

# Linguistic Deviation on Bilingual Billboard Slogans in Cameroon: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal

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**Abstract:** The link between linguistic deviation and translation techniques is enshrined in the conventionality of language use and communication. Linguistic deviation occurs when a text ignores conventional norms of a language in order to communicate a certain artistic merit and draw attention to the meaning of the message. The main objective of this paper is to interrogate how translation techniques used on bilingual billboard slogans in Cameroon lead to linguistic deviation and how such deviations affect communication and sociolinguistics. The corpus of this paper is composed of fifteen bilingual billboard slogans purposively selected from different parts of Cameroon. In terms of methodology, the data was collected by taking pictures of billboards and extracting their slogans. A qualitative descriptive method of document analysis was used with the help of Leech's linguistic deviation theory and Jakobson's communication functions. Regarding the results, the study identified graphological, semantical, grammatical and lexical deviations on the selected billboards caused by translation techniques like literal, reduction, adaptation, borrowing, discursive creation, amplification and transposition. As a result of linguistic deviation, the messages that were finally conveyed through bilingual billboards looked absurd and sometimes nonsensical. The paper recommends that certified translators should be employed to translate billboard slogans from French to English.

**Keywords:** Linguistic Deviation, Communication Functions, Bilingual Billboard Slogans, Translation Techniques, Conventional Norms

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## 1. Introduction

The issue of bridging the gap between linguistic deviation and translation techniques is enshrined in the conventionality of language use, communication, and sociolinguistics. Linguistic deviation occurs when a writer ignores conventional norms and rules of a language in order to communicate a certain artistic merit [1] and draw attention to the meaning of the message. [2] Advances in publicity techniques have triggered the use and manipulation of billboards slogans in political, commercial, and public spaces. Manipulative language devices are deployed on billboards to entice the audience, to look persuasive, convincing, dramatic, and vivid. [1] According to Leech, [3] linguistic deviation is significant when it communicates what was intended by the author and judged by the reader to be essential.

Despite the availability and accessibility to print media, cable, internet and digital television in Cameroon, the use of

billboards as a means of communication is still highly prevalent. Language use on billboards attracts attention from sociolinguists and communicators due to its deviation from conventional norms. Knowledge of a language depends on good pronunciation (phonology), forms of language units (graphology), vocabulary (lexicon) and sentence construction rules (grammar/syntax). [1] Accordingly, language is defined as the institution whereby human beings communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-arbitrary systems. [4] Put otherwise, language performs six functions namely; emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, referential and poetic. [5] When linguistic deviation occurs through translation techniques, it violates conventional norms of language. Therefore, linguistic deviation techniques can be an efficient means of communication. Deviation refers to an unusual expression that deviates from normal norms of a language. [6]

Cameroon's multilingual landscape provides a fertile

ground for the visibility of its two official languages (French and English) and a reflection of its sociolinguistic features. [7] In these days of globalization, the need for proper and precise translation is increasing due to the expansion of trade, science, culture, and technology. [8] According to Shuping, [9] translators face the challenge of what technique is appropriate to transfer meanings, signs, and symbols from one language to the other. That is why some translators use many forms of rewriting due to certain sociolinguistic constraints. It is possible that part of the source text could be poorly translated due to varied structures of language, grammar, stylistics, and linguistic norms. [1]

In the context of sociolinguistics, translating cultures, mediating between the various codes, and crossing the boundaries of self-contained systems, are varied linguistic ventures fraught with difficulties. Hence, there is hardly a faithful translation. [10] That is why translators must exercise caution because any text can be tainted by one's cultural beliefs and attitudes. [11] Hence, a positive sociolinguistic norm in one socio-cultural setting may be negative in another. A translation cannot mean the same thing in another language, producing the same effect on the mind. [12] Thus, every translation always betrays some degree of meaning. [13] At times, linguistic deviation has been the cause of this betrayal of the original meaning of the source text.

Linguistic deviation is socially and culturally oriented. In sociolinguistics, language and culture remain inseparable entities. [14] In translation, Tymoczko [15] opines that the source culture has distinct cultural practices, concepts, beliefs, and values which may have no close counterparts in the receptor culture. Some symbols have no lexical equivalents in the target cultures. Due to Cameroon's sociolinguistic diversity, 'false friends' have been taken as acceptable translations. For example, the phrase 'to assist at a ceremony' for *assister à une cérémonie* is misleading. In proper English, one attends a ceremony and not assist at a ceremony. Also, the word *concours* is erroneously used as a translation for 'competitive examination', and *mandat* for 'money order'. [16]

All these examples indicate that code-switching or code-mixing is used in Cameroon. [17] Due to language contact or code-switching, both speakers deliberately or unconsciously introduce features of one language into another to fill a sociocultural gap. [18] For instance, there was an MTN billboard in Douala in 2011 bearing the message *switcher sur le reseau*. This slogan included an English root (switch) attached to a French morpheme *-ez* (2nd person plural) meaning to switch on the internet. [19] Yet, both English and French speakers understood this advert. This familiar use of the diction from two languages enables the audience to understand billboard communication (Umar, 2021). Another billboard advert which read *Ne faites plus de jaloux*, was translated as: No more exclusivity. [20] Here, the translator preferred 'exclusivity' to 'jealousy'. The above translations were influenced by sociolinguistic and sociocultural specificities linked to maintaining fidelity to the source text that ended up sacrificing the original meaning. This implies

that whether within the same language, from one language to another or from one culture to another, translation is and remains one of the most challenging fields of study. [10] Thus, figurative expressions and deviations are common in everyday communication. In business communication, billboard advertisers use the kind of language that departs from linguistic convention. [21]

