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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ERRORS IN TRANSLATION DIDACTICS: LEARNING IMPROVEMENT AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This article aims to shed light on the importance of errors in the field of translation didactics, since it has been widely recognized as an efficacious pedagogical instrument for teaching translation. In this context, we will emphasize the significance of errors in translation research as well as identify the various categories of these errors. Furthermore, we will explore their relevance in teaching criteria and evaluation, which this may help us understand the cognitive abilities of the student and develop a curriculum that addresses the educational challenges and difficulties of translation. To accomplish this, we conducted an experimental study involving fourth-year students in the Integrated Master Program at the Institute of Translation (Oran University) is undertaken, during the academic year 2022/2023.

Keywords: Didactics of Translation, Translation Errors, Teaching Criteria, Evaluation

Introduction

The challenges posed by translation are extensive, without mentioning the variety of difficulties, problems, and obstacles that professional translators constantly face. According to Jean Delisle (Eiben, 2015, p. 174), if it's hard to translate well, it's even harder to teach people how to translate properly. Certainly, what approach should be taken to introduce the broad field of translation to students who are new to this domain ?

Method

This study aims to present a comprehensive analysis of the frequent translation errors observed in guided activities. It is noteworthy that an applied study was carried out with fourth-year Master of Integrated Bachelor's degree Translation during the academic year 2022/2023 at the Translation Institute, University of Ahmed Ben Bella, Oran, under the supervision of Pr. Bendahou Nesrine. Our study does not incorporate the use of surveys or questionnaires, as depending solely on proposals or statistics may occasionally result in imprecision. In addition, we have conducted an analysis of the translation assignments submitted by these students, as well as taken note of important classroom debates that have captured our interest as instructors.

Similarly, since these are translation students, we haven't restricted ourselves to specific language combinations. While our courses primarily focus on translation between French and English or English and French, we also provide them with the opportunity to translate between Arabic and English, and vice versa. Therefore, the present study will use a diverse range of languages as illustrative examples, with a predominant focus on didactic concepts and principles rather than the choice of specific languages.

In this context, our objective is to enhance this analysis by incorporating concepts formulated by Pym related to the categorization of translation errors, the primary difficulties encountered in translation and its pedagogy as examined by Campbell, and the translation competencies that need to be developed, as suggested by Jean Delisle. The utilisation of these fundamental concepts can help the teacher-translator in constructing a proficient pedagogical approach for acquainting learners with the principles of translation.

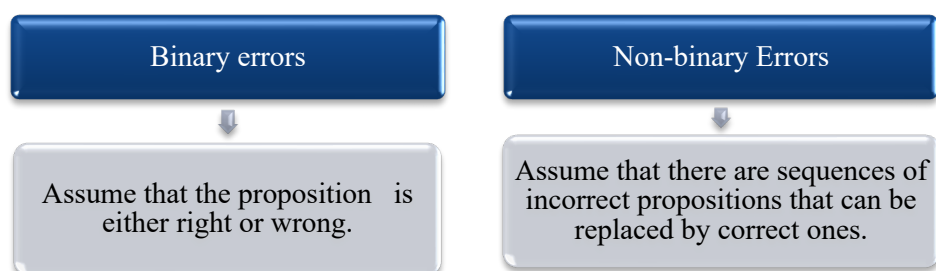
Findings

According to (Aissani, 2022, p. 489), it can be assumed that there are no [miracle] recipes in translation for the translator-teacher; the general principle remains respect for the meaning to be conveyed at different levels.

Moreover, it is necessary to consider the didactic of translation in a comprehensive manner, despite the specific genre of texts assigned to students (such as scientific, legal, technical, literary, etc.) or the intended objective of the translation.

Nevertheless, what criteria can the teacher-translator rely on evaluation? The consideration of text type is a crucial factor in the translation process, particularly in regard to the various levels of translation, including phonological, morphological, syntactical, phrasal, stylistic, textual, and cultural aspects. These criteria aid in the identification of error types and their respective levels of severity. Based on Pym's concept, we have determined it to be imperative to categorize the errors made by language learners into distinct sorts, namely binary errors and non-binary errors. The classification may be explained through the following figure:

Figure1: Pym's Classification of translation errors



Source: (Hatim, 2014: 180)

In summary, binary errors include "barbarisms, solecisms, incorrect occurrences, spelling and grammatical errors, and incorrect use of prepositions, which are language errors" Non-binary errors, on the other hand, refer to translation errors, such as the improper use of translation techniques such as "compensation, explicitation, modulation, and normalization, resulting in translation errors"(Benaissa, 2023, pp. 7–8).

