Detecting Mistranslations Based on Logical Judgement: The Case of English-Kurdish Translation Test at the University Level*

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Abstract

This paper explores the possibility of detecting mistranslations based on logical judgement. The paper examines translations carried out from English into Kurdish by translation trainees at the university level. The importance of this method of translation assessment is that the target text (TT) alone is sufficient for the purpose of identifying mistranslations based on logical judgement, without any reference to the source text (ST). The logical judgement can be based on an established fact, general knowledge or common sense. This model of translation assessment is particularly important in translation settings where the process of translation revision is carried out on the translation product alone due to time constraints, such as in the case of journalistic translation. The model can be crucial for translation students and translation examiners alike. On the one hand, it will help translation students to avoid mistranslations that run against logic. On the other hand, it will help translation examiners to detect such mistranslations if and when they occur in an actual translation.

Keywords: translation test, translation assessment, mistranslation, logical judgement, English-Kurdish translation, journalistic translation.

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A. I. INTRODUCTION

Translation quality assessment (TQA) is an essential part of translation and has attracted the attention of many translation scholars (e.g. Williams 1989; House 1997/2015; Nord 1997; Lauscher 2000; Colina 2003). One of the most detailed models of translation evaluation is Translation Quality Assessment proposed by Julian House (1997/2015). The model involves a comparative analysis of TT-ST pairs at three comprehensive dimensions, namely: language/text, register (field, tenor and mode) and genre. The method is a descriptive one and "the nature of the model is very complicated with complex terminology" (Rasul 2015, p. 71). Therefore, it is practically difficult to put the model into practice; "The more detailed a

system is, the more difficult it is to apply, and to achieve intersubjective reliability" (Rothe-Neves 2002, p. 116).

Translation assessment is traditionally carried out by a critical analysis of ST-TT pairs, typically looking for mismatches that might have occurred in the translation process. Two major methods of translation assessment can be distinguished:

> (1) 'error analysis method', which "[takes] into account the negative effect of errors on the overall quality of the translations"; and,

> (2) 'holistic method' which is "unitary and treats the translation competence as a whole".

> (Waddington 2001, p. 314)

In this paper, which focuses on error analysis, we shall argue that, based on logical judgement, some mistranslations can be detected via checking the translation product alone. Such mistranslations seem to be particularly common in translations produced by translation students while in the process of training to develop their translation skills.

B. II. MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of the present paper, authentic material is used, which is based on students' translation works produced as part of their translation exam. The exam is carried out in the Department of English at the University of Human Development (UHD), in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Department offers a four-year BA degree, which consists of English language and literature as well as translation. The translation module is studied in the 3rd and 4th years and includes both the theory and application of translation, specifically between English and Kurdish. Throughout the year, students typically take three exams: end-of-first-semester exam, end-of-second-semester exam and the final exam. Graduates of the Department mostly end up being English teachers or translators, especially in the field of media. Thus, the translation module is studied as 'translation pedagogy', i.e. "translation skills being the longer term goal" (Aranda 2013,p.9).

This research is based on exams taken in the 2015-2016 academic year. The exams consist of translation theory and translation practice, with this paper being based on the practice section of the exam. Overall, five different journalistic texts were used, the details of which are given in Table 1 below. The exam was taken under a time limit of one hour for the translation of a fairly short news report. For the purpose of ethical issues, consent has been taken from the participating students.

Headline	Media agency
Iraq's Kurdistan plans to supply gas to Turkey by the end of 2016	Sputnik News
Turks and Kurds clash in Japan over Turkey elections	Aljazeera
Canadian forces help Peshmerga repel ISIS attack	CBC News
Peshmerga foil 9 car bombs on northern Mosul front	Rudaw
Kurdish family fleeing Syria stuck in Moscow airport for over 50 days	CNN

Table 1: Headlines of the news reports along with their respective media outlets.

