

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

A COMPARATIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE MEDICAL TRANSLATION PERFORMANCE OF SPECIALIZED TRANSLATORS AND GENERAL TRANSLATORS IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Medical Translation is considered one of the most salient segments in the field of translation. Although the Medical Officers serving the patients takes the centre stage, this discipline does involve a large number of documentation. However, as this particular concept of specialized translation barely exists in Sri Lanka, the majority of the translations pertaining to the field of medicine are carried out by general translators who are likely to commit more errors in comparison to the specialized translators, yet this particular matter is paid less attention. Therefore this study drew a comparison between the medical translation performance of general translators and specialized translators in Sri Lanka with the intention of investigating the effect they could have on the quality of the medical translation. In order to determine the performance of specialized translators and general translators in this very discipline, a case study was put in place, and it was discovered that specialized translators make a significant improvement on the time consumed, content, and completeness in contrast to general translators despite the grammar accuracy not indicating any major deviation. Hence, the research has provided enough evidence to suggest that specialized translators have a clear influence in improving a medical translation when compared to general translators. Eventually, this study has presented facts to conclude that specialized translators are a better choice in contrast to general translators in the field of medical translation.

Keywords: Medical translation, specialized translators, general translators

1. Introduction

Medical translation is barely recognized in the field of medical science, or even translation itself, but certainly a subject that requires a great deal of attention. Although the medical service or health care is a very practical discipline, it also consists of a considerable amount of documentation including teaching resources for healthcare, medical tools or pharmaceutical fields, marketing or medical, regulatory, and industrial documentation (Racoma, 2010). However, at present most of the documents in relation to medical science are being translated by general translators who possess general knowledge in a number of matters but do not have expert knowledge in one subject. This has eventually led to a series of mistakes considering the large number of technical terms often associated with medical science Gouadec, D. (2007). Sri Lanka has still not considered the possibility

of utilizing specialized translators in most of the fields although there are few experts in the field of legal translation at present (Golavar, E.). While terminology appears to be the major problem faced by general translators, it must be mentioned that the translators who have no knowledge in medical science also struggle to construct sentences that make sense which is why it is very crucial to have a translator who is familiar with the discipline. Therefore the prime objective of this research is to clearly identify what specialized translators and general translators could offer when translating documents in the field of Medical Science and the possibility of utilizing specialized translators on a regular basis in Sri Lanka (Martin, C.).

2. Methodology

The research focused on drawing a comparison between the effect of general translators and specialized translators on medical translation performance. Therefore, it was decided that a qualitative approach would be ideal to determine the impact specialized translation and general translation had on medical translation performance using a case study. The sample was selected in line with the non-probability sampling as this research required the expertise of the phenomenon of professionals in the field of medical science. Therefore, the experts in this particular field were selected in line with the expert sampling which is one of the three forms of non-probability sampling. However, convenience sampling which is another form of non-probability sampling was utilized in choosing the general translators. Since the concept of the specialized translation does not exist in Sri Lanka five subject experts related to the medical since were selected as per expert sampling mentioned above while five general translators were also chosen in line with convenience sampling. All ten translators were then given a document to be translated from Sinhala to English. Each and every translation was collected before analyzing the data, and the amount of time spent on completing the translations by each and every selected translator was recorded as well. Medical translation performance was evaluated through four variables in the form of 'grammar accuracy,' 'content,' 'completeness,' and 'time spent' which were tested in accordance with the website 'Unbabel Blog' which has given a set of clear instruction on measuring a translation. The performances of the translators were evaluated by giving them grades in the following format constructed in accordance with the guidelines given by the website 'Unbabel Blog' 'Grammar accuracy' was evaluated considering the grammatical errors of the translation. A translation without one single grammar error was ranked as 'high quality' while a translation consisting of 1-3 errors was considered 'average' and any translation with more than three errors was branded 'poor.' 'Content' was evaluated focusing on how well the idea or message has been carried to the target language through the translation. A perfect conversion of the idea or message into the target language was ranked as 'high quality' while a translation where the idea has not been perfectly carried into the target language was considered 'average' and a confusing or incorrect translation was branded 'poor.' 'Completeness' was evaluated considering the consistency of a translation. In a translation where every single word of the source text has then been translated to the target text was considered as 'high quality,' and translations missing 1-3 words of the source text were branded as 'average' and any translation missing more than three words was considered as 'poor.' 'Time spent' was evaluated through the total of minutes a certain translator spent in compiling the translation. If a translation had been completed in less than ten minutes, it was ranked as 'high quality' while a translation compiled in ten to fifteen minutes was branded as 'average' and translations where translator spent more than fifteen minutes to complete, was determined as 'poor.' The data were analyzed based on the grades that had been obtained by every translator which paved room to determine the effect of general and specialized translators on medical translation performances.

3. Results and Discussions

The data received from the case study has been represented in Table 1 below which indicates the performances of both general translators and specialized translators. Table 1 and Table 2 indicate that

Table 1. Medical Translation Performance of Specialized Translators

Translator	Grammar	Accuracy	Content Time	Spent Completeness
Specialized Translator 1	High Quality	Average	High Quality	High Quality
Specialized Translator 2	High Quality	High Quality	High Quality	High Quality
Specialized Translator 3	High Quality	High Quality	Average	Average
Specialized Translator 4	High Quality	High Quality	High Quality	Average
Specialized Translator 5	High Quality	High Quality	High Quality	High Quality

there is virtually no difference whatsoever when it comes to grammar accuracy as both specialized translators and general translators had produced 'high quality' translations. However, in terms of the content, four specialized translators had compiled 'high quality' translations while one of them produced 'average' translation and in contrast, three general translators compiled 'average' translation while the other two ended up with 'poor' translation. There was a significant difference in the time consumed as all the specialized translators earned a 'high quality' grade while general translators struggled with each and everyone getting a 'poor' grade. Four specialized translators had earned a 'high quality' grade for 'completeness' while one received 'average' and four general translators received 'average' while once securing 'high quality' grades. Therefore, it was evident that the specialized translators have had a positive influence on the medical translation performance when compared with the general translators.

Table 2. Medical Translation Performance of Medical Translators

Translator	Grammar	Accuracy	Content Time	Spent Completeness
Specialized Translator 1	High Quality	Average	poor	Average
Specialized Translator 2	High Quality	Average	poor	High Quality
Specialized Translator 3	High Quality	Poor	Poor	Average
Specialized Translator 4	High Quality	Poor	Poor	Average
Specialized Translator 5	High Quality	Average	Poor	Average

4. Conclusion

As per the case study, it is crystal clear that specialized translators have outperformed general translators in the field of medical translation. This leads to the conclusion that more specialized translators should be utilized in this particular discipline.

Especially, in a field like medical science which is directly connected to the lives of all human beings, it's very important to take matters very seriously and the research has undoubtedly proved the need for specialized translators. Currently, the University of Kelaniya, University of Jaffna, and Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka offer special degree programs in Translation Studies and these universities must consider the possibility of adding medical translation into the syllabus which would see the emergence of more specialized translators in this field.

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