

AN INVESTIGATION OF ERRORS IN THE TRANSLATIONS OF ESL STUDENTS AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVELFarah Deeba¹, Dr. Shaukat Ali², Zaheer Ullah^{*3}**Original Article**

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Abstract

Translation Studies is one of the emerging disciplines in linguistics. It has become need of the hour in this globalized world, as it caters for the transfer of knowledge from one language to another. The current study aimed to investigate the errors committed by learners in their translation from Urdu into English at undergraduate level. The researchers selected 30 students of 7th semester for the study as a sample of the whole population. The respondents were selected through convenient sampling procedure, as the respondents were easily accessible to the researchers. The selected students translated from Urdu into English; three translated texts were obtained from each student, so as whole there were 90 versions of the texts. After the data collection, Corder (1967) error analysis model was employed for the identification of the errors. Then, the collected data was analyzed statistically to obtain the results. Corder's Model of error analysis focuses on the identification of error, description of error, explanation of error and quantification of error. It was found that the learners made four types of errors; syntactic errors, semantic errors, pragmatic errors and translation specific errors. It is inferred that the learners must be conscious of the above-mentioned errors while translating from Urdu into English language.

Keywords: Error Analysis, Syntactic Error, Semantic Error, Pragmatic Error, Translation Specific Error.

Introduction

English is the Lingua Franca of the world. Its importance is manifold in modern world, since it has become not only the language of technology but also research and academia. It is one of the rich languages in terms of knowledge and research. In order to develop, many countries of the world have translated texts from English into their national and regional languages. With the emergence of technology, translation is very crucial for today's learners. Translation is a process of changing an original text from one language into another. "The ability to translate well is not a naturally acquired skill; it is learned as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments" (Ardeshiri, Zarafshan, & Education, 2014). The term translation itself is described as a process of changing an original text in the original language into a different language by the translator (Munday, 2008).

Nowadays, the role of translation is important, as we come across many different languages every day online and offline. It is essential to interact with people and share information

across the languages. Translation has become an important study in this world. It is not only needed in the area of education but also for daily interaction and communication purposes. Since with the overwhelming of technology, the role of translation also develops in almost every aspect of human's life. Apart from this, it also serves as connection between two languages and two cultures (Abu-Mahfuz, 2008). Doing translation is not an easy task; it is a combination of skill and art. However, there are many translators which make some errors in translating a text. The successful translation requires not only adequate possession of linguistic knowledge of both the source and target languages, but also the rules of language and linguistics.

Literature Review

Translation Studies and error analysis are inseparable from each other, as translators need to maintain accuracy in their translated text (Mahmoodi, 2007, Panou, 2013 & Popescu, 2013). To properly understand the error, it should be distinguished from mistake. To distinguish between an error and mistake, Ellis (1997) suggests two ways. The first one is to check the consistency of learner's performance. If he sometimes uses the correct form and sometimes, the wrong one, it is a mistake. However, if he always uses it incorrectly, it is then an error. The second way is to ask learner to try to correct his own deviant utterance. Where he is unable to, the deviations are errors; where he is successful, they are mistakes.

There are various types of translation error experienced by the translators. Among them, Popescu (2013) mentions that there are three main kinds of error; they are linguistic error, comprehension error, and translation error (Cúc, 2018). Linguistic errors involve morphological, syntactical and collocation errors. Comprehension errors include misinterpretation of syntax. Translation errors are related to deforming meaning of lexical items. The lack of knowledge in structure, pronunciation and vocabulary of both the source and target language results in further types of errors in translations. Theoretically, this research is linked with the error analysis theory of translation studies. Error has different kinds and manifestations. There are various theories and definitions for the error analysis classification. Nord (1997) classifies error analysis into four categories such as pragmatics, cultural, linguistics, and text specific. Pragmatic errors stem from the source text ambiguities. Cultural errors belong to the mismatch between the source language and target language in terms of culture (Nord, 1997, p.75). Linguistic errors involve morphological, syntactical and collocation errors and text-specific are the failure when there is no suitability of the translated text to the target audience (Muhammad, Khan & Ullah, 2022, Nord, 1997). The findings of the study are based on the data collected from students enrolled in the department of English, University of Malakand. It is a public sector university located in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It offers degree programs in thirty disciplines. The students of English department are selected for the study based on the convenience of the researchers. Other reasons include their wide exposure to English language courses, grammar and linguistics. During the study, the researchers designed writing activities in which the students were involved randomly. During the activities, they were asked to write and to translate passages and were checked to find out the expected errors.