As is obvious, all the journalistic texts are directly related to Kurdish politics, and four out of the five texts were published by foreign media. The rationale behind choosing such texts for the test is that students will be very likely to translate Kurdish-related texts, should they choose to become journalist-translators after graduation. This is so because Kurdish media is particularly interested in translating foreign reports about Kurdish socio-political and economic issues: "There is the belief among some Kurdish commentators that reports from the outside world have greater authority and impact than home grown produce" (Hogan and Trumpbour 2013, p. 49).

C. III. TRANSLATION ASSESSMENT AND MISTRANSLATIONS

Translation assessment or evaluation is an essential element in teaching translation. Gonzalez Davies (2004, p. 31) believes that "[e]valuation is always a tricky matter in which subjectivity plays an important part". He (ibid.), therefore, raises the need for more research in the area. According to him, in a university context, the purpose of translation evaluation is twofold:

(1)   to orient students as to how they are performing at each stage (pedagogical assessment);

(2)   to prepare for official accreditation or professional translator standards (professional standards).

(Gonzalez Davies 2004, p. 31)

In translation assessment, detecting mistranslations (or 'translation errors') is of pivotal importance. However, "[the] perception of what constitutes a translation 'error' varies according to translation theories and norms" (Hansen 2010, p. 385). Delisle et al. (1999, p. 189) refer to translation error as "any fault occurring in the target text, ascribable either to ignorance or to inadequate application of translation principles, rules, or procedures, which result from either the misinterpretation of a source text segment or methodological error". This definition is very much related to the idea of detecting mistranslations based on logical judgement. For the purpose of this paper, we shall define 'mistranslation' as any translation mistakes that can be ascribed to a lack of general knowledge on the part of the translator and that which result from the misunderstanding or misinterpretation of an SL term or utterance.

Translation examiners usually look for mistranslations through observing the ST-TT pair comparatively, which is undoubtedly "a difficult and time consuming task" (Popović 2011, p. 59). In this paper, we shall argue that there are also mistranslations that can be detected within the TT which can be explained by logical judgement. It is crucial to point out,

from the outset, that 'logic' is a multi-faceted concept. According to Kilwardby, "the subject of logic is reasoning and its end is the investigation of truth" (quoted in Kretzmann and Stump 1988, p. 262). Likewise, 'logic' is defined in Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2011, p. 838) as "reasoning conducted or assessed according to strict principles of validity'. In other words, if a statement or an utterance is perceived to be valid, it can be then considered logical, and vice versa. In this study, we shall specifically refer to the term 'logical judgement' as a conclusion that can be justified by an established fact or general knowledge of the world or common sense.

D. IV. ANALYSIS OF MISTRANSLATIONS BASED ON LOGICAL JUDGEMENT

As explained above, mistranslations based on logical judgement are translation errors that can be observed within the TT alone based on an established fact or general knowledge or common sense. It is first crucial to distinguish between mistranslations that can be detected by logical judgement and those which cannot be detected based on such judgement. The former refer to those translation errors that sound odd and thus raise questions of validity. The latter, on the other hand, refer to those translation errors that do not sound odd and thus do not raise questions of validity.

Let us first exemplify mistranslations that cannot be detected by logical judgement. Consider, for instance, the following extract, in which *CBC News* is translated as بی بی سی نیوز ['BBC News']. Since these are two totally different media agencies, the mismatch is obviously a mistranslation. However, one is highly unlikely to detect such a mistranslation unless checking the translation product against its ST. (For ease of understanding, the English ST extract is followed by its Kurdish translation, which is followed by its back-translation in square brackets.)

(1) "The Peshmerga came under effective fire and our soldiers were close enough and able to respond with fire on those ISIS positions," Canadian commander Charles Lamarre told **CBC News**.