Binary Errors

Below, we will present a set of errors that have been extracted from a range of translations performed by translation students. Subsequently, we will attempt to provide comments on these errors.

Literal Translation

Primarily, it is apparent that students possess a strong desire to engage in literal translation, specifically, to copy the target structure from the source structure. There are other causes that could be responsible for this phenomenon.

Source text	Student's translation
al-Dīmuqrāṭīyah al-barlamānīyah hiya aḥad Ashkāl al-tanzīm al-siyāsī allatī tataḍammanu wujūd Dawlat markazīyah qawīyah wttb'hā Muḥāfazāt aw wilāyāt	"Parliamentary democracy is one of the forms of political organization that means there is a powerful central state and it followed by provinces or states. "

In the given context, a grammatical error is observed in the target language as a result of an excessive focus on the source language, ignoring the appropriate structure in the target language.

The same principle applies to the following example:

Source text	Student's translation
al-Dīmuqrāṭīyah al-barlamānīyah hiya aḥad Ashkāl al-tanzīm al-siyāsī	Parliamentary democracy is one of the kinds of political organization... Instead of : One kinds of.....

The student's translation approach seems to be characterized by a mechanistic approach, wherein the process of translation is reduced to a simple transfer of words and structures between languages. Additionally, it appears

that occurrences of literal translation may arise as a result of the student's struggle to effectively restructure the expression in the target language. It can be deduced that the student, after making multiple tries, falls back again into the "calque" trap, as illustrated in this example:

Source text	Student's translation
She is a real go-getter.	Elle est une vraie obtenez-preneuse. Instead of : Elle est très dynamique.

In this sense, Campbell divides the process of the translator-learner into four levels (Campbell, 1998, p. 107):

- 1) The persistent and risk-taking student: free translation.
- 2) The student who gives in but still takes risks: resulting in an "unusual translation" or over-translation/adaptation...
- 3) The persistent but cautious student: almost word-for-word, for fear of "deviating" from the original meaning.
- 4) The student who gives in and is cautious at the same time: resulting in a purely literal translation, as can be seen in the following example:

Source text	Student's translation
Les grands criminels manœuvrent au grand jour.	Almjrmwn al-kibār ythrkwn fī al-yawm al-kabīr. It is better to say: Inna mḥtrfy al-ijrām Yas'ūn fī waḍaḥ al-Nahār.

Linguistic Interference:

Secondly, the phenomenon of literal translation can also lead to cases of interference, especially between English and French (false friends, spelling errors: civilisation and civilization, etc.)(Moloud, & Mohamed, 2023, p. 710).

Source text	Student's translation
Indira Gandhi was India's first female Prime Minister.	Indira Gandhi a été la première female, comme Ministre de l'Inde.

However, Pym argues that translation is not exclusively dependent on non-binary errors, just as binary errors are not exclusively limited to language training. The word "non-binarism" denotes a developmental period that beyond the fundamental or elementary stage of learning, during which students commence acquiring the processes and strategies of translation essential for transferring meaning between different languages.

Non-binary Errors:

These errors can also take various forms and may be due to several factors:

