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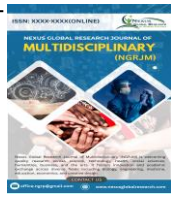

Research Article

Accidental Humour Unveiled: A Sneak Preview of Funny Translation Blunders in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines accidental humour found in selected public posters. The humour in question is derived from linguistic blunders made by the author, probably, from translation-related problems while drawing the signage. To arrive at this humour requires a careful analysis of errors in interpretation found in public notices. There appears scanty literature and little academic propensity associated with and surrounding this particular genre, even though, it is widely spread. Furthermore, without analysing the accidental humour therein, denies the academic fraternity a proper comprehension of the humour concept and its academically related linguistic associations. Specifically, this paper shows how humour is derived from script analysis based on the Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH) which was unique to the analysis of this genre. This research involved collecting data by photographing relevant signs in Kenya. Ten of such signage were analysed for accidental humour. The sampling procedure was done purposively to include signage from different locations in Kenya and the presence of linguistic mistakes in translation. The data was presented using tables portraying the relationship of the components sought. Consequently, the study enriched script analysis and critiqued the linguistic concepts of performance and competence.

Keywords: *Accidental humour, Signage/public posters/notices/signs, Translation blunders.*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of humour is multidisciplinary and linguistics which this paper addresses is unique. Scholars have endeavoured to study different concepts and the components of humour including its therapeutic nature (Godwin, 1946; Holland, 1982; Warren & McGraw, 2014). The interpretation of humorous utterances has been controversial and has been a topic of great academic discourse for decades (Warren & McGraw, 2014).

Intentional humour has been manipulated by marketers to boost and endear their products to clients. Therefore, their designated signage writers have deliberately and precisely used humour to entice readers to buy their goods and services. Multi-nationals will contract skilled consultancy services for this singular purpose to ensure professionalism. The resulting signage are therefore error-free and well-constructed to suit the wishes of the corporate bodies thereby communicating as was envisioned.

Nonetheless, modest businesspersons may not afford such professional services as offered by expert consultants. Thus, there is a possibility of rampant errors arising in some notices that may sometimes produce a form of hilarity. Interestingly, the funny side of these notices is significantly different from the one espoused by multi-nationals concerning intentionality. Mostly, what creates the comic component is the gap created when the target and source languages do not align and, in so doing, interfering with the communication process.

SIGNIFICANCE

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This paper analyses accidental humour found in signage by exploring apt linguistic components that comprise it. Linguistically, it assists translators to employ caution and subsequently identify and correct the causes of errors that may occasionally distort the original intention of the authors and produce faulty communiqué. On the same note, the paper sought to highlight accidental humour as a topic of serious linguistic research and its association with translation studies.

Second language learning education may also benefit from this paper since there are probable linguistic errors found in signage as a result of the gap from source to target languages. Linguistic errors are part and parcel of learning a new language and the knowledge arrived here will be significant in deterring subsequent errors. Thus, when second language learners encounter distinct difficulties during the learning process, such knowledge would equip them with the requisite skills to circumnavigate the difficulties and avoid miscommunication.

OBJECTIVE

To explore accidental humour derived from linguistic gaps on selected public notices in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Humour

"Humour" is a word whose origin is Latin and is derived from "*humorem"* (fluid or liquid) (Martin, 2007). Before the 18th century, Sen (2012) argues, "humour" was simply known as "laughter" and "comedy". In fact, during Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus and Descarte's times, "laughter" was viewed in negative terms for it was considered something undesirable (Zalta, 2012).

Humour is "that quality of action, speech, or writing which excites amusement; oddity, jocularity, facetiousness, comicality, fun…the faculty of perceiving what is ludicrous or amusing, or of expressing it in speech, writing, or other composition; jocose imagination or treatment of a subject" (Simpson and Weiner, 2012, p. 98). The "amusing" nature of humour resonates very well with the current study.

