam kelas ekonomi, mereka belajar dengan kawan-kawan mereka</i>	In the economy class, they learn with their friends like Alfonso, Isabel,

	<i>Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos y Susana.</i>	<i>seperti Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos dan Susana.</i>	Carlos, and Susana.
R6	<i>En economía clase, ellos estudian con otro amigos como Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos y Susana.</i>	<i>Dalam ekonomi kelas, mereka belajar dengan kawan-kawan seperti Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos dan Susana.</i>	In the class economy, they learn with friends like Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, and Susana.
R7	<i>En la clase economica, estudian juntos con los amigos como Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos y Susana.</i>	<i>Dalam kelas ekonomi, mereka belajar bersama-sama dengan kawan-kawan seperti Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos dan Susana.</i>	In the economy class, they learn together with friends like Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, and Susana.
R8	<i>Ellas estudian con los amigos como Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos y Susana.</i>	<i>Mereka belajar dengan kawan-kawan seperti Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos dan Susana.</i>	They learn with friends like Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, and Susana.
R9	<i>En la clase de economica, estudian con los amigos juntos como Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos y Susana.</i>	<i>Dalam kelas ekonomi, mereka belajar dengan kawan-kawan bersama-sama seperti Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos dan Susana.</i>	In the economy class, they learn together with friends like Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, and Susana.
R10	<i>En clase de el economía, ellas estudian con otro amigos, por ejemplo Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos y Susana.</i>	<i>Dalam kelas ekonomi, mereka belajar dengan kawan-kawan lain, contohnya Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos y Susana.</i>	In the economy class, they learn together with other friends, for example Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, y Susana.

Most respondents were able to translate sentence A4 although there were several errors they made, such as choosing the wrong equivalent translation and function of the word (economy) which is translated to *economía* and *economica*. The word *economía* functions as the noun for the word 'economy', whereas *economica* functions as an adjective for the word 'economy'. Therefore, the more appropriate equivalent translation that is closest to the original message for (economy class) should be *economía*. But we can still understand the meaning because of the words choices is quite similar to the original text. From the translations, it can be observed that only respondents R1, R2 and R3 provided translations that are equivalent to the intended meaning of the original text. Here we can see how the relevance meaning was functioning to find the similarities.

In addition, the term 'friends' is translated in two forms that are *amigos* and *los compañeros*. The semantic-pragmatic meaning equivalent in this instance does not interfere with the meaning of the intended message because *amigos* mean 'friends' while *los compañeros* means 'companions'. They are both different in vocabulary items but 'friend' and 'companions' both generally mean the same that is 'close acquaintance'. The different meanings of both words do not affect the meaning of the sentence.

Based on the above discussions, the researcher can summarise that translation relevance can be divided to two very important criteria as emphasised in the Relevance Theory (1986);

(a) **Relevance Context Selection**

Based on the translations discussed earlier, it is evident that the selection of the correct context will immensely preserve the intended meaning of the original text. Context selection is very important to ensure that the translation process still retains the intended meaning so that readers can understand the message conveyed in the source language. Hence, if the context of the source and target languages do not match, the intended meaning will be misunderstood resulting in poor translation. For example:

Natalia y Camila llegáis a la universidad...

(Natalia dan Camila awak semua tiba ke universiti...)

(Natalia and Camila all of them arrived at the university...)

Clearly the matching context selected, which is *llegáis* has disrupted the overall meaning of the translated sentence because the correct conjugation that fulfills the intended meaning of the original text is *llegan* (they arrive) that refers to the subject Natalia and Camila which is third pronouns plural.

(b) **Relevance Connection of Semantic-Pragmatic**

It goes without saying from the translations produced by respondents that both Malay language and Spanish have different grammar structures. In Spanish, stress is given on the verb conjugation form within a constructed sentence. Although the grammar structures of both languages are different, the most important aspect in translation is the preservation of the intended meaning of the source language.

Example sentences are as follow:

- (i) *En la clase de economía, ellos estudian juntos con otros amigos como Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos y Susana.*
(*Dalam kelas ekonomi, mereka belajar bersama-sama dengan kawan lain seperti Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, dan Susana.*)
In economy class, they learn together with other friends like Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, dan Susana.
- (ii) *En la clase de economía, ellas estudian juntos con los compañeros como Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos y Susana.*
(*Dalam kelas ekonomi, mereka belajar bersama-sama dengan rakan-rakan seperti Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, dan Susana.*)
In economy class, they learn together with other companions like Alfonso, Isabel, Carlos, dan Susana.

In sentence (i) the subject reference used is *otros amigo* which means 'other friend'. Respectively, in sentence (ii), *los compañeros* may mean companions. Hence, both sentences mean the same because they have the same matching semantic-pragmatic context. According to Cambridge dictionary online, 'companion' refers to person you spend a lot of time because you are friends. So we can accept it because of the semantic-pragmatic connection where the meaning can be understood.

Conclusion

The researcher can conclude that there is evidence of translations that have fulfilled the meaning relevance of the original text. This supports the use of the Relevance Theory as a guide in translating foreign languages as the theory emphasises on the preservation of the intended message eventhough both languages have different grammar structure. It has also been proven that translation process becomes more complicated if the translator has mastery over both the source and target languages. As a result, errors are committed due to interference of first language. The researcher has proven in the discussion that respondents have achieved to match meaning relevance in translating although minor errors were made. The errors were considered as evidence that learners were experimenting their hypothesis about Spanish grammar. Unfortunately, the learners' first language seemed to have interfered with their translation. These translations proven that the process of teaching and learning Spanish took place.

The translation process can train students to practise the knowledge they have gained. This is because translation can develop abilities, flexibility, and focus on accuracy and clarity in finding the appropriate word match. Students are free to use their choices of words or sentences as long as the meanings are retained. In this study students who learned Spanish were able to translate the Spanish text into the Malay language since they have acquired the skills besides the knowledge in both languages.

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