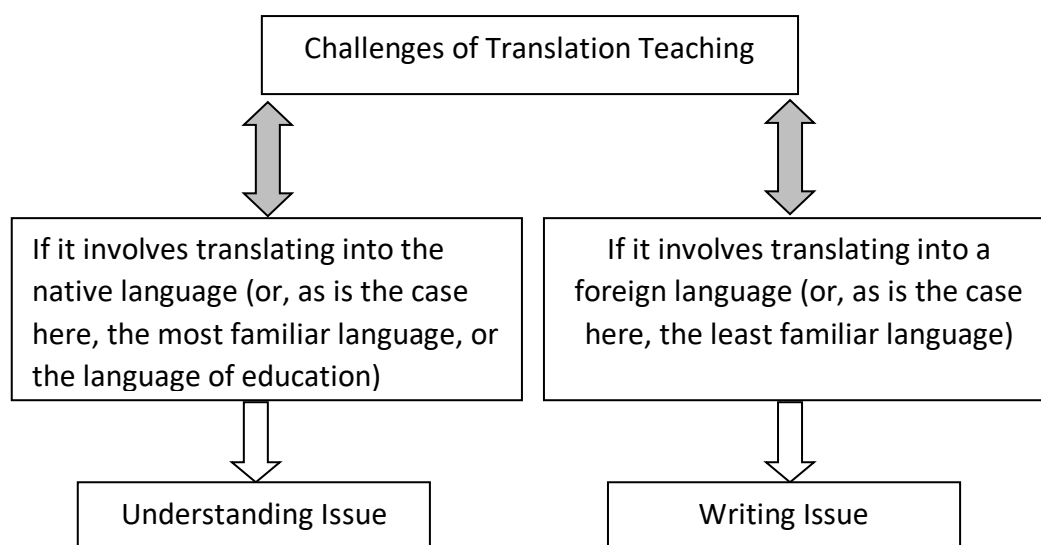
Change/Loss of Meaning:

This may be the result of a misunderstanding, a lack of comprehension, or a deficiency in the student's source language skills:

Source text	Student's translation
Climate change is one of the most important causes of environmental degradation and species loss.	Le changement climatique est la principale cause de la dégradation de l'environnement et de la perte de biodiversité. Taghayyur al-munākh huwa ahamm sabab fī ..tadahwur al-bī'ah wfqdān al-anwā'

Thus, we can summarize the nature of the challenge posed by translation teaching, according to Campbell(Hatim, 2014, p. 178), based on the following two axes:

Figure 2: Challenges of Translation Teaching according to CAMPBELL



Source: (Hatim, 2014, p. 178)

Confusing the word/term = Confusing the meaning:

A phenomenon that can be illustrated through the following examples:

Source text	Student's translation
Chaque jour, la presse nous informe des événements nationaux et internationaux, nous permettant ainsi de rester connectés au monde qui nous entoure."	Kull yawm, y'rfnā al-ḡagħṭ bi-al-aḥdāth al-Waṭaniyah wa-al-dawliyah, mim mā ymknnā min al-Baqā' 'alā Ittiṣāl ..ma'a al-'ālam min ḥwlnā

However, it is evident that this writing problem can also arise in the native language (which is supposed to be Arabic in the case of Algeria):

Source text	Student's translation
Climate change is one of the most important causes of environmental degradation and species loss.	al-Taghayyur al-munākhī wāḥid min asbāb tadahwur al-bī'ah wfqdān al-kā'ināt....

Addition or omission:

of elements that are either unnecessary or should be included. This includes, prepositions and other fixed expressions:

Source text	Student's translation
Instead of the pub, let's have a quiet night in with a movie.	Au lieu du pub, on passons une soirée tranquille à la maison avec un film. Instead of : Au lieu d'aller au pub, passons une soirée tranquille à la maison avec un film.

Neglecting the context:

which relates to the ability to choose the appropriate term based on the context:

Source text	Student's translation
New Orleans is considered the homeland of jazz music, where this distinctive musical genre first took root and flourished.	La Nouvelle-Orléans est considérée comme la terre natale de la musique jazz, où ce genre musical distinctif a pris racine et prospéré." Instead of : le berceau

Lack of cohesion:

which may be due to a focus on the source language as well as the student's failure to revise their translation(Vâlcea, 2022), as illustrated by the following example, which is a journalistic headline in the form of a question:

Source text	Student's translation
Is Climate Change Threatening Our Future?	Le changement climatique menace elle notre avenir ?

Nuance of meaning:

sometimes, the choice of one expression over another can result in meaning nuances that are not necessarily deliberate and are not always simple to convey to the student.

Source text	Student's translation
The tourist guide provided information about both the familiar landmarks and the non-familiar hidden gems of the city.	Le guide touristique fournissait des informations sur les monuments familiers ainsi que sur les trésors cachés non familiers de la ville.