Statement of the Problem

In translation studies, equivalence is the central issue for translators. Expert translators always try to maintain the equivalent effect in the target and source language. This research study investigated the errors committed by undergraduate students in their translated texts. The research is mainly concerned with the errors occurred in the translations of Undergraduate students. To properly investigate the errors of the students in their translation is a central problem

in translation studies. So, this research is an attempt to find out the major errors of undergraduate students in their translations from English to Urdu text.

Research Objectives

- To investigate the problems faced by the students while translating text from Urdu into English.
- To identify the types of errors made by the students during translation exercises.

Research Questions

- What are the problems faced by the students while translating texts from Urdu into English?
- What are the major types of errors committed by the students in translation from Urdu into English?

Research Methodology

In this study, the researchers employed quantitative research methodology. Purposively, the researchers collected written-samples from 30 students of 7th semester of the department of English, as they were more valid respondents for the data collection. Only the 7th semester students were selected because of the relevancy of the participants to the study of translation. They were taught translation studies as major subject in the seventh semester. The students' age ranged from 21 years to 25. The researchers obtained the data from classroom assignments and translation tasks, as the concerned teacher was consulted in anticipation to conduct the study. Before the data collection, consent of the students was taken that the assignments would only be used for research purposes and would be kept confidential. From each student three written assignments were obtained, so all together the 90 written texts were collected. The transcribed texts were translated from Urdu to English. So, the errors made by the students were easily identified. Then, collected data was analyzed and errors were highlighted.

Data Analysis

The obtained data were analyzed through using error analysis model presented by Keshavar (1999). He categorized errors into six different types of errors. Descriptive statistic was used for the analysis of the collected data. Further, in descriptive statistics the data was analyzed through simple frequencies and percentages and the analyzed data has been summarized in tabular form. The results showed the different types of errors; frequency and percentage. After that, the researcher interpreted the obtained results and inferred the reasons of making such errors.

Results

Table.1: Error Types with Examples.

Type of Error	Example	Occurrence
Syntactic Errors	*The information were conveyed... The information was conveyed...	42(21)
Semantic Errors		78(39)
Pragmatic Errors	* She said to bring water for... She requested for water...	34(17)
Translation Errors	Specific *They have learned the thing which was very.... They have realized the intensity...	46(23)
Total		200(100)

❖ Figures outside the Parenthesis Represents Frequency and within the Parenthesis represent Percentage

In the table.1, the most common types of errors are given with relevant examples and its occurrences from the translated texts of the students. The above given errors are taken from the Corder (1967) Error Analysis model and Keshavaraz (1999) errors analysis of the translation. In this model, they pointed out the most common four types of errors which are syntactic errors, semantic errors, pragmatic errors and translation specific errors. The above table illustrates all the errors committed by learners with their relevant categorization. So, in the first category, the students made 42() syntactic errors and example is presented in the table. Similarly, the next type of errors is semantic errors which are related with the meaning. So, the learners committed semantic errors 78 times in the above table which show the highest figure in all the errors. In addition, the learners also made certain pragmatic errors, as pragmatic errors are related with the appropriate use of language in a proper context. In table.1, the pragmatic errors occurred 34 times in their translated texts. It was the least occurred errors in the translate text of the learners. In the last, translation specific errors were highlighted from the translated texts learners. Translated specific errors occurred 46 times in the translated texts of the learners which show that the learners lack of knowledge of translating the text.