فەرماندەی کەنەدی چارلس لامار بە **بی بی سی نیوزی** راگەیاند: "پێشمەرگە کەوتنە بەرهێزرشی کاریگەر و سەربازەکانیشمان ئەوەندە نزیک بوون بتوانن بەچەك وەڵامی ئەو پێگانەی داعش بدەنەوە".

[*'Canadian commander Charles Lamarre told **BBC News**: "The Peshmerga came under effective fire and our soldiers were close enough and able to respond with fire on those ISIS positions."'*]

However, mistranslations that can be detected by logical judgement can be easily observed within the translation product alone; they run against reason or common sense – and that is what this paper aims to postulate. To demonstrate the postulation, we shall refer to a representative set of mistranslations occurred in the collected data:

(2) **Iraq's KRG Minister of Natural Resources Ashti Hawrami** said in November that the region planned to export 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Turkey over the next two years.

ناشتی هەورامی وەزیری سامانه سروشتیەکانی عێراق له تشرینی یەکەم راگەیاند که هەرێم بەرنامەرێژی کردووه ۱۰ بلیۆن مەتر سێجا گازی سروشتی هاناردەی تورکیا بکات له ماوەی دوو ساڵی داهاتوودا.

[*'**Ashti Hawrami, Iraq's Minister of Natural Resources,** announced in November that the region planned to export 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Turkey within the next two years.'*]

The established fact here is that Ashti Hawrami is not *Iraq's Minister of Natural Resources*, but is actually Minister of Natural Resources of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Referring to Ashti Hawrami, in the translation, as وەزیری سامانه سروشتیەکانی عێراق ['Iraq's Minister of Natural Resources'] is obviously a mistranslation as it changes reality. The mistranslation can be detected by general knowledge. It can be argued that the student simply missed the term *KRG* in the translation, i.e. an instance of omission has occurred. Yet, omissions that result in the change of reality can be deemed mistranslations. Delisle et al. (1999, p. 165), for example, define *omission* as "a translation error where the translator fails to render a necessary element of information from the source text in the target text".

(3) About 3,600 Turkish nationals reside in Japan, according to **the country**'s foreign ministry.

بەگوێرەی وەزارەتی دەرەوەی **پاریزگاکه**، نزیکەی ۳٦۰۰ هاونیشتیمانی تورکیا نیشتەجێی یابان.

[*'According to the **county**'s Foreign Ministry, about 3,600 Turkish nationals reside in Japan.'*]

The established fact here is that a *country* or a *state* has a Foreign Ministry whereas a *county* does not. The utterance وەزارەتی دەرەوەی **پاریزگاکه** ['The **county**'s Foreign Ministry'] soon raises the question of validity, i.e. whether it is possible for a county to have a Foreign Ministry. It seems that the

student has mistaken *country* for *county*, most probably due to spelling confusion. Whatever the reason for this confusion is, the result is a mistranslation that can be detected by logical judgement, specifically based on general knowledge of the world.

(4) The election, to be held in Turkey on November 1, comes at a time of escalating violence in **the country's mainly Kurdish southeast**, despite a ceasefire after three decades of instability that has caused the death of tens of thousands of people.

هەڵبژاردنەکە، که بریار وایه ١ی نۆڤەمبەر له تورکیا بەرێوەبچێت، لەکاتێکدایه که ئاستی توندوتیژییەکان له هەڵکشاندایه له **باشووری کوردستان،** سەرەرای ئاگربەست دوای سئ دەیه له نائارامی که بووەته هۆی گیان لەدەستدانی دەیان هەزار کەس.

[*'The election, to be held in Turkey on November 1, comes at a time that the violences are escalating in **southern Kurdistan,** despite a ceasefire after three decades of instability that has caused the death of tens of thousands of people.'*]

Since this is a news report about Turkey, one immediately wonders what the relationship is between Turkish elections and southern Kurdistan, keeping in mind that southern Kurdistan is located in northern Iraq and not in Turkey. So, based on logic judgement, specifically general knowledge, the examiner can easily detect the mistranslation that the source text talks about 'the Kurdish area in the southeast of Turkey' and not 'southern Kurdistan'.