Therefore, there is almost no literary work without a sort of deviation from ordinary language use. [2] For Savory, [22] it is difficult for a translation to render words without additions or deletions leading to obvious deviations. A good translation strives to be close to the original text to be read and understood with ease and pleasure. [22] It must attract the attention of spectators and arouse their interest. Some linguistic deviations are due to poorly written texts, non-respect of the sociolinguistic and translation principles, and outright carelessness. [17] This results in incorrect language use on billboards leading to lexical, semantical, grammatical and phonological interferences that affect English pronunciation, spelling and meaning. [16] Cameroon English is gradually being deculturated due to the use of French lexemes, acronyms, suffixes, and terms. [23] Yet, studies that highlight translation flaws hardly focus on linguistic deviations on bilingual billboards. At the end, the translation does not always have the same value from the stylistic viewpoint [24].

Based on this shortfall, the main objective of this paper is to interrogate how translation techniques used on bilingual billboard cause linguistic deviation and impact communication. Put otherwise, how does linguistic deviation affect communication? As translators strive to act as bridges between and across cultures, linguistic deviation must occur. Such linguistic deviations pose a problem to translation, sociolinguistics, and communication. That is why translators must recognize deviations and be sufficiently skillful to convey them from the source to the target texts. [2]

## 2. Literature Review

Here, the conceptual, theoretical and empirical reviews provide other scholars' views on concepts, theories and empirical data on billboards as a strategy of communication.

### 2.1. Conceptual Review

Billboards are visual and concrete permanent or semi-permanent structures that reach out to the same audience several times. [25] In the context of this paper, bilingual billboards refer to those billboards that were initially conceived and designed in French and later translated into English. Translation is an inter-lingual process which engages the cultural, religious, and political components of language. [8] On most billboards, informative, persuasive, semiotic and symbolic messages [20] represent how language is located in the public space for consumption. [26]

The search for an artistic merit pushes billboard translators to deviate from conventional norms to impress readers. Artistic merit refers to the value of a piece of art, film,

literature, sculpture, or painting. [1] Simply put, deviation or foregrounding is the opposite to acceptable norms. [3; 27] By norms, we mean standard practices in speech and writing. [28]

Sociolinguistics deals with sociological aspects of language that are linked to ethnicity, religion, status, gender, age, and education. It explains how cultural norms affect how language is used in society and why some words may be appropriate or inappropriate in different sociocultural contexts. [27] A slogan is a short and striking or memorable word or phrase often used in advertising to attract attention. [29] Slogans visually express the importance and benefits of any product. Slogans are successful when they are attractive, creative, and clear. [29]

Many translation techniques are used to attain linguistic equivalence. [30] For Savory, [22] translation is made possible by the equivalence of thought that lies behind its different verbal expressions. In the amplification technique, details lacking in the source language are introduced into the target language. [1] Discursive creation is when the source text is transferred to the target text with a temporary equivalent. [31] Borrowing or calque is the direct transfer or loaning of the source text into the target text without any alterations. In pure borrowing, the source text is purely loaned without any change while in natural borrowing, there is alteration. [32] Literal translation is a direct word-for-word rendition that sticks close to the source text while compensation refers to the recreation in the target text of the loss effect in the source text. [30] Adaptation technique occurs when texts are altered to become relevant in a sociocultural setting. [1] Reduction or deletion is a translation technique that seeks to suppress some information of the source language in the target text. [30]

In the modulation technique, translators modify a source text (ST) to suit the receiver of the target text (TT). [1] For equivalence, one preserves the meaning of an expression by finding a target language equivalent. [33] Transposition technique involves the switching of a word (verb, noun, adjective) from one role to another to clarify the meaning. [1]

## 2.2. Theoretical Review

In this paper, we employ the theories of linguistic deviation and the six functions of communication. In the theory of linguistic deviation, language changes in phonetics, lexis, syntax, and semantics, due to socio-cultural changes. [28] In the study of language, some expressions that were hitherto considered simple and colloquial, now seem strange in modern linguistics. Language variation or alteration to attain artistic merit is referred to as linguistic deviation. [1]

Linguistic deviation that was initially applicable to poetry is attributed to Geoffrey Leech [3] who defined it as a creative kind of language where a writer creates a new language deviated from the norms of literary convention. A text that deviates from conventional norms becomes noticeable or perceptually prominent. [24] Leech [3] classifies linguistic deviation into lexical, phonological, graphological, semantic, dialectical, deviation of register and historical period.

Lexical deviation is associated with neologism (new words) which is misunderstood for a violation of the lexical rule. [3] In neologism, a rule of word-formation is applied where a writer may exceed the normal resources of the language. For Yaghubyan, [27] coinage is a form of lexical deviation through the invention of new words or phrases. Being creative and intending to attract readers' attention, coinage is often used on billboards by designers.