Table.2 Error Types with Percentage and Frequency

	Translated sentences	Erroneous Sentences	Recognized Errors	Syntactic Errors	Semantic Errors	Pragmatic Error	Translation specific Errors
Number	400	130	200	42	78	34	46
Frequency		32.5%		21%	39.0%	17.0%	23.0%

In the table.2, the percentages and frequencies of the different types of errors are given. First, there were total 400 sentences which the students translated from Urdu into English in their assignments. So, the researcher took those sentences as primary data for the study. Among the 400 translated sentences, students made errors in 130 sentences. The erroneous sentences become 32.5% of the overall translated sentences. It means the students committed 32% errors in their translated text. Then, in each sentence, number of the errors were counted, so as whole, the students made errors in 200 sentences. The researcher recognized 200 errors collectively which are divided into different types of errors respectively.

In the same manner, 42 errors were related with syntactic. So, the number of syntactic errors was 42 as whole in number. The frequency of the syntactic errors is 21%. It means that students made less syntactic errors as compared with semantic and translational errors, while more than the pragmatic errors. It shows that students had comparatively a better understanding of the syntax of the English language. On the other hand, students made 78 semantic errors at the frequency level of 39%. Semantic errors are the highest in number in all the errors made by the learners. It suggests that the learners have less semantic knowledge of English and Urdu where they could not properly transfer the meaning of one language to another. Semantic transfer is one of the important issues of translation studies and the difficult area for the translators as well to command over it. The aforementioned results illustrate that the learners had not properly learned the semantic meaning of the words in English language. Moreover, the learners are also made

some pragmatic errors as well in the translated text. It was the least recognized errors of the committed errors by the learners. In the above table, learners made 34 pragmatic errors at the frequency level of 17% of the all errors. It can be inferred that either the errors are not properly identified by the researcher or students had better proficiency in the pragmatic use of the translation.

Furthermore, the learners made certain translation specific errors as well. In the table.2, the learners made 46 translation specific errors at the frequency level of 23% of all the errors committed by the learners in the translated text. Translational errors are basically the errors which occur due to the insufficient translation of the source language to the target language. Meanwhile, in this study the students are the beginner translators who do not have enough skills of translation. So, it suggests that the learners must work on their translation skills to enhance them. Along with that, the learners must have adequate command over both the languages to translate the text in the proper manner.

Discussion

Error analysis is an important aspect of language learning, and one of the essential branches of linguistics. It has been a center of attention and interest for linguists since ancient era. The detection of errors and its correction was essential for the language practitioners to help out the learners not only in the past but also in present. There are multiple aspects and theories about errors of the learners; some prefer timely correction, while others value no correction at all. On top of that, linguists are also divided whether to correct the errors of learners or not. However, modern linguists and translation experts prefer the latest theories in the analysis of errors committed by learners. The current study is concerned with the errors committed by learners at undergraduate level at their translated texts from Urdu into English. This section presents the critical discussion of the obtained results of the respondents. The students of 8th semester, Department of English University of Malakand were the respondents of this study who are 30 in number. They were given a translation tasks to translate texts from Urdu into English. Besides, the study also attempted errors in terms of addition, omission, misinformation and disordering of the syntactic constructions.

The data of study was analyzed through descriptive and quantitative methods. Corder (1967) and Keshavarz (1999), model of error analysis was applied which linguistically categorized the errors into four major groups. In recent times, researchers and linguists have been interested in the field of translation studies. Students 'syntactical errors, semantic errors, pragmatic errors and translation specific error were coded and arranged with the intention to disclose their difficulties in English translation. The error analysis process included three steps as: discovering errors, coding errors and categorizing errors.

The study revealed that the students encountered problems and different syntactical issues while translating from Urdu into English. The statistical analysis of the learners 'errors in converting various passages of Urdu into English has been made which presents the frequency and percentage of errors made in the translation of different categories. On the basis of the obtained results, it is inferred that learners always have difficulty in the syntax of L2, as English was L2 of the learners. They learners have not properly understood the syntax of English language, as it is was clear from the data the learners did not write with much accuracy. There are two reasons; either the learners could not properly learn the structure and grammar of L2 or there was the influence of L1 transfer in the translation. In the above case, mostly it was the lack of understanding of the L2 grammar on the part of the learners. So, the translation teachers should

also explain the syntax of L2 during the translation activities in the class to cater with learners' needs. Moreover, the researcher found in the obtained data that the students also made certain semantic errors in their translation. After the analysis of the data, it is inferred that learners could not properly transfer the meaning of Urdu language into English. Semantic errors were the most common and mostly repeated error in all the four major types of errors understudy. In translation studies, semantic is the most essential area in all respect. Translation experts are concerned with the issue of equivalence in translation which is directly related with the adequate transfer of meaning. On the basis of the above results, it is suggested that learners must improve their skills to properly translate the text from Urdu into English. It is also recommended that semantic errors should be focused more during the translation activities in the classroom.

As we know that learners commit errors when it comes to the translation of specific texts, so it is necessary to learn the structure very well. Now, we look into the causes and reasons behind the frequent occurrence of semantic errors in the translated text of the students. The causes and reasons are totally based on quantification of data and personal observation and experience of the researcher. These may vary accordingly. While assessing the translated texts, the cause of failure lies in comprehension and inadequate knowledge of the source and target language, as such lack of knowledge and exposure to the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features. Such difficulty may either due to this lack of knowledge or faulty teaching, as the semantic errors occurred 80 times in the translated texts of the students.

Conclusion

The study was carried out on the undergraduate students at the department of English, University of Malakand. The study aimed to find out the errors committed by ESL learners at undergraduate level. There are different error analysis model given by various experts in the field of Linguistics. In the study, Keshavaraz (1999) error analysis model was employed, where the he divided errors into four major categories. Keshavarz model is based on the Corder (1967) error analysis model which he presented for the linguistic error of the students, while Keshavaraz employed the model in translation studies. The researcher employed that model to find out errors in the translations of the Undergraduate students. In the study, 30 students were selected and three translated assignments were collected from each, so collectively there were 90 translated texts of the respondents. The obtained data were analyzed and results were drawn from the collected data. The researcher focused on four types of errors of the learners; syntactic errors, semantic errors, pragmatic errors and translation specific errors.

The study found that majority of the students made semantic errors in their translation from Urdu into English, as semantic transfer is one of the most daunting areas in translation studies. It was the most difficult area of the students to properly transfer the meaning of Urdu into English in a proper manner. It could be either the lack of understanding of Urdu language or not enough proficiency of English language. The second most common errors in the translation of the students were the syntactic errors. Students were unable to properly translate with grammatical accuracy. At the same way, syntax is another very crucial area for the learners where they often make mistakes. So, the respondents' errors show that they have not properly understood the syntax of English language. So, it is essential for the learners to improve their understanding of the use of English language. Along with that, the learners also made some pragmatic errors. Interestingly, pragmatic errors were the least in all the four types of errors. It shows that there very few situations for them to translate from Urdu into English. Similarly, students also made translation specific errors in their translated texts from Urdu into English. Translation specific errors

occur due to translation from Source language to Target language. In this study, Urdu was the source language, while English was the target language. There are some concepts which could not be properly transferred from Urdu into English. So, the learners made errors to translate them in accurate manner. It is pertinent to mention that in such situations, translation teachers should point out such areas in the source and target language and design more activities for the learners to enhance their skills in translations.

Recommendations

The study suggests some recommendations to the teachers of translation and learners. First of all, teachers must work on the error analysis and highlight the essential types of error that committed by students on regular basis. Similarly, translation trainers should also focus on the errors committed by students frequently in their written tasks. It will make students conscious about the errors and minimize it in future. In addition, maintaining equivalence is always a matter of serious concern for the translators, translation trainers and researchers. As a matter of fact, the more a translator reduces the errors, the higher will be equivalence effect in the source language. So, minimizing the errors will automatically create more equivalence in the Target and Source language. It suggests that understanding the errors of the students is very crucial for every researcher, translation teacher and trainer. The research study provides certain recommendation for future researchers. There are still many areas undiscovered so far. After conducting the study, it is recommended that a research should be carried out to find the perceptions of students regarding the errors made by them. Secondly, it is also recommended that a study should be conducted to find out the impact of translation studies on the students proficiency in the Target language, as translation studies improves the learners capabilities in the target language. Along with that, there an experimental study can be conducted to know the difference of control group and experimental group in the classroom. Next, it is recommended that a research is needed to find out whether the translation teachers have been given proper training before teaching the subject of Applied translation studies or not. It will highlight the major obstacles faced by the translation teachers during initiating translation tasks and activities.

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