(5) Six Peshmerga soldiers were killed when their base near **Kaske**, west of Mosul, was attacked by ISIS suicide bombers.

شەش پێشمەرگە کوژران کاتێک بنکەکەیان له نزیک **حەسەکه** له رۆژئاوای موسڵ کەوته بەر هێرشی خۆکوژانی داعش.

[*'Six Peshmergas were killed when their base near **Hasaka** in the west of Mosul was attacked by ISIS suicide bombers.'*]

According to the translation, *Hasaka* locates west of Mosul (northern Iraq), where the Peshamarga forces are based. But, as a geographical fact, *Hasaka* is located in the Kurdish region of Syria. The student's lack of geographical knowledge of different Kurdish areas seems to have caused the mistranslation. On the other hand, the examiner's knowledge in this respect is crucial to detect the mistranslation without referring to the ST.

(6) According to Hansi, currently the **reserves** in the region are estimated at nearly 45 billion cubic meters.

بەگوێرەی هانسی، له ئێستادا بری **نەوتی نیحتیات** له هەرێمەکه به نزیکەی ٤٥ بلیۆن مەتر سێجا دەخەمڵێنرێت.

[*'According to Hansi, currently the **oil reserves** in the region are estimated at nearly 45 billion cubic meters.'*]

In the example above, the term *reserves* is translated into Kurdish as نەوتی ئیحتیات ['oil reserves']. Thus, it is rendered by *explicitation*, which is "the technique of making explicit in the target text information that is implicit in the source text" (Klaudy 2009, p. 104). But the term *reserves* can also be rendered as گازی ئیحتیات ['gas reserves'], depending on the context. In the extract above, logic judgement tells us that the correct translation is the second option - *gas reserves* - because it is gas that is measured by cubic meter. So, translating *reserves* as نەوتی ئیحتیات ['oil reserves'] is a mistranslation that can be detected by general knowledge.

(7) **A Kurdish man whose shirt had been torn off** told the media outlet: "I was attacked by Turks all of a sudden while I was in a car with my friends."

پیاوێکی کورد که کراسەکەی هەڵگەرابووەوه به دەزگا میدیاییەکەی راگەیاند: "لەناکاو لەلایەن تورکەکانەوه هێرشم کرای سەر له کاتێکدا لەگەڵ هاوڕێکانم له ئۆتۆمبێلێکدابووم".

[*'**A Kurdish man whose shirt was turned inside out** told the media outlet: "Suddenly, I was attacked by the Turks while I was in a car with my friends."'*]

Here, the description provided in the translation پیاوێکی کورد که کراسەکەی هەڵگەرابووەوه ['A Kurdish man whose shirt was turned inside out'] immediately raises a red flag. When weaving a news story, journalists rely on a set of techniques including "relevant description", i.e. a description that projects the content of the news (Berner 2009, p. xi). In the given example, describing the interviewee as *someone whose shirt was turned inside out* seems absolutely irrelevant and pointless. It is at this point where the examiner feels suspicious about the validity of the translation of the utterance. The examiner would then be urged to check the translation against its ST to find that in the ST the interviewee is actually described as *someone whose shirt is torn off*. It is noteworthy that the actual description in the ST is highly relevant to the news story; it projects the scale of the clashes between the Turks and the Kurds over the Turkish elections, which is the subject matter of the news report.

(8) A Kurdish family that fled the Syrian civil war want to settle in Russia, but the government says their visas are fake. **<u>Returning home is out of the question</u>** because of the dangers there.

خێزانێکی کورد که به هۆی جەنگی ناوخۆی سوریاوه هەڵاتوون دەیانەوێت له ڕووسیا نیشتەجێ بن بەڵام حکومەت دەڵێ ڤیزاکانیان ساختەن. **بۆیه به بێ پرسیار کردن دەبێت بگەڕێنەوه بۆ وولاتی خۆیان**، بەهۆی مەترسیەکانی ئەوێ.

