LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO MISTAKES IN LANGUAGE C (ENGLISH) TARGET TEXTS: SPANISH - FRENCH LANGUAGE INTERFERENCES AND OTHER TRANSLATION ISSUES

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Abstract:
Translation teaching is extremely important in translation and interpreting courses. Owing to this, translation lecturers should be aware of how to teach, monitor, and correct translation students, as they may have a lack of terminology as well as a lower level of their working languages. These grammatical requirements need to be dealt with at the earliest stages of their translation training. One of the most important concerns for translation lecturers is the problems that future translators may experience within their professional careers. These issues become more serious as translation students work with more than two languages. Owing to this fact, they may encounter many interferences, especially in their initial university years. This issue in the translation is remarkable in the Spanish-French-English combination, when English is the third working language of these translation students (language C). As translation students need to have ongoing training, this difficulty needs to be solved from the beginning of their translation learning process. Thanks to this, translation lecturers have the possibility of dealing with these issues earlier, before translation mistakes become fixed and fossilized in their translation process. This research is based on a practical project that has been implemented in language and translation subjects taught in the first and third year of the Translation and Interpreting degree at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain. This study assesses, analyses, and evaluates translation problems mainly based on interferences but extended to other usual issues that may arise from the initial source text into the final target text. Additionally, it provides some conclusions to solve those problems and further comments for students who begin their academic careers in translation.

Keywords: language interference, translation process, Language C (English), translation mistakes

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1. Introduction

Translation issues have been an essential matter for translation lecturers. They need to assess and monitor their students in order to test problems in their source and target languages and solve those issues to prevent mistakes from being fossilized in individual translators or as a group.

Owing to this, it is necessary to consider mistakes that future translators and interpreters make through the translation process. One of the most frequent problems that translators could face is language interference, as they work with more than two languages (named Language A: Source Language, Language B: Target Language 1, and Language C: Target Language 2).

The aim of this study is to analyse a translation done by translation students from Spanish into English without any external help and a second translation of the same text from Spanish into French or German. The purpose of this is to assess and evaluate possible mistakes in the target language (English) (in this study, language C), and see the possible interferences between their language A (mainly Spanish) and language B (French in most cases).

2. Literature Review

Translation mistakes are important issues that translators may commit during the translation process. The study of translation mistakes has been a frequent issue that many researchers have considered in their studies. We can mention Vázquez y del Árbol et al. (2011), Durán (2012), Godoy (2022), Kasmaiee et al. (2023), Maitlo et al. (2023) o Kamoi et al. (2024).

This research will consider some of the mistakes explained by Deslisle (1993), and thoroughly explained by Hurtado Albir (2011: 291). Some of these mistakes, included in this practical study, are:

- Barbarism: morphological mistakes. An unintentionally corrupted term.
- Calque: literal translation of the source term into the target term. It can be lexical or syntactical calques.
- False Meaning (Nonsense): illogical meaning in the target language.
- Incorrect Meaning: an incorrect sense of a term within a particular context.
- Omission: lack of a piece of information, which is not rendered in the target text.
- Interference: characteristic of the source language into the target language.

All these mistakes have been considered in this practical test. In addition, translation students with language C (English) had more problems, such as misspellings and wrong word formation in some essential terms that needed to be monitored in class. One of the most recurrent mistakes in a combination of working languages is language interference, which has been researched thoroughly.

We can mention the works of Isurin et al. (2001), with a study of the L1 forgetting process within the cognitive field, Xiao (2011), who takes into account the English-Chinese combination, Shaham et al. (2022), Gong et al. (2023) o Takahesu et al. (2024), among many others. It is, therefore, remarkable that interference in more than two languages is important in the translation process. Language C (English) students have linguistic influences from their languages A and B, with several interferences in lexicology and syntax.

This research focuses on several important issues for non-native speakers. Firstly, the interference of their native and second languages may have serious consequences for the target text.