Through repeated readings of the original passage, one can sense a certain loss of meaning in the translation. It would have been more accurate to translate it as: " Le guide touristique fournissait des informations sur les monuments familiers ainsi que sur les trésors cachés moins connus de la ville. "

One of the other challenges that the teacher-translator must constantly face, and by far the most delicate, is how to make the student understand that translation is neither a synthesis nor a paraphrase of the original text/idea.. "But then, you might ask, doesn't this lead back to the trap of literal translation?" It's in this sense that I echo the words of (Cotelli, 2008, p. 15) "... without being literal, translation must faithfully reflect the source text."

Over-translation

This is due to over interpretation or personalized explanation of the original message:

Source text	Student's translation
.Kānat al-nisā' ytgāmzn	Les femmes se faisaient des gestes avec les yeux. Instead of : les femmes se lançaient des œillades .

According to Pym's classification, it can be difficult to distinguish between a language error and a translation error. In fact, literal translation can also result from a student's inability to comprehend translation mechanisms, such as:

Reformulation

Source text	Student's translation
Indira Gandhi was India's first female Prime Minister.	Indira Gandhi était la première Premier Ministre femelle.

Instead of detaching from the source structure and simply reformulating the idea in the target language as "la première femme premier Ministre..."

Equivalence

Source text	Student's translation
Expliquez-moi pourquoi vous avez pris cette décision ; il doit y avoir mille et une raisons.	Explain to me why you made this decision; there must be a thousand and one reasons."

The student in this case is unaware that there is an equivalent in the target language to convey the same meaning: "there must be more than one reason."

Omission: or repetition of what should not be repeated.

Source text	Student's translation
Tamalluk mustawá ta'limī a'lá min al-ākharīn, mimmā smḥ la-hā btfwqhā fī majālāt mutanawwi'ah, ".mžhrh mustawá astthnā'y min al-Khibrah h	She has a high educational level than the level of others which allowed her to excel in various fields, demonstrating a remarkable level of expertise."

Some solutions and teaching criteria

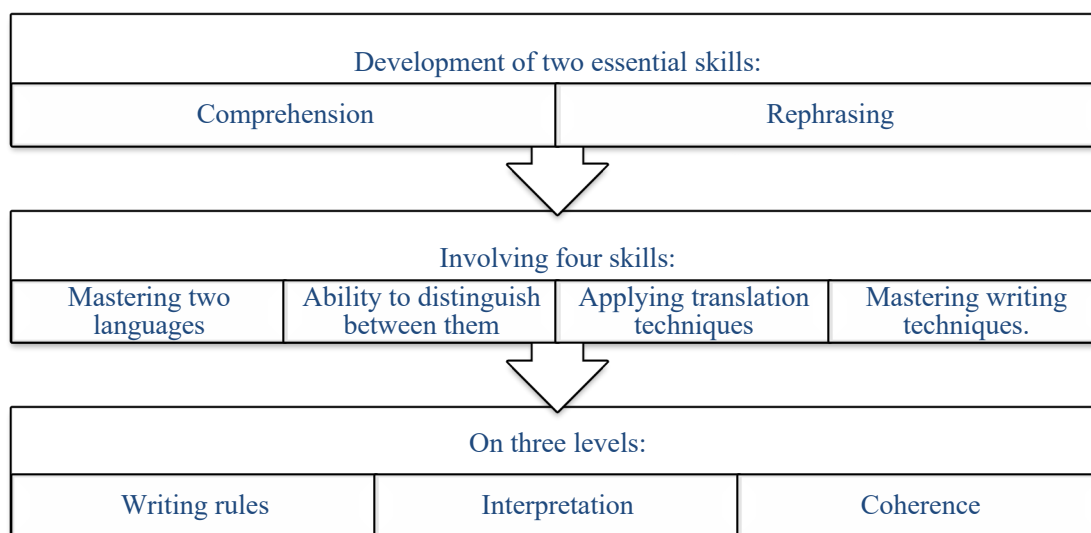
Based on the identified errors, an attempt has been made to create a set of criteria aimed at improving the teaching methods of translation and addressing the associated obstacles and challenges. In the field of translation didactics, the concepts of Pym, Delisle, and Campbell have been cited. For each error, we have assigned a criterion that would be useful to consider.

-Criterion 1: The student must comprehend that translation is not merely a linguistic operation, but rather "an interpretative process that involves grasping the articulations of thought in a discourse in order to reformulate them in another language" (Delisle, 2005, p. 175). It cannot be an exact science; the translator-learner must be aware that different translations of the same source text are possible. Although it is true that translation can always be improved, a translator cannot "get lost in endless revisions" (Pan, 1977, p. 40).