Phonology is the visual coding of spoken version represented by deviation in sound or pronunciation to preserve the rhyme. [29] Phonological deviation refers to irregularities of pronunciation that are different from the acceptable norm due to an alteration in spelling. [3] On billboards, phonology is represented by using alliterations, rhymes, and homographs. [27]

Graphological deviation refers to any strangeness of pronunciation that affects the written form. Graphology refers to writing systems like punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling. [3] Orthographic devices like script, colour, font type and size, draw the attention of most clients. To be emphatic, vivid, associative, and conspicuous, orthographic deviations occur through repetition of morphemes, words, punctuations, capitalization, misplacement, deletion, addition, substitution, and malapropism. [27]

Semantics studies the meanings of words in sentences. [34] Semantic deviation can be nonsense or absurdity especially in a strictly literal way. The types of semantic deviations include oddity, transference of meaning, honest deception or irrational meaning of a work of art. [2] As the figurative meaning becomes necessary, the literal meaning becomes absurd. [1]

Dialectal deviation or dialectism refers to the borrowing of features of socially or regionally defined dialects as a minor form of license not generally available to the average writer of functional prose who writes in an accepted dialect known as standard. [1] In deviation of Register, a certain register is used in a wrong domain accompanied by the further incongruity of register mixing, or the use of the features of different registers. [3] Deviation of historical period uses linguistic heritage of dead languages like Latin and Greek or the use of a language of the past in the present. [2]

The second theory relevant for this study is Roman Jakobson's [35] six functions of communication where the addresser and addressee are engaged as perceiver/expresser prior to interpersonal interpretation of conveying meaning through billboards. The act of communication includes referential function (context), emotive function (addresser), conative function (addressee), metalingual function (code), the phatic function (contact) and poetic function (message) which are relevant to linguistic or semiotic elements on billboards like colour, texture, shape, typography, imagery, and icons.

The referential function is oriented towards the context. The emotive or expressive refers to the addresser and his emotions manifested through colours and typography. The conative orientates towards the addressee and finds its purest grammatical expression in the vocative and imperative. [35]

The conative function is represented on billboards through colours, typography and pictures. The phatic function strives to establish communication or good relationships between the addresser and the addressee while the metalingual function is applicable when the addresser and the addressee employ the same graphic codes of communication. [36] In our context, the poetic or aesthetic function focuses on the billboard text or the artistic design that explains the code that is used. [37] Thus, in the context of Cameroon, cultural signs and symbols on bilingual billboards determine the dominance of the aesthetic function of communication.

Jakobson's model is significant in sociolinguistics and communication. Each of the six functions of language has a dominant function in every text. Pictures also serve an important role in communication. Jakobson's [35] ideas on language use pay attention to linguistic details like form and texture of text, whereas non-linguistic methods focus on the semantic dimension of coherence where an addresser communicates meaning that is conveyed through a billboard slogan. Any misuse of language leads to incorrect and misleading messages since it defeats the intention behind the communication. [38]

### 2.3. Empirical Review

Historically speaking, Leech [3] was the first to use the theory of deviation exclusively on the examination of poetic language. In recent times, this theory was adopted in studies to analyze linguistic features and linguistic deviation in English advertising. It revealed that advertisers deliberately deviate from usual expressions to attract viewers. [39]

A study carried out by Dhyaningrum [1] on linguistic deviation revealed that the most used deviation types were at the level of semantics, graphology and grammar (syntax). It also revealed that reduction, linguistic compression, and discursive creation were the most used translation techniques. Such devices were used to create unexpected surprises and to impress readers. [1]

Singh's [40] study found that language use created an imaginary world of literature, expression of ideas and emotions through features like lexicology, semantics, and grammar. [1] In the study of Dicken's novel, *Hard Times*, Ouameur and Daddi [41] discovered phonological deviation like substandard pronunciation and substitution of sounds; graphological deviation in the use of capitalization; and lexical deviation in the nonce use, compounding, and malapropism words. Grammatical deviation was found to contain the confusion of affixes, comparison of adjectives, multiple negation, and misuse of verbs; while semantic deviation uncovered oddity, periphrasis, transference of meaning including synecdoche, metaphor, and simile; and finally, the study discovered honest deception like hyperbole and irony. [1] In translation studies, Hossein and Medhat [2] found that although semantic, historical, and lexical deviations were dominant in Ahmad Shamlu's poetry, *Blank Verse*, only semantic deviations were largely transferred in translation. Supeno [42] researched on linguistic deviation in the students' translation of *The Road Not Taken* by Robert

Frost, and the study revealed that both lexical and grammatical deviations were the two most dominant in that text.

## 3. Methodology

The procedure used to analyze the selected bilingual billboards in the light of linguistic deviation fitted within the syntactic structures of the slogans in question. Generally, the linguistic norm on a given billboard slogan that deviates from convention might have been one foregrounded sentence structure or the norm might have been the reverse so that deviation was analyzed based on the appropriate translation technique. To conduct this analysis, some bilingual slogans were extracted from purposively snapped billboards. They were successively numbered from 1 to 15. Each bilingual billboard slogan was abbreviated as BBS with a serial number (e.g. BBS1).

This research used the descriptive qualitative method. Content analysis was used to identify linguistic deviation and translation techniques as communication strategies used on bilingual billboards. The analysis was based on English texts selected from some bilingual billboards in Cameroon. However, untranslated billboards were not relevant to the current research. The texts were analyzed using Leech's [3] theory of linguistic deviation, Jakobson's [35] six functions of communication and some translation techniques.

## 4. Corpus Presentation and Analysis

Corpus analysis was based on English texts extracted from billboards and coded as BBS with a serial number (1-15) focusing on linguistic deviation and translation techniques in the target text (TT).