Owing to this fact, contrastive analysis in translation is a key point within the translation discipline, as in Godoy (2024), which compares many legal documents in English, Spanish, and French, such as online court judgments, among others. We can mention other works, such as Tarawneh and Al-Momani (2023), with the contrastive analysis of Arabic and English, Moneus and Sahari (2024) and the contrastive analysis of AI in legal translations, or Auni and Manan (2024), who made a contrast between Indonesian and English within the morphological and syntactic fields.

3. Material and Methods

This study is based on a practical test that was done on 3rd October 2024. This was a text written in Spanish, created for this investigation, in order to translate it into English, their third language (language C) of the degree in Translation and Interpreting Studies at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain. The total corpus of tests was 28.

These students were from two different subjects: 14 students of Language and Civilization C1 (English), a subject taught in the first year of the degree, with an age range between 18 and 21 years old.

The second subject was General Translation C2 (English), a compulsory subject in the third year of the Translation and Interpreting degree. This subject had 14 students in the 20-26 age range.

The mother tongue and languages B and C are as follows: mother tongue (Spanish): 22, mother tongue (French): 4, mother tongue (others): 2, language B (French): 21, language B (Spanish): 4, language B (undetermined):3, and language C (English): 28.

The translation process of the text was carried out without the help of external sources, as no laptops or dictionary resources were provided. The source text of this analysis is as follows:

[1] Tom cogió el coche. Alguien había llamado a su secretaria e iba a esa cita. Condujo por toda la provincia, pensando en Mary, una amiga de su hermana de quien le había hablado muchas veces a lo largo de esa semana. Trabajaba una granja de un empresario en las afueras de un pueblecito.

Cuando Tom llegó a la localidad, supo quién era persona que había llamado. Era ella, Mary.

[5] Fue cuando ella se acercó a él y le dijo: "ahí tienes 500 euros". Se decía por el pueblo que Tom les había comprado unas ovejas y unas gallinas para su granja familiar. Le dijo "No había 'comprao' 'ná'. No tenía 'ná'". Tom le recomendó que ahorrara cuando recibiera el sueldo de ese mes. "En mi caso suelo ahorrar dinero y no tengo ningún problema", dijo Tom. También le dio un consejo: "mi sugerencia es que llegues puntual también cuando venga el propietario de la tierra.

[10] Me comentó que solo llegaste a tiempo una vez el mes pasado. Esas reuniones son esenciales para que sepa cómo está realmente su tierra". Cuando terminaron la charla, le acercó a Mary a su granja y cogió la A32 de vuelta a casa.

As the source text shows, its lexical and syntactical complexity is not considerable, but this practice conveys several points to consider for future language C (English) translators and interpreters. Firstly, the possible implications of linguistic interferences in the translation process from language A (Spanish / French) to language C (English).

However, the text above includes important problems in grammar and terminology that could be problematic in the Spanish > English translation, especially with language interferences between French and Spanish. During this test, they were not allowed to use their dictionary in the English section, so the students of both groups needed to translate it without any external source. Additionally, they were provided with the same text in order to translate it into French or German (their language B), this time with the help of their laptops.

The text was not difficult, yet it included many confusing expressions, structures, and terminology for Spanish and French speakers. All the structures and terminology were included in the text on purpose in order to investigate possible problems in the translation process.

Firstly, the use of structures in Spanish that have a different translation in English. This is the case of 'llamar a su secretaria' [line 1], 'una amiga de su hermana' [2], and 'llegó a…' [4]. In all these structures, translation students need to be aware of the different structures in Spanish and English in order not to commit lexical and syntactical mistakes in their translation into English.

In terminology, the text incorporated easy, yet confusing terminology for Spanish and French speakers that makes find them difficult to translate and, moreover, with a high risk of being translated wrongly. This is the case of the following lexical list chosen from the source text:

'Cita' [1], 'provincial' [2], 'empresario' [3], 'localidad' [4], 'ovejas' [6], 'ahorrar' [8], 'consejo' [8], 'propietario' [9], 'reuniones' [10], 'tierra' [11] y 'charla' [11].