-Criterion 2: The teaching translator should also seek to develop in the learner an understanding of the fundamental principles of "translation choices." Furthermore, it is crucial to develop in the student the ability to engage in discourse analysis and construct meaning, which depends upon numerous linguistic and extralinguistic factors

-Criterion 3: Since translation is not an exact science, it is important to contribute to the acquisition of "translation competence," to borrow Pym's notion. A key directive that we have attempted to reproduce through the diagram below, based on the model favored by (Delisle, 2005, pp. 36–37) .

Figure 3: Schema of Concept of "translation competence" as defined by Delisle



Source: (Delisle, 2005, pp. 36–37)

As for Roda, he defines translation skills as follows: linguistic, translational, methodological, disciplinary, and finally technical. (Daeyoung, 2013, p. 39).

–Criterion 4: It is imperative to ensure that the pedagogical approach is focused on specific learning objectives, a concept that Delisle has emphasized. These objectives should be aligned with the nature of the program and the student's expectations.

–Criterion 5: According to Liping Bai(2022, pp. 112–114), the development of pedagogical programs should consider student motivation. This can be achieved by selecting engaging texts and fostering idea exchange, problem-solving, and justification among students.

–Criterion 6: The initial presentation of fundamental definitions related to translation and "metalanguage," based on Delisle's conceptual framework. These can be effectively conveyed through the use of visual aids such as diagrams, tables, or other graphical representations.

–Criterion 7: Understanding theories, even to a limited extent due to time constraints, can increase students' confidence by demonstrating that the obstacles they face are the subject of ongoing research. Some of the most commonly used and pertinent translation theories in pedagogy, according to (Marchand, 2011), include:

1. The Comparative/Contrastive Approach (Vinay and Darbelnet) :Explaining language differences and peculiarities.

2. The Interpretative Theory (Seleskovitch and Lederer): Addressing difficulties related to meaning on three levels: comprehension, de-verbalization, and re-expression.

3. The Functional Theory (Reiss and Vermeer): Dealing with difficulties related to text type and its purpose.

For instance, if we consider the comparative approach, it allows us to justify that a noun in French (which is a language with a nominal tendency) doesn't necessarily have to be translated as a noun in English (which is a language with a verbal tendency), a concept known as "transposition." Example: - Le début de la reunion The meeting starts.

–Criterion 8: Finally, it is imperative to emphasise the importance of applying an evaluation system that aligns with the course objectives and its inherent characteristics. This evaluation system can be categorised into three primary stages, as proposed by (Allignol, 2007, p. 257): "Diagnostic evaluation of a task assigned at the beginning of the semester to all students will allow the teacher, who does not yet know them, to get an idea of their starting level, in order to give them practical advice to guide their work. Then, through formative evaluation of work done during the semester, learners can acquire reference points, direct their efforts, adapt to the teaching, assess their progress, etc. Finally, at the end of the semester, summative evaluation allows students to know whether they have acquired the skills defined and announced as required for the level considered."

Discussion - Conclusions

This study, which attempts to be as comprehensive as possible, seeks to identify the various errors made by translation students. Clearly, teaching translation is a delicate balance that the teacher-translator has to develop in the student, although with the student's participation. Similar to swimming or riding a bicycle, there are no specific instructions that guarantee preserving this balance. As Jean Delisle describes it, the didactics of translation is like "a road map that doesn't tell you where to go, but lays out the possibilities" (Delisle, 2005, p. 177). We can

therefore attribute these difficulties primarily to linguistic deficiencies, whether in the native or foreign language, which cause the student to rely on the source structure unconsciously. This leads to a lack of expertise and abilities in translation techniques.

In the midst of navigating these challenges, it's important to acknowledge that "a stronger academic background might not necessarily lead to better teaching effectiveness" (CHAN, 2018, p. 51). However, it is essential to raise students' awareness by employing a method of instruction that adapts to their levels and expectations. This includes the immediate application of various teaching strategies and theories, illustrated and supported by appropriate materials. In addition, suggesting a "reference" translation for the student to analyze can help them become aware of their errors, whether linguistically or methodologically, allowing them to develop the skills necessary for the art of translation.

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