According to Zalta (2012), intelligence is required to arrive at any humour piece - another important argument that will be propagated by this paper. He also argues that humour is expressed in "a mild and good-intended manner" as a result of funny and ridiculous techniques. Since diverse individuals enjoy varied intensities of intelligence, it also follows that different individuals possess different levels of humour competence.

The by-product of humour is not necessarily laughter, it could also be an inner smile. Finally, humour is bound to elicit laughter or an inward smile. Whereas one emphasises the affective nature of humour, the other considers the mildness of humour in satire. A person may burst out in laughter without any indication of humour presence since, according to Shibles (2001) and Gáll (2010), laughter is more of a physiological response. Thus, as far as this paper is concerned, the errors in the signage may be missed by an observer who is not very keen and, in this manner, lose the humour therein. After all, not everyone possesses the same humour competence; therefore, humour may escape their attention altogether.

According to Shibles (2001, p. 12), humour is an emotion, while emotion is the language-use which causes bodily feeling and action. Similarly, humour is opined as not just a "bodily feeling" or "internal state" but something that can be changed by changing our "valuations". For him, humour words partly describe each of the following: language-use, feelings, action, and context. One can never have the

same humour experience twice because of the different variations of the various factors associated with humour. Altogether, humour may be distinguished from other emotions by the different evaluations, feelings, actions, and contexts involved in it.

Humour Categorisation

There are many categorisations of humour depending on the respective field and the scholars in question. One typology breaks humour into verbal and referential; whereby, one (the former) is translatable or paraphrased, while the other (the latter) cannot (Attardo, 1994). Another one by Gáll (2010) envisages humour into three types: jokes, deliberate humour and accidental humour. The first two are deemed intentional because the authors designed them as so, and are therefore irrelevant to this paper; however, the third category is intentional and is the basis for this study.

Gáll (2010) further divides accidental humour into two types: physical and linguistic. Since the former mostly revolves around "minor mishaps" and "pitfalls", it does not bring out the linguistic nature that the study espoused and will be ignored. However, since the former deals with linguistic aspects including slips of the tongue, wrong spellings, faulty pronunciations, logical errors, wrong word order and misplaced sounds, it marked the hallmark of this research.

Al-Kharabsheh (2008) shares similar sentiments as Gáll (2010) about humour demarcation: intentional and unintentional. He propagates the existence of an "intentional act" in humour that produces laughter as a result of the mutual sharing between the humour giver and the humour recipient. Nevertheless, in accidental humour, the humour object entirely lacks the purpose to amuse or to entertain. The mode of communication is thus non-bona fide (NBF) in nature which refers to the "unexpected" in speech.

Unintentional Humour

In one of his examples is a signage outside a Jordanian car wash station reading: *Laundry for Car* (Al-Kharabsheh, 2008:17). In this signage, the word "laundry" should naturally collocate to "clothes" but not "cars" as this sign tends to suggest thereby creating a contrasting scenario that elicits accidental humour. It appears the author has erroneously expanded the semantic intention of "laundry" to include that of "washing cars"- a rather ludicrous state.

Martin (2007: 21) gives the illustration of a newspaper headline: *Prostitutes appeal to Pope* to explain accidental humour. Here, "appeal" may appear to initiate a sense of "admiring/wanting" which when juxtaposed with "Pope" elicits a rather ridiculous meaning bordering on blasphemy! This contains a semantic shift in meaning that involves ambiguity to elicit a secondary unintended meaning. The resultant incongruous and subsequent scandalous nature of the mere thought of the "Pope" in this context creates a comical elucidation. Martin (2007:22) further realises accidental humour in cases of spoonerism which involves rearranging the initial sounds of two or more words e.g.: *Three cheers for our queer old dean*. It seems that the initial sounds for "queer" and "dean" have been interchanged thereby creating a sort of funny incongruity.

Farghal (2006) cautions that some signage would be difficult to ascertain whether they are accidental or intentional: *Don't kill your wife. Let our washing machine do the dirty work* (in the window of a Kentucky appliance store). This signage may elicit either intentional or unintentional humour depending on the context therein. In the first case,

the sign may elicit accidental humour because the intention is not "to kill housewives" but to promote the product in question as "a source of relief to the housewives" when placed in an advertising context. However, in the second instance, the producer may be assumed to be exploiting Grice's (1965) maxim of manner to generate humour. It may be seen to be an attempt by the author to create a cordial atmosphere to encourage prospective clientele to shop. If that is the case, then it is deemed as a deliberate way of producing humour. This is remarkably different from an intentional humour signage on a window in a butchery: *Let me meat your needs* where "meat" is used on purpose as a play on words.

Mtati (2015) exemplifies accidental humour when "Africa" was misspelled as "Arfica" in a cricket competition logo by Cricket South Africa (CSA). He noted that the association sensationally claimed it was intentional and went on to deliberately misspell another word "(l)arf" when responding to the outcry: "We apologize for the oversight on the #AfricaT20Cup logo. We're glad we could provide you with a good (l)arf though…". Criticisms intensified and the unintended word trended further on social media and "…it seemed that the CSA was '(l)arfing' at itself as much as everybody else was…" It played out as satire and he says that when they ultimately apologised, they had become a laughing stock. This is a typical case whereby unintentionality can further distort communication.

Chagema (2018) argues that grammatical errors by internet users on social media contribute to unintentional meanings. He attributes these errors to mother tongue interference by Kenyan languages which he argues are mostly phonetic; thereby, influencing authors to write words from how they are pronounced. He also faults teachers of language for their failure to not only insist on the phonetic aspect of language but also for failing to overcome interference and negative transfer during the acquisition of the second language.

Generally, the humour concept is rather complex and encompasses many other important components including the humour producer, humour recipient, humour competence, humour context and language. Specifically, the role of context, in a sociolinguistic version, to yield accidental humour has been fully addressed, analysed and discussed critically by this author in Maina (2021) and will only be used to buttress the point, a simple analysis will suffice since context is crucial in determining accidental humour. The other components are analysed and discussed deeply in prospective papers by this author but will still be touched on when needed.

THEORETICAL BRIEF

This study is chiefly be guided by the Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH) as propounded by Raskin (1985). Fundamentally, the SSTH is based on the concept of a script which is a structured chunk of information about lexemes and parts of the word (Raskin, 1985). This is a typically unique linguistic theory that seems to determine and formulate the necessary and sufficient linguistic conditions for the text to be funny (Raskin, 1985). Consequently, the SSTH contains two essential and adequate conditions for a text to be funny:

a) Each joke must contain two overlapping scripts.
b) The two scripts must be opposed. (Raskin, 1985:99).

Applying the SSTH to humour is a unique process involving explication of the relationships of the scripts: overlap and opposition. Considering the first condition, the text must be interpretable, fully or partially, according to two different scripts. Where there is full overlap, the whole text is compatible with the two texts in question; but where there is

partial overlap, some parts of the text may not be compatible with one part of the other script.

In the second condition, the two overlapping scripts must be in negation of each other, according to a list of basic oppositions between real and unreal situations in life: actual and non-actual, non-existing situation; expected and abnormal, unexpected states of affairs; possible, plausible and impossible situations. They are then instantiated into five concrete oppositions of good/bad, life/death, obscene/non-obscene, money/no-money and high/low stature (Raskin, 1985). Then, it involves the application of a "script-switch" trigger i.e. the component of the text that actualises its meaning through the passage from the first to the second script. Therefore, the SSTH considers the text to be funny only if the two conditions above are met, and the outcome is incongruity.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design was used in this research to examine texts to establish their relationships with each other. The sample size involved ten signs derived from shops in public spaces distributed all over the country. Generalisations were made from the data collected to establish the relationship between the concepts found in the signage. Data collection involved photographing as many of the real signage from their respective locations. The idea was to locate humorous signage and analyse the type of humour elicited by the signs.

FINDINGS

Table 1a below summarises the 10-signage identified for a discussion in this paper and *Table 1b* shows the distribution of humour in the signage under study highlighting translation errors followed by short comments about their distribution

Table 1a: Sample of public notices

	Public Notice
1.	*We deal with all kinds of car jacks*
2.	*Toilet ONLY for disabled elderly pregnant children*
3.	*Ladies: you are requested not to have children in the bar*
4.	*Vacant room suspicious bedsitter*
5.	*Customers are cushioned from stealing anything in this shop*
6.	*Why go elsewhere to be cheated, when you can come here*
7.	*Customers who find our waitresses rude ought to see the manager*
8.	*for personal problems like…remarriage…manpower and women power*
9.	*Poko Hotel*
10.	*Do not sit on chair unless for the intended use*

Table.1b: Humour Intentionality

	Research Items	**Distribution**
1.	Intentional humour	01
2.	Accidental humour	09
	TOTAL	10

DISCUSSION OF ACCIDENTAL HUMOUR

This paper scrutinises ten public signs to ascertain the presence or absence of accidental humour. To arrive at this humour involves the application of the Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH). Simply stated, there is an unintended meaning derived from a first reading of the signage; therefore, the reader is called to reinterpret the sign to arrive at the original intention of the author. This involves deciphering another meaning of the opposing and overlapping scripts to arrive at the correct interpretation and understanding that the first one was faulty, absurd and thus humorous. Each signage will be discussed independently of the others to identify its idiosyncratic status.

a) ***"We deal with all kinds of car jacks"*** (in front of a shop selling spare parts)

This sign involves the normal/abnormal distinction resulting in a semantic field shift since the initial intention encompasses the innocent normal advertisement of jacks used for lifting automobiles to perform repairs. There is an incongruity that is produced as a result of the other meaning that evolves especially that involved in stealing cars. "Car jacks" produces an incongruity realisable through ambiguity. The double meaning invokes the sense of "stealing cars" or/and "mechanical devices used to raise and support a car for repair".

With the first interpretation, it is ridiculous since it is foolhardy for any seller to advertise stealing cars. To resolve this absurdity, the reader has to switch to another script and reinterpret the sign to understand the author's intention. Humour results when the reader reconciles the two opposing scripts and realises that "stealing" cars is a crime, and the owner of the business should therefore have been imprisoned for the crime; therefore, the reader needs to decode the author's meaning as the second rather than the first one.

b) ***"Toilet ONLY for disabled elderly pregnant children"*** (in front of a hotel's toilet)

The capitalised word "ONLY", seems to indicate either "pregnant" and "disabled children" or those who are "elderly" and/or "disabled" because they are or appear "pregnant" and/or are accompanied by "children". Either of the two implications seems anomalous for this signage. In the first case, the singular specificity of "pregnant disabled children" as the clientele implied in the signage, though probable, is unlikely since it is a rare occurrence. In the second instance, naturally, the script "elderly" should insinuate "advancement in years", but the script "children" is known to imply "being of a very tender age"; thereby raising a contradiction. Even though parents can refer to their adult offspring as "children", it is still an odd inference for this signage.

Therefore, a new interpretation is needed which involves considering the words in the signage as part of a list. To resolve this incompatibility involves two main steps. Firstly, placing the right punctuation between the words; secondly, highlighting that the successive adjectives do not describe a single persona but different categories of people: the "children", the "disabled", the "elderly" people, and the "pregnant" women. Otherwise, the reverse interpretation is hilarious when one imagines that the signage could be specifically referring to an "elderly child who was both disabled and pregnant". The imagery formed by the signage in the reader's mind is quite disturbing and ridiculous since encountering such a creature is a very rare occurrence.

c) ***"Ladies: you are requested not to have children in the bar"*** (on the walls of an entertainment joint)

The elicitation of the script equivalent to "giving birth in the bar is forbidden" is an obvious interpretation. Then again, this creates an inconsistency since "childbearing" is a natural process which can and should be allowed to occur anywhere (including bars). The mere thought that the management is prohibiting the patrons from "childbearing" appears sexist, if not discriminatory! Therefore, there is a need for a new interpretation of the script "to have children in the bar" to make sense of the signage.

The intended meaning can be recovered when the reader appreciates the ambiguity of the script and subsequently reinterprets it correctly. This second interpretation is as a form of warning to the lady patrons "not to be accompanied by children in the bar", probably, as a precaution to the existence of adult-like activities that may appear to be disturbing to children. The realisation that it is simply a mistake in meaning elucidation may be considered harmless and create some humour as well. Apparently, the humour is derived from the fact that the proprietor appears to be extending maternity services in his premises without informing and involving the local county council to get the necessary accreditation or tax evasion.

d) ***"Customers are cushioned from stealing anything in this shop"*** (on a window of a multipurpose shop)

The interpretation of the erroneous word "cushioned" elicits a disturbing script when interpreted in combination with the rest of the words since it appears to encourage "stealing" from "this shop". It is ironic that instead of facing criminal charges, the culprits who steal from the shop are promised to be absolved of any charges: it is even more ridiculous when it is the author who suggests this. Instead of acting as a deterrent, the signage appears to encourage burglary and raises fundamental questions: would "cushioning" thieves not be counterproductive to the security measures put in place by the government? Would the author be encouraging thieves? Wouldn't the author's shop be suffering from losses occasioned by thieves? All these questions exacerbate the situation as well as exuberate the humour within.

Therefore, the reader needs a sensible reinterpretation to locate the author's real intention. The script "cushioned" is in opposition and appears to overlap with the intended script by the author and can only be resolved through a substitution of the right concepts that the author may have missed. The only sensible word to fulfil this substitution is "caution" since it elicits the script "warn" which makes sense in this context. Otherwise, the initial erroneous interpretation where the author appears to entertain the insinuation that clients are stealing from him is humorous.

e) ***"Why go elsewhere to be cheated, when you can come here"*** (at a window shop)

The script elicited by "cheated" overlaps in meaning to include the sense of either "unfaithfulness" or "falsehood". Oddly, the interpretation of the former creates confusion since in this context it does not make any sense. To resolve this confusion, the reader has to understand that it is a typical case of semantic overlap, and has to recover the lost meaning by conducting a script switch and reinterpreting the erroneous word to acquire the appropriate sense equivalent to "falsehood". Once the correct meaning is recovered, the error becomes quite amusing since the implication of

"unfaithfulness" is incongruous with the reader's expectation.

Curiously, a third funnier interpretation can also be elicited from this signage. It appears as if the author implies that he is the best peddler of falsehood in the area and invites clients to visit his premises to be defrauded as well. Of course, this is ridiculous and contains a semantic/pragmatic incongruity. The author seems to be infringing on the law of ample reasoning since there appears to be something wrong with this signage. To resolve this incongruity, the reader should seek a rational interpretation through the linguistic resource of semantic overlap. What makes it funnier is the mere implication that the author is in effect advertising to have clients defraud them.

Generally, there is a form of script-switch to allow the reader to capture the ironical circumstances. Besides, the statement is based on the wrong premises which would render the signage incongruous. Therefore, the reader would only be allowed to arrive at the correct sense of the signage by resolving the incongruity within and subsequently reinterpreting it as ironical. The humour arises from the fact that the author expects customers to still patronise his shop even after threatening to "cheat" them.

f) ***"Customers who find our waitresses rude ought to see the manager"*** (in a hotel)

It looks like the author wishes to inform the patrons that more help could be sought from the manager in case they were dissatisfied with the services offered by the waitresses. However, what the notice evokes is an indication that the manager would not be of much help, but would be "rude" more than the waitresses. This creates a sentential incongruity which is quite worrying apart from it being hilarious. This interpretation is erroneous since it is expected that the manager being a senior administrator should come to the patrons' rescue to resolve and assure them of the hotel's hospitality

The modal auxiliary "ought" elicits different scripts in English including those senses that indicate obligation, probability, duty, ask for and give advice, and say what is right or good (Aarts, & McMahon, 2006). The intention of the author in this notice is lost since she probably envisions the customer would report any complaints to the manager. However, the obvious unintended interpretation is that, compared to the rudeness of the waiter, the manager appears to be the rudest. It is contradictory because it defeats the sole purpose of going to the manager to seek assistance if you may instead face more rudeness than help. As a result, an absurdity is created since the resultant meaning is in direct conflict with the anticipated form of behaviour expected from such an office, especially operating in the hospitality industry.