4. Results and Discussion

The result of the analysis shows important aspects of their translation process. First of all, their final version includes many language interferences (Spanish-English and French-English) that should be considered in every translation class. This research has divided those interferences into two main groups: lexicology and syntax.

4.1. Lexical Problems from Spanish/French into English

Owing to the nature of the text, students had more problems in lexicology. First and foremost, the interference of their languages A and B (Spanish and French). Students make some mistakes in their translation:

- **False Meaning.** 'left' (no took), 'country' (<province), 'ground' (<land), 'get into' (Fr. 'montait'), 'earn' (<'save') 'in all the city' (< 'across the province'). In all these cases, students included a wrong sense from the source term into their target translation

- **No Meaning.** Their mistakes become more serious in No (complete wrong) Meaning translations, which result in a complete lack of meaning from the source text. This is the case of translations, such as 'date', 'booking', 'assignment', 'greetings' (< 'cita') or 'livre sterling' (< 'libra esterlina' [instead of 'euros']). Therefore, the translation from the Spanish term 'cita' show different translation with the wrong meaning in the target text. The confusing final target text above reveals problematic versions that are hard to understand.

- **Omission.** Another serious mistake is the omission of necessary information (with the omitted information between square brackets [information]). This is noticeable in '[outside of a village]', '(…) and told [X]:', '(…) of a [tiny/small] village/town', '(…) arrived [X] he knew (…)', 'recommends her [to] save (…)'.

- **Misspelling (barbarisms).** Misspelling words was another important issue for the students. This was the case of 'business', which had three wrong spellings in some target text: 'bussines', 'busines', and 'buisness'. Additionally, other misspellings can be found in 'reciebed', 'receve' and 'recibe', 'recomended', and 'wich'. Wrong spelling of words becomes more remarkable in serious mistakes of irregular verbs, such as wrong inflections of their forms: 'drived', 'buyed', 'taked', 'gived', or the past form of 'take': 'toked' or 'tooked'. These huge mistakes in irregular word formations of English verbs need to be dealt with in class, as they imply huge problems in the target language.

- **Grammar issues (barbarisms)**: plural form in adjectives and adverbs; 'essentials', 'outsides'.

4.2. Language Interferences in Lexicology

In most of the cases we could observe a literal calque from French, which is their second language (Language B), and their mother tongue, Spanish (Language A). This is clearly noticeable in the next cases:

Table 1: Examples of Language Interferences

Source Term (Spanish) [lines]	Term used by the students	French Interference	Correct Target Term (English)
Consejo [8]	Conseil	(< Fr. 'conseil')	(A piece of) advice, counsel, suggestion, recommendation, tip.
Esenciales [10]	Essentiels	(< Fr. 'essentiel')	Essential.
Euros [5]	Livre sterling	(< Fr.'livre sterling')	Euros.
En las afueras de … [3]	Periphery	(<Fr. Périphérie)	Outside, on the outskirts of…
Cita [1]	Reunions	(< Fr. 'réunion')	Appointment.
Sueldo [7]	Revenue	(< Fr. 'revenu')	Salary.
Tierra [9]	Terrain	(<Fr. terrain)	Land.
Pasado [10]	Past	(< Sp. 'pasado')	Last.
Propietario [9]	Propietary	(<Sp. 'propietario/a', Fr. 'propiétaire')	Owner.

As the table above indicates, students in both groups committed many mistakes, especially in False Meanings of the terminology. Some of the mistakes are big, such as the use of 'livre sterling' for 'euros' or the plural form in adjectives, highly influenced by Spanish and French ('esenciales' / 'essentiels'). The use of the French term 'conseil' (defined in Le Petit Robert as 'conseil: avis sur ce qu'il convient de faire; recommendation' (2020: 292) for 'advice', 'suggestion', 'counsel', 'tip' suggests a considerable influence of French in the language B (French) students.