On BBS1, we read: *Tous les examens radiologiques et échographiques sont payés à la caisse. Ne vous faites pas aider par personne.* This is translated as: 'Payments for all radiological and ultrasound exams are done only at the cashier's office. Do not accepted help for anybody.' Here, the word 'cashier' was wrongly spelled as *cashiar*, leading to orthographic deviation. The preposition 'from' was replaced by 'for', which is a function word that indicates the purpose or reason for something. Thus, to say 'do not accepted help for anybody', sounds nonsensical. If something is for someone, they should benefit from it. The verb 'accept' was wrongly put in the past tense (accepted) instead of the present tense (accept) leading to grammatical (syntactical) deviation. The proposed translation is: Payments for all radiological and ultrasound exams are done only at the cashier's office. Do not accept help from anybody.

On BBS2, the source text which is *MINEDUC: Ecole Publique* was rendered as: 'Government Primary School of (de Konti)'. By translating *Ecole Public* as Government Primary School, some words were added to the target text like 'of de Konti'. The translation technique of amplification was used to enhance the meaning of the text. Literally, *Ecole Publique* could be translated as 'Public School' but in

Cameroon, it refers to Government Primary School. The word 'of' (*de*) has confused the English text and looks absurd. *De Konti* refers to the location of the school, represented by the preposition 'of'. By using 'of' (English) and *de* (French), the translator doubled a word with the same meaning. Therefore, there is more precision in the target text than in the source text. The proper noun Konti, is followed by the conventional grammatical rules to make the phrase comprehensible to the audience. Here, there is semantic deviation. The proposed translation is: MINEDUC: Government Primary School, Konti.

Concerning BBS3, the text: *Ecole Primaire Publique Inclusive* is literally translated as 'Primary Including Public School'. The translator upheld the same number of words in the target texts to remain faithful to the original text. The French word *inclusive* which is a descriptive adjective and at the same time the proper noun, is translated as 'including' which is in the present continuous tense. *Inclusive* refers to the quality of including different types of people and treating them all fairly and equally in terms of access and opportunities to education. Here, grammatical (syntactic) deviation is identified by replacing the adjective *inclusive* with the verb 'including'. Semantic deviation can be noticed with the use of the word *public*. A public school does not belong to government. The proposed translation is: Government Inclusive Primary School.

In BBS4, the text: *Ecole Maternelle Publique de Monou II* is under-translated as 'Government High School'. The words in the source text are reduced in an attempt to summarize the source text. The target audience feels cheated because the target text has not transferred exactly what the source text says. The proper noun *De Monou II* is omitted in the target text. This translation changes the educational level from 'Nursery School' to 'High School'. It deviates from the meaning (semantics) intended and this ends up in semantic absurdity or oddity. The possible translation is 'Government Nursery School Monou II'.

In BBS5, the political slogan *Le Cameroun est un et indivisible* is translated as 'Cameroon is One and Non divided'. The adaptation technique is used by replacing the adjective *indivisible* with 'non-divided'. This distorted the meaning of the word *indivisible* which implies what cannot be separated. This implies that despite its sociocultural and multilingual diversity, Cameroon remains one, united and indivisible. Non-divided, in medical terms refers to a cell that cannot undergo any further division. The proposed translation is 'Cameroon is one and indivisible'.

In BBS6, the phrase *Department de Mfoundi; Arrondissement de Yaoundé IV*, is falsely translated as 'Department of Mfoundi; Arrondissement of Yaoundé IV'. Here, 'false friends', borrowing/calque or discursive creation was used. *Department* and *Arrondissement* are borrowed into the English language. It is also discursive creation since the translators transferred the same words to the source text by providing a temporary equivalence. *Department* or *Arrondissement* refer to an administrative jurisdiction called Division or Subdivision respectively. The English noun

department refers to a large, specialized division of a business, university or administration. Code-switching has also occurred due to language contact between French and English. Here, what matters is the actual meaning of the message and not the words. Thus, semantic and lexical deviations occurred on this billboard. It should be translated as: 'Mfoundi Division: Yaoundé IV Sub-Division'.

BBS7 bears the text, *Arrêté portant nomination de responsables à l'Université de Bamenda* literally translated as: 'Arrested carrying out the appointment of Officials at Bamenda University'. The noun *arrêté* (order) was mistranslated as 'arrested'. There is transposition with the switching of a noun in the source text to become a verb in the target text. The English verb 'arrested' means to seize someone physically by a legal authority and take into custody. But *arrêter* can also mean to 'arrest' or to 'stop'. Instead of 'an order on the appointment of officials', the translator said they were arrested for carrying out appointments of officials. There is an exchange of the noun for a verb which leads to syntactic deviation. The word *portant* is literally translated as 'carrying out'. This also leads to distortion of the meaning of the text which represents semantic deviation. The proposed translation is: 'Order on the appointment of officials at the Bamenda University'.

BBS8 reads: *Ecole Publique Maternelle de Bini* translated as 'Nursery School of Government'. The translation technique of reduction or deletion was used as the proper noun *de Bini* (location) is missing. Semantically, the source text is misrepresented implying that the 'Nursery School' is in a location called 'Government'. The adjective 'Government' is used as a proper noun by distorting the syntax. While changing an adjective to a noun might have been to stress the state of the object and make language more vivid, the whole phrase ends up looking silly. The proposed translation is: 'Government Nursery School, Bini'.

In BBS9, the text *Centre de Formation Professionnelle des conducteurs d'engins lourds* is under-translated as: 'Professional Operators Training Centre'. The words *des conducteurs d'engins lourds* are omitted from the target text. This distorts the meaning since the *raison d'être* of that professional training centre, which is exclusively for drivers of heavy-duty engines, is missing. Some relevant information is omitted in the translation. This partial translation deviates from the intended sense. This text could read: Professional Training Centre for drivers of heavy engines.

BBS10 presents the source text: *Recherche d'une menagerie* which is literally translated as 'Housewife needed'. The word *recherche*, which is translated into English as 'search' is left out of the target text. Apart from literal translation, there is also reduction translation in the target text. In the sociocultural set up of Cameroon, people normally search for house helps or nannies. Though *menagerie* can be loosely translated into English as housewife, it is unthinkable within the African culture to be searching for a housewife through a billboard advertisement. The amateur translator of this billboard does not master the cultural context and the target language because housewife

and house help do not mean the same thing in English. Here, there is semantic deviation because the meaning of the source text is distorted. This kind of translation is an aberration. The right translation should be: ‘House Help needed’.

Regarding BBS11, the phrase *Gagner c'est rien* is mistranslated as ‘Gagner is Nothing’. The French word *gagner* is repeated in English. This is an attempt to loan or borrow French words into English by distorting the meaning (semantics). Discursive creation could be considered in terms of transferring or imposing the same French lexis (*gagner*) to the target text by providing a momentary equivalence. It sounds like a pun (play on words) intended to pass across the message. ‘Gagner is nothing’ could mean victory is imminent. The probable translation could be: ‘Winning is obvious’.

In BBS12, the text *Port de Masque obligatoire* is literally rendered as ‘Habor of the mask is compulsory’. The auxiliary verb ‘to be’, is introduced in the target text and makes it a complete English sentence with subject, verb and object (SVO). This leads to syntactic deviation. Also, the meaning of the text is altered. The word *port* is literally translated as ‘habor’, which means a place on the coast where ships moor in shelter from rough waters. The harbor of ships and compulsory wearing of masks to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus have nothing in common. It erroneously implies that placing a mask at the habor (like a ship) is compulsory. Here, grammatical and semantical deviations occurred. The translation could read: Wearing of masks is compulsory.

In BBS13, the text; *Kadji Beer: Supporteur Naturel de la CAN* is translated as ‘Kadji Beer: Obviously behind the AFCON’. The noun *Supporteur naturel* literally means ‘natural supporter’, but it is omitted in the target text. The translator used an adaptation technique where the adverb ‘obviously’ and the preposition ‘behind’ are used in place of *supporteur naturel*, leading to syntactic deviation. Both the grammar (syntax) and the semantics (meaning) were distorted. The translation could read thus: ‘Kadji Beer, Number one supporter of AFCON’.

Concerning BBS14, the text; *Hommage aux victims du stade d'Olembe* is rendered as: ‘RIP at the deceased of the Olembe stadium’. The French word *hommage* is abbreviated as RIP. This reduction or compressive technique does not give

the full meaning of the word: Rest in Peace. The word *hommage* is rightly translated into English as ‘tribute’ or ‘homage’ which implies showing the last respect to some fallen heroes. The noun ‘victim’ is translated as a person who is harmed, injured or killed through a crime or an accident. The adjective ‘deceased’ does not capture the accident that took place at Olembe stadium during the African Nations cup. Deceased refers to the dead, but it does not specify the cause of the death as the word ‘victim’. Thus, the word ‘deceased’ limits the meaning. *Hommage* (French) and ‘RIP’ (English) do not mean the same thing. However, RIP is precise and brief, but it leads to an alteration in syntax. Hence, grammatical and semantic deviations occurred here. The proposed translation is ‘Tribute to the Victims of Olembe Stadium’.

On BBS15, the text *Stade Annexe A* is literally rendered as ‘Annex A Stadium’. There is a misplacement of the adjective and the noun leading to grammatical (syntactic) deviation. Annex is an adjective that qualifies the proper noun Stadium A. Yet in the target text, the adjective seems to qualify the letter ‘A’ and not the stadium. The adjective is supposed to come after the noun for the phrase to be grammatically (syntactically) correct. The correct translation is ‘Stadium A Annex’.

It should be noted that in each bilingual slogan extracted for this study, graphological deviation takes place through differences in font's type and size between the source texts and the target texts through capitalization, signs, symbols, and colours. The French texts are obviously domineering over the English texts. This could be because the texts are initially conceived in French before being translated into English.

At another instance, there is some degree of carelessness in these translations. They are not done by professionals and even if they were, there is no proofreading, editing or cross checking. This should not be so if English and French are official languages with equal status. The designing of billboards tells the story of the place a language holds in any society. Therefore, the absurd and sometimes nonsensical translations of billboards demonstrate that there is still so much to be done regarding Cameroon Government's policy to promote bilingualism. These slogans are presented below:

Table 1. Presentation of Corpus.

Slogan	French Text	English Text	Translation Technique	Deviation	Proposed Translation
BBS1	<i>Tous les examens radiologiques et échographiques sont payés à la caisse. Ne vous faites pas aider par personne</i>	Payments for all radiological and ultrasound exams are done only at the Cashier's Office. Do not accepted help for anybody	Literal	Grammar (syntax) Lexicology	Payments for all radiological and ultrasound exams are done only at the Cashier's office. Do not accept help from anybody
BBS2	<i>MINEDUC: Ecole Publique</i>	Government Primary School of de Konti	Amplification	Semantics	Government Primary School, Konti
BBS3	<i>Ecole Primaire Publique Inclusive</i>	Primary Including Public School	Literal	Grammar (syntax)	Government Inclusive Primary School
BBS4	<i>Ecole Maternelle Publique de Monou II</i>	Government High School	Reduction	Semantics	Government Nursery School, Monou II
BBS5	<i>Le Cameroun est Un et Indivisible</i>	Cameroon is One and Non divided	Adaptation	Semantics	Cameroon is one and indivisible
BBS6	<i>Department de Mfoundi - Arrondissement de Yaoundé IV</i>	Department of Mfoundi: Arrondissement of Yaoundé IV	Borrowing/ calque	Semantics Lexicology	Mfoundi Division Yaounde IV Subdivision

Slogan	French Text	English Text	Translation Technique	Deviation	Proposed Translation
			Discursive creation		
BBS7	<i>Arrêté portant nomination de responsables à l'Université de Bamenda</i>	Arrested carrying out the appointment of Officials at Bamenda University	Literal & Transposition	Grammar (syntax) Semantics	Order on appointment of officials at the Bamenda University
BBS8	<i>École Publique Maternelle de Bini</i>	Nursery School of Government	Reduction	Grammar (syntax) Semantics	Government Nursery School Bini
BBS9	<i>Centre de Formation Professionnelle des conducteurs d'engins lourds</i>	Professional Operators Training Centre	Reduction	Semantics	Professional Training Centre for drivers of heavy engines
BBS10	<i>Recherche d'une menagerie</i>	Housewife needed	Literal Reduction	Semantics	House help needed
BBS11	<i>Gagner c'est rien</i>	Gagner is nothing	Borrowing/ calque & Discursive creation	Lexicology Semantics	Winning is obvious
BBS12	<i>Port de masque obligatoire</i>	Habor of the mask is compulsory	Literal	Semantics	Wearing of the mask is compulsory
BBS13	<i>Kadji Beer: Supporteur Naturel de la CAN</i>	Kadji Beer: Obviously behing the AFCON	Adaptation	Grammar (syntax) Semantics	Kadji Beer, Number one supporter of AFCON
BBS14	<i>Hommage aux victims du stade d'Olembe</i>	RIP at the deceased of the Olembe stadium	Reduction	Grammar (syntax) Semantics	Tribute to the victims of Olembe Stadium
BBS15	<i>Atade Annexe A</i>	Annex A Stadium	Literal	Grammar (syntax)	Stadium A Annex

Bilingual Billboard slogans (BBS) snapped and extracted by Ita Nawom (2022)

## 5. Discussion

Our discussion stems from the corpus analysis of types of linguistic deviations and translation techniques identified on bilingual billboards and how they affect communication.

### 5.1. Linguistic Deviation

Based on the corpus analysis, there are recurrent linguistic deviations like graphology, semantics, grammar (syntax), and lexicology that were discovered on the selected bilingual billboard slogans in Cameroon. Most deviations appeared more than once on different billboards. The table below illustrates the frequencies of linguistic deviations on bilingual billboards.

**Table 2.** *Types of Linguistic Deviation.*

S/N	Linguistic deviation	Frequency	Percentage/100
1.	Graphology	15	38.5
2.	Semantics	12	30.8
3.	Grammar (syntax)	09	23
4.	Lexicology	03	7.7
	Total	39	100

The table above shows that graphology (38.5%), semantic (30.8%), grammar (syntax) (23%), and lexicological (7.7%) deviations are common on the selected bilingual billboards in Cameroon. As noted already, graphological deviation is the most recurrent with capitalization and variations in colors and font sizes used on bilingual billboards. Let us examine each form of deviation that was identified in this study.

**Graphological Deviation:** Every pronunciation is guided by spelling or orthography. Orthography is reflected in the written form. Graphological deviation occurs on billboards in the use of bold capitalization, deletion, addition, substitution, spacing, symbols, and multiple vowels or consonants based on standard rules of language. On these billboards,

graphological deviation was used as most source texts were written in capital letters for the sake of being emphatic, vivid, associative or to give a strong emotion to the audience. This tallies with the emotive or expressive function of communication which refers to the addresser and his emotions. [36]

On most billboard texts, the emotive function of communication was manifested through colours and typography. Graphological deviation provided translators the freedom to make unlimited changes to the font sizes and colours of the slogans. The selection of script, its color, fonts type and size of French words drew the immediate attention of the French consumers more than the English-speaking audience. This form of deviation not only retains the original meaning of the source text but also added or reduced the information intended. Font sizes of French texts were bold and more colourful as compared to the English slogans. Graphological deviation added to the beauty of the slogans and the symbols. This ties with Jakobson's [35] poetic or aesthetic function of language that focuses on the beauty of the message communicated on billboards. The poetic function is an excellent artistic expression or design of the billboard. The arts and objects that are valued are for their beauty and not their usefulness. This is associated with this poetic function of language that is caused by graphological deviation on the selected billboards.

**Semantic Deviation:** Semantic deviation refers to the silliness and nonsensical meanings which are reflected in the target text like 'housewife needed'. Semantically, the meaning of the source text was completely distorted, and the text failed to communicate the intended meaning. Also, semantic deviation was identified in the text 'arrested carrying out the appointment of Officials at Bamenda University' especially in the exchange of the noun for the verb. The French lexical term *arrêté* ignored other meanings or contexts. The verb 'arrested' distorted the meaning in

English. However, *arrêté* has an ambivalent meaning which could either be translated as ‘arrested’ or ‘order’. This misled the translator to arrive at semantic oddity or what Leech [3] depicts as an irrational element of meaning in a work of art. Although the intention of the translator might have been to make the text more comprehensive on a figurative plane, the irrational element which this text communicates shows how a particular translation technique can lead to semantic deviation. This conclusion is corroborated by Asobele [38] who argued that any misuse of language leads to incorrect communication since the motive of the communication is defeated.

**Grammatical Deviation:** Grammatical deviation happens in morphology (the grammar of the word) and syntax (the grammar of words pattern within sentences). [3] Here, syntactic deviation is noticed in the phrase ‘Habor of the mask is compulsory’. The pattern or arrangement of the words is poor. The word ‘harbor’ which translates as *port* affects the syntax of the phrase. This arrangement of words does not create a well-formed sentence acceptable in the English language especially when a common part of speech is changed as using a verb in place of a noun. [44]

In the context of this work, nouns, adjectives, and verbs were combined for a better linguistic appeal and emphasis and to make the language more vivid. On the target text ‘Nursery School of Government’, the adjective ‘government’ is transformed to appear as a proper noun indicating the location of the Nursery school. The non-standard use of language here, fits under grammatical (syntactic) deviation. In relation to this finding, Ouameur and Daddi’s [41] study also realized that grammatical deviation contains the confusion of affixes, comparison of adjectives, multiple negation, and the misuse of verbs.

In the target text which carries the abbreviation ‘RIP’ as a translation for the French lexis ‘*hommage*’, this represents a special way of using language because of its brevity and precision. This can be regarded as a sort of grammatical deviation as the summarized version of the words is different from the normal arrangement of the parts of a sentence in the standard English language. This sort of deviation, however, appears in the translated version although the translation is semantically incorrect because ‘RIP’ does not mean the same thing as homage or tribute.

**Lexical Deviation:** Lexical deviation happens when a word which has not existed before is coined or invented in a language. The invention of new words is called neologism which is one of the more obvious ways in which a writer exceeds the normal use of language. [3] The changing of the normal spelling in the case of *cashiar* cited above is a coinage birthed by negligence or because it looks like the correct orthography. Thus, little attention has been paid to notice that this coinage, if at all it is, is a wrong orthograph. The phrase ‘gagner is nothing’ maybe a form of coinage by loaning the French word into English. Here, there is a nonsensical effect as it doesn’t mean anything in English. From a lexical perspective, neologism includes novelty in the use of words. [2] For example, the use of lexical elements

like *department* and *arrondissement* in the English version loaned from French are an innovation that could also be regarded as lexical deviation.

The translation approach which causes lexical deviation by introducing new words into the English version tallies with the metalingual function of language which plays an important role in everyday language when the addresser and addressee use the same code of communication. [36] In this context, the translator uses the same code or word in translating the texts. The findings on lexical deviation are validated by the conclusion that advertisers deliberately deviated from the usual expression of language to catch the attention of viewers and readers. [39]

## 5.2. Translation Techniques

The findings revealed that diverse translation techniques are freely used to solve the problems faced by translators in Cameroon. For Vermeer, [43] the purpose or skopos of a source text determines the translation techniques that are used. The table below represents the frequencies of translation techniques applicable in the corpus of this study.

Table 3. Techniques of Translation.

S/N	Translation Technique	Frequency	Percentage/%
1.	Literal	06	33.3
2.	Reduction	04	22.2
3.	Adaptation	02	11.1
4.	Borrowing/calque	02	11.1
5.	Discursive creation	02	11.1
6.	Amplification	01	5.6
7.	Transposition	01	5.6
	Total	18	100

From the table above, the most used translation techniques are literal (33.3%), reduction (22.2%), adaptation (11.1%), borrowing (11.1%), discursive creation (11.1%), amplification (5.6%) and transposition (5.6%). Some of the techniques appeared more than once on different bilingual billboards. Let us examine each translation technique and its application to each selected bilingual billboard.

**Literal Technique:** The target text ‘do not accepted help for anybody’ is an example of literal translation technique which maintains some equivalence and stays faithful to the source text. [3] At the end, the translator messes up the target text. The advertisement ‘Housewife needed’ for *recherche d’une menagerie* employed a literal translation technique that deviates from the standard norms of the English language. Also, the slogan *port de masque obligatoire* translated as ‘habor of the mask is compulsory’ is an example of literal translation that has made a mess of English grammar rules. Here, the literal technique (word-for-word) is the most recurrent. Since literal translation maintains the original texts, this confirms Savory’s [22] idea that translation is made possible by the equivalence of thought that lies behind its different verbal expressions. A literal approach of translation is fruitful in linguistic deviations through the omission or exclusion of devices that affect the target texts.

**Reduction Technique:** In this technique, some information



of the source text is omitted from or deleted from the target text. [30] In BBS4, the target text is 'Government High School' and the location of the school which is *Monou II* were omitted or deleted. In the English text on BBS9 that translates *conducteurs d'engins lourds*, this particular phrase of the source text is omitted in the target text. Also in the text, 'RIP to victims of Olembe Stadium', the translator compressed linguistic elements of the French word, *hommage* found in the source text into 'RIP' by abbreviating 'rest in peace'. Yet, RIP is not equivalent to French word *hommage* which can be translated into English as 'tribute' or 'homage'. This technique is applied to make the translation result more efficient even though the messages lose some information in the original texts.