To understand this requires the reader to arrive at the correct interpretation of "ought". Thus, the modal "ought to" has to be understood to mean that the waiter's rude behaviour needs to be reported to the manager, ignoring any other interpretation. Humour is caused by the erroneous implication of the manager being considered ruder than the waitresses. The emerging imagery is quite amusing since it is the manager who is supposed to come to the rescue of the patrons and the reader is bereft of where to take his grievances. Above all, the contradiction is hilarious when the reader realises that indeed that is not the intention of the author after resolving the incongruity by attaching the right meaning to modality.

g) ***"we do…man cure…pencure"*** (outside a beauty parlour)

The signage appears to include "man cure" services in their menu. Even though they are acceptable English words in their own right, they are bizarre when used in this context notice. Figuratively speaking, it implies that the ladies, who visit these premises, would automatically undergo such a transformation that they would be "cured of/for men"- a rather disturbing interpretation. Alternatively, it may indicate the services are for men and the bigger question revolves around how "men" are "cured" in this salon. Assuming this is the case, and the "men" are really "cured" in some way or another, then the script does appear to make some sense, yielding humour. In effect, the humour arises when the reader is left with the imagination of how men could have been expected to be "cured" in a female facility thereby encouraging sexual innuendos.

Therefore, the script "man cure" is erroneous because it is in opposition to the other scripts and to the context. Resolving this contradiction requires the reader to consider another interpretation to overcome the script overlap. The error is that the author appears to have erroneously missed an important letter of the alphabet to give a more sensible implication: "manicure" instead of *man cure* which alters the original meaning, thereby realising the confusion. Amusingly, it has nothing to do with the male species but everything to do with the feminine fashion-related paraphernalia. With this understanding, the faulty interpretation is indeed humorous.

h) ***"Poko Hotel"*** (outside an eatery)

In this signage, "Poko" is a notorious *Sheng* (a pidgin language formed from a mixture of English, Swahili and a native language) word that contains a disparaging sense of "commercial sex worker". Could it be that the author is advertising a hotel full of "Poko" (prostitutes)? Or is it where clients visit to eat and wait for a "Poko"? Though these are probable interpretations, prostitution is outlawed in the country so it is not the case. It is also ridiculous because self-respecting people would not patronage the premises associated with the oldest profession in the world. Besides, it is incongruous with the rest of the scripts in this notice since it is unfathomable to imagine this "hotel" is in fact, a brothel!

Script opposition and script overlap seem to be at play here. The reader has to seek an alternative interpretation because of the confusion that arises with the first faulty elucidation. Unfortunately, this is rather difficult for a reader who is a non-resident because the word *Poko* is a non-target Language; whereby its resolution involves a lexical gap resulting from the reinterpretation of the word using *Sheng*. Ostensibly, humour is produced when the word is discovered to presuppose a "commercial sex worker" when interpreted from its *Sheng* derivation. Evidently, the implicatures and presuppositions created in this notice, including the implicit sexual connotations, render it pretty humorous.

i) ***"Do not sit on chair unless for the intended use"*** (outside an entertainment joint)

The author's message is confusing since he seems to be repetitive in trying to anchor his message. In his repetitive nature, the author appears to use words unnecessarily thereby producing an incongruity. It is funny how the author is warning clients not to sit down yet he still provides chairs for them. The question lingering in the reader's mind is what other purposes do chairs have apart from sitting on? Why then state the obvious? The meaning and intention of the author is incongruous to that of the reader thereby creating humour in the process.

To understand the original intention of the author requires a reanalysis of the scripts. The scripts elucidated in the first decoding are in opposition to the rest of the signage creating a script overlap. The reader has to understand that it is a false reasoning since nobody would intend to sit on a chair "unless for the intended purpose". To arrive at the correct decoding would require an appreciation of tautologous scripts. Specifically, Grice's (1975) maxim of quantity is flouted in tautologous scripts because the signage is repetitive, distracting its informativeness. Apparently, the author is warning patrons against using the chairs for other purposes apart from what they are designed for. It appears as though some people may be misusing the chairs by placing drinks or feet on them or even stepping on them and in the process dirtying them. Probably, some customers may have complained as they might have stained their clothes while sitting down.

j) *"**For personal problems like…remarriage…man power and women power"*** (in a public market)

The signage originates from a traditional doctor advertising his/her services but it leaves the reader more confused since "remarriage" is really not a "problem" and is consequently not related to the work of traditional medicine men. Moreover, the author assumes that since lack of "manpower" (male virility) is a common phenomenon and is widely recognised all over the world, then it automatically follows that the concept of "women power" is true as well. "Gender empowerment" is the script normally associated with the concept of "women power". Therefore, the assumption that the author makes is faulty since the interpretation of the word and the concept referred to here is non-existent at worst, and ambiguous at best. Thus, this presupposition is denied, creating an incongruity and the public notice appears ludicrous.

Recovering the intention of the author requires a resolution of the script opposition and script overlap. The author seems to communicate in a vernacular form which consists of some broken form of English as shown by the choice of the word "remarriage" which appears misplaced and does not make sense in this context. Maybe the real problem is the concept of "divorce/separation" and the fear of not getting a partner in the future. The author attempts to ensure that the culprits can have other future meaningful relationships.

Undoubtedly, issues of "power", especially about "masculinity" and "femininity", are quite sensitive and personal; therefore, for there to be a notification about remedying this type of "power" implies a serious underlying condition. For there to be an advertisement of such nature suggests that the residents were desperate and desirous to confront such problems to reduce any potential calamity. It also signifies that it was no longer a private issue that residents were concealing, but a humongous one that needed to be immediately publicly confronted. Unfortunately, the way the signage was written left a lot to be desired since the "power" that the signage advertises is unclear allowing for some mischievous interpretations.

k) ***"Vacant room suspicious bedsitter"*** (in a residential area)

The script "suspicious" elicits the sense of something "questionable/doubtful" which does not augur well with renting a room in a residential area. If the bedsitter is "suspicious" then no one would dare rent it; thereby, defeating the very purpose of advertising it. Therefore, the intention of the author is not revealed in this signage and the reader needs to locate a sensible interpretation.

There is a need to further interrogate the scripts because the wrong choice of words would bring confusion to the public notice. Thus, the script

"suspicious" is in opposition to the intended meaning and it is most likely a script overlap. If the author had wished to inform potential tenants that there were houses available for tenancy, then the usage of "suspicious" would not have helped her cause; instead, she should have located the correct word substitution that contains an equivalent meaning to "spacious" to sort out this confusion. Wrong word choice yields a lexical incongruity creating humour because the mere imagination of a "suspicious" room is ridiculous. In fact, when "suspicious" modified "bedsitter" should be regarded as a warning to potential clients not to attempt occupancy. This beats the sole purpose of the intention of the author who appears to seek for clientele.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions: There was general agreement from the respondents that there was humour in the signage studied. Moreover, there was consensus that the humour was not deliberate but accidental. The presence of humour was a result of confusing, contrasting, abnormal, absurd and incongruous scripts that elicited a different decoding from the author's intention because of wrong spellings, ambiguous concepts/words, semantic and lexical overlaps, as well as lack of punctuation marks, which appeared to distort the overall meaning of the signage.

Recommendations: The study recommended further interrogation on the concept of humour competence since it appeared that there different people perceive humour differently; whilst, others do not. Moreover, there was a need to examine whether the intelligence level of the individual contributes to humour perception or was just a matter of a "sense of humour".

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