This French interference includes 'revenue' ('salario' in the Spanish source text) in the English target text, a term defined in the Collins Dictionary as 'the income accruing from taxation to a government during a specified period of time, usually a year' (2014: 1695), which gives a False Meaning to the term. The contrastive analysis of this term with its French calque reveals that our students took the French term 'revenue', which is described in Le Petit Robert as 'ce qui revient [à qqn, à une collectivité] comme remuneration du travail ou fruit du capital (…) revenue du travail (honoraires, salaire)'. (2020: 2241).

This language interference becomes more remarkable with the use of 'reunion'. The use of this term has a False Meaning in the target text, especially if we compare both terms in English and French. In the English case, this concept is very restricted and limited, defined as "*(1) the act or process of coming together again. (2) the state or condition of having been brought together again (3) gatherings of relatives, friends, or former associates*". (Collins Dictionary, 2014: 1695). The English term shows a close relationship between two or more people who meet again in a familiar or close gathering.

The French term "reunion" shares common features with its English word, as it includes 'les personnes qui sont venues en un même lieu pour être ensemble [pour participer à une activité commune ou collective]. (…) une reunion de famille (…)'. (Le Petit Robert, 2020: 2237). However, none of them shows the actual meaning of the term 'cita' in the Spanish context of the text and its equivalence in English, 'appointment'. If we compare 'cita', 'appointment', and 'rendez-vous':

Table 2: Example of Lexical Interferences

Spanish Source Term	English Term (Corrected)	English Target Term 1	French Target Term 2
Cita	**Appointment**: **an arrangement to meet a person or be at a <u>place</u>** at a certain time. Collins Dictionary (2014: 97).	**Reunion**: (1) the act or process of **coming together again**. (2) the state or condition of having been brought together again (3) gatherings of **relatives**, **friends**, or former associates. Collins Dictionary (2020: 1695).	**Rendez-vous**: (1) **recontre convenue entre deux ou plusieurs personnes** (…) (2) <u>**Lieu**</u> fixé pour une rencontré. Le Petit Robert (2020: 2188).
Tierra	land	Terrain: <u>**a ground or piece of ground**</u>, esp with reference to its physical character or <u>**military potential**</u>. Type of rock. Collins Dictionary (2020: 2031)	Terrain: <u>**Lieux où se déroulent des operations militaires**</u> (…) Espace, etendue de terres de fórme et de dimensions déterminées (acheter/vendre un terrain). Le Petit Robert (2020: 2536).

The False Meaning of the target language in English is important in the use of the term 'terrain', with the exact French spelling. Apart from a wrong calque (French > English), our students have a False Meaning of 'terrain'. In English, this term ('terrain') includes a 'a ground or piece of ground, esp with reference to its physical character or military potential', such as 'a rocky terrain', or 'a series of rock formations, esp one having a prevalent type of rock ('terrane' or 'terraine'). In French, however, the term 'terrain' is wider, as it compiles several meanings.

4.3. Language Interferences in Syntax
However, the analysis of the texts shows another important problem in the target language (English): the language interference in syntax (French > English < Spanish). The numerous mistakes in some of these structures need to be taken into account in future translators (Spanish/French > English).

Our results reveal Spanish > English and French > English interferences that need to be corrected from the very beginning of the degree. In the first case (Spanish > English), we find the expressions:

'One time' (calque from Spanish < Sp. 'una vez'), instead of the English form 'once'. Additionally, the heavy use of postmodification (frequent in Spanish and French) is noticeable in understandable, yet infrequent, structures in English. This is the case of 'owner of the land', a literal translation of the Spanish source sentence: 'propietario de la tierra'. This becomes more noticeable in another calque: the translation of 'salario' as 'the paid of that month' (< Fr. 'la paie de ce mois')/ cost of the month.

This language interference in syntax becomes double in expressions, such as 'