

A critical look into the *Essential 18000 English-Cebuano Medical Words Dictionary*

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First of Three Parts

Surfing the net to check on resources for medical translation, I stumbled upon this 18000 English - Cebuano Medical Words Dictionary listed in Google books. The word *Dictionary* in its title is a misnomer; it is a glossary. Yet that lapse is nothing compared to its generally flawed contents. This is the impression gathered after going over some 400 entries of the glossary.

For the benefit of the medical translation industry, this publication is reviewed based on the three pitfalls cited in Rubrico, (2008)ⁱ, namely: (1) **lexical snags** caused by inappropriate word choice, incongruous English – Cebuano terms combinations in a phrase, and lexical category mismatch; (2) **syntactic anomaly** brought about by *slot correspondence glossing* (e.g., following the English syntax, which blocks the natural flow of language and causes ambiguity or confusion) and by *omission of integral markers and linkers* that renders a phrase or any given string awkward, if not ungrammatical; and, (3) **semantic issues** triggered by lexical snags, syntactic anomaly, and subcategorization issues.

This 3-part review corresponds to the aforementioned major pitfalls. This paper examines the lexical snags as cited in (1) above. Table 1 lists nine entries from the glossary showing the source texts, their translation into the Target Language (TL), and their respective Entry numbers. Discussion of each entry ensues.

Table 1. Lexical snags: Some entries showing inappropriate word choices and incongruous English – Cebuano pairing

	Source: English	Target : Cebuano	Entry
1.	<i>advanced breast cancer</i>	<i>abante nga breast kanser</i>	255
2.	<i>arrest before arrival</i>	<i>pagdakop sa atubangan sa pag-abot</i>	237
3.	<i>activity before exercise</i>	<i>kalihokan atubangan sa ehersisyo</i>	305
4.	<i>abdomen, gut</i>	<i>tiyan, kaisog</i>	287
5.	<i>arterial blood gases</i>	<i>arterial nga dugo gases</i>	331
6.	<i>abrasion , the wearing away of a substance or structure</i>	<i>abrasion, ang nagsul-ob sa usa ka bahandi o gambalay</i>	395
7.	<i>localized pocket of pus</i>	<i>localized bulsa sa pus</i>	403
8.	<i>arched-back nursing</i>	<i>arched-balik nursing</i>	358
9.	<i>a skinned knee</i>	<i>sa usa ka pinanitan tuhod</i>	395

1. The translation of *advanced* into *abante* in the phrase *advanced breast cancer (abante nga breast kanser)* is unusual in Cebuano. The term *abante* is not commonly used to refer to advanced stages of diseases; *abante* denotes moving forward. When used as an interjection, *Abante!* means *Go ahead! Proceed!*
2. The Cebuano word selected for the preposition *before* (prior to) is the noun *atubangan* (front; frontage; presence) which when marked by *sa* becomes an adverb of place *sa atubangan* (in front); the phrase *arrest before arrival* (i.e., prior to arrival) is glossed as *sa atubangan sa pag-abot* (Back Translation: *arrest in front of the arrival*) which does not capture the context of the source. Furthermore, there is a possibility that the *arrest* referred to here is not *the apprehension by legal authority*, as *pagdakop* denotes, but *stopping the spread of a disease or the sudden cessation of motion as cardiac arrest* (i.e., medical denotation).

3. On the other hand, the phrase *activity before exercise* is translated into *kalihokan atubangan sa ehersisyo*. The term *atubangan* here is not marked by *sa*, thus, a noun. The Back Translation (BT) then is *activity in the presence (or in front) of the exercise*, a semantically-odd phrase.
4. The term *gut* which refers to the abdomen is translated as *kaisog* (courage, valor); this translation is incorrect. Google, however, translates the term *gut* in the context of *courage, valor* which may have influenced the compiler (<https://translate.google.com/#en/ceb/gut>). An exploration into Cebuano dictionaries could have prevented this error.
5. Translation of the phrase *arterial blood gases* into *arterial nga dugo gases* is confusing. Attempt at BT would yield the following: Literal BT, *blood that is arterial* > Polished BT, *arterial blood*; the term *gases* lacks the obligatory linker or punctuation that would connect it to the rest of the words in the phrase. Although rendered as such by Google Translate, the translation fails to make any sense in Cebuano. (<https://translate.google.com/#en/ceb/arterial%20blood%20gases>)
6. This translation is also adopted from Google Translate, which puts together the gloss of individual words without considering context nuances. Below is the one-to-one correspondence of the terms. The BTs show the difference in meaning between the source and the target.

Source	abrasion,	the	<i>wearing away</i>	<i>of a substance</i>	<i>or structure</i>
FT: Target	<i>abrasion,</i>	<i>ang</i>	<i>nagsul-ob</i>	<i>sa usa ka bahandi</i>	<i>o gambalay</i>
Literal BT	abrasion,	the	wearing	of a treasure	or structure
Polished BT	abrasion, the one wearing a treasure or structure				

Note the following:

- (1) Phrasal verb *wearing away* (eroding) is rendered as *wearing* (e.g., wearing a dress);
- (2) Prepositional phrase *of a substance* (material, matter, element) is decoded as *of a treasure*;
- (3) The translation fails to convey the message of the source, as the BT shows.

Items 7 and 8 show some incongruous English - Cebuano terms combinations in the phrasal translation.

7. The gloss below shows an incongruous combination, *localized bursa sa pus*, which should not have been necessary as there are equivalent terms in the TL. The translation output is awkward, just like that of the unfamiliar *arched-back nursing* in Item 8.

Item 7	Source	localized	pocket	of pus
	FT: Target	<i>localized</i>	<i>bursa</i>	<i>sa pus</i>

8. The term *back* in the FT denotes a verb *coming/going back, return*; while that of the source refers to a part of the body, a noun. Word categories here do not match, and *arched – balik* is a translation failure.

Item 8	Source	arched – back	nursing
	FT: Target	<i>arched – balik</i>	<i>nursing</i>

9. There is a mismatch between the source text and the translation here.

Item 9	Source	a	skinned	knee
	FT: Target	<i>sa usa ka</i>	<i>pinanitan</i>	<i>tuhod</i>
		of a	skinned	knee

The term *pinanitan* denotes a deliberate removal of the skin or peel, as in *peeled mango – pinanitan nga manga*. Thus, *skinned* is translated in the context of *deliberate skinning* instead of the *unintended skinning* denoted by *abrasion* in the source.

Moreover, the context of the phrase is now different. The source, Noun Phrase (NP) *a skinned knee* becomes a Prepositional Phrase (PP) *of a skinned knee*. The NP to PP shift changes the meaning of the source.

Another snag here, as in some entries above, is the lack of the obligatory linker to connect *pinanitan* and *tuhod*. This is discussed in the second part, syntactic anomaly.

The nine entries presented illustrate the lexical snags which render the translation unacceptable: inappropriate word choice, incongruous English – Cebuano words combination, and lexical category mismatch.

ⁱ Rubrico, J. G. U. (2008, December). The Common Pitfalls of Medical Translations from English to Cebuano. Paper presented at the 10th Philippine Linguistic Congress, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City. Abstract accessible at: http://www.languagelinks.org/onlinepapers/translation_commonpitfalls.html

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