**Borrowing/calque technique:** Borrowing or calque is the direct transfer or loaning of the source text into the target text without any alterations. In pure borrowing, the source text is purely loaned without any changes, but in natural borrowing, there is alteration. [32] In the corpus above, the translators used pure borrowing frequently because there is no equivalence found in the target text for the word. In some billboards, French lexical elements like *gagner*, *department* and *arrondissement*, were merely preserved without any modifications. In the context of this study, there was no explicit example of naturalized borrowing.

**Discursive Creation:** In trying to transfer into the target text by providing a temporary equivalence, [30] the translation went out of context. The words *gagner* (to win), *department* (Division) and *arrondissement* (Subdivision) that are maintained in English, demonstrated the use of the discursive creation translation technique. These words have different meanings in French as compared to English. However, the translator gave them temporary equivalence in the target texts. This confirms Biloa's [23] conclusion that Cameroon English is gradually being decultured due to the inclusion of French lexemes, acronyms, suffixes, and terms resulting from daily contact between French and English.

**Adaptation or substitution:** Here, many texts are altered to become relevant to a particular cultural setting. [32] The target text '*Department of Mfoundi: Arrondissement of Yaounde IV*' was adapted to fit the sociocultural and sociolinguistic setting of Cameroon where the French language towers above the English language in the public space. The same technique is also used for the translation *Cameroon est un et indivisible* as 'Cameroon is one and non-divided'. The English lexical term 'non-divided' is used to avoid literal translation which should have been 'indivisible'.

**Amplification:** Here, the details not found in the source language are introduced in the target language. [30] Some examples of amplification technique were identified in the selected bilingual billboard slogans like the introduction of the auxiliary verb 'is' in the phrase 'harbor of mask is compulsory' (BBS12). This verb did not exist in the source text. To attain grammatical acceptability, this verb made the sentence complete and the meaning was clearer.

**Transposition:** In this technique, there is switching of lexical items like verbs, nouns, and adjectives from one role

to another to clarify the meaning. [1] In other words, the parts of speech change their sequence when they are translated. The target text 'arrested carrying out the appointments' was converted from the noun 'order' into the active verb 'arrested'. At the end, the translation does not have the same value from the stylistic viewpoint, [24] but the meaning (semantics) of the translation has changed drastically.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper interrogated how translation techniques used on bilingual billboard slogans lead to linguistic deviation and how such deviations affect communication. The descriptive context analytic approach proved essential in achieving some insight into communication through bilingual billboard slogans. Analysing the diverse approaches for translating the French source text revealed the dominating linguistic deviations in both the source and the targeted texts that justified our sociolinguistic appraisal.

The study revealed that translation techniques like literal (33.3%), reduction (22.2%), adaptation (11.1%), borrowing (11.1%), discursive creation (11.1%), amplification (5.6%) and transposition (5.6%) were used. The literal technique may have been preferred in order to make the translated version of billboards more equivalent and acceptable for the target readers. There were significant shifts between French and English since they were linguistically, socially and culturally distinct. These translation techniques revealed linguistic deviations and sociolinguistic features used in communicating through bilingual billboards in Cameroon.

Linguistic deviation on billboards represents a continuum of text functions which inform, persuade, manipulate and influence the audience. The findings identified linguistic deviation at the level of graphology (38.5%), semantic (30.8%), grammar (23%), and lexicology (7.7%). Graphological deviation was prevalent through many slogans with the use of capitalization; semantic deviation included oddity and absurdity with a complete distortion of meaning; grammatical deviation was noticed at the confusion between adjectives and nouns, and misuse of verbs; while lexical deviation was found in the introduction of French words into English. This implies that phonological, dialectical, deviation of register and historical deviation were not found on the selected billboards.

This study is significant as linguistic deviation is a communication tool that grabs readers' attention, arouses their interest, and constructs their memory to trigger their action. The study can help billboard designers, translators and advertisers in developing attention, interest, desire and action. It can raise readers' sociolinguistic awareness and understanding of slogans used in Cameroon. Linguistic deviation is an effective communication means that enriches the text and achieves artistic merit. [1] As billboard slogans are manipulated to look persuasive and convincing, this paper uncovered linguistic deviation approaches and translation techniques affecting communication in Cameroon.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, constraints between

French and English systems demonstrate that most target texts were simplified by reducing the message of the original text to an extent that some texts seemed nonsensical and absurd. [3] Regarding the fifteen (15) selected billboards, linguistic deviations and translation techniques were influenced by sociocultural and sociolinguistic features that characterise Cameroon's linguistic landscape. Linguistic deviation is caused by poorly written texts, non-respect of the sociolinguistic rules and translation principles, and also outright carelessness on the part of the translators. [17]

The paper recommends that certified translators should be employed to translate billboards from French to English. It is necessary for the translator to pay close attention to sociolinguistic features on billboards. The translator's awareness of the source language and communication techniques do affect the quality of the final translation. Based on the findings, the literal technique can always be useful in the identification of linguistic deviations because any exclusion or omission of some words in the source texts may have negative effects on the grammatic function of the target text. The translator should be careful when creating new words (neologisms) so that they don't mar the naturalness of the translation.

## Authors' Contributions

Ita Nawom Itanghi conceived the title of the article, carried out the research, reviewed the literature, analyzed, and discussed the results. Victor Ngu Cheo and Atoh Julius Chenwi supervised the research, proofread, and edited the final manuscript of this paper.

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