[*'A Kurdish family that fled the Syrian civil war want to settle in Russia, but the government says their visas are fake. **So they should unquestionably return to their country**, because of the dangers there.'*]

In this example, the utterance به بێ پرسیارکردن دەبێت بگەڕێنەوه بۆ وولاتی خۆیان ['they should unquestionably return to their country'] rather implies that it is inevitable that the family have to return to their home country. However, this contradicts the proceeding utterance - 'because of the dangers there'. It is logically impossible to claim that 'a refugee family inevitably have to return to their home country because of dangers there'. Here, the mistranslation can be ascribed to the translator's misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the idiom 'out of the question'. It is true that the idiom does not have an idiom counterpart in Kurdish that has the same meaning and form, but it could be well translated by sense as مەحاڵه.

V. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

We have demonstrated above how some mistranslations can be detected based on logical judgement even without referring to the ST. Such mistranslations run against an established fact or can be justified by general knowledge of the world or common sense. This reiterates the important fact that "general knowledge leads to vigilance that can help translators avoid pitfalls" (Collombat 2006, p. 63). This model of assessment can be of potential benefit for translation examiners as well as translation students; it will help translation examiners to detect such mistranslations that may occur in an actual translation and will help raise translation students' awareness of mistranslations that run against logic.

The simplicity of some of the mistranslations analyzed above may bring into question the students' level of general knowledge and education. The truth is that students at UHD, possibly as in any other university, have different levels of language capacity as well as general knowledge. Furthermore, the exam is taken under time limitation, which is likely to have contributed to some of the mistranslations and inaccuracies occurred in the translation products. The timing is set in a way that reflects translation practice in real life.

Interviewing journalist-translators, Rasul (2015, p. 239) concludes that translation in the Kurdish media is constrained by time limitations, amongst several other factors.

This is not to claim that the model suggested is a radical technique to eliminate all sorts of mistranslations - it is essentially a model to eliminate some mistranslations, specifically those mistranslations that can be detected by logical judgement. Readers with a good level of general knowledge of the world can recognize mistranslations of this nature when reading the translation product. This will definitely raise questions with regard to the quality of the translation. Therefore, translators should be on the alert to avoid such mistranslations. Likewise, translation revisers should take into consideration logical factors when revising a translation product. The model is particularly important in settings where the process of translation revision is carried out on the translation product alone due to time constraints, such as in media or journalistic translation. In the Kurdish media, for instance, in 2 out of 12 media outlets, translations are revised by the editor, who carries out the revision on the translation product alone and does not necessarily have translation skills (Rasul 2015, p. 239).

Last but by no means least, this model of mistranslation detection can be effectively applied to any other language pairs. Mistranslations that run against logic are likely to occur in translations carried out between any two languages, especially mistranslations that originate from student's lack of general knowledge of the world.

VI. CONCLUSION

Traditionally, translation assessment is carried out by a comparative analysis of an ST-TT pair to identify mistranslations. However, this paper demonstrates that, based on logical judgement, some mistranslations (specifically those that run against logic, an established fact and/or general knowledge of the world) can be identified by checking the translation product alone. Such mistranslations are more common in translation works produced by translation students, who are still in the process of improving their translation skills side by side widening their general knowledge, as reflected in translation works produced by students at UHD as part of their translation exam.

As far as translation training is concerned, the model can be useful to translation examiners/trainers as well as translation students/trainees. On the one hand, the model will help

examiners/trainers develop necessary skills to detect logically unacceptable mistranslations in students' translation products. On the other hand, it will help translation students/trainees develop an awareness to avoid such mistranslations. In translation practice, the model can be particularly important in settings such as journalistic translation, where the translation revision/assessment is often carried out on the translation product alone due to time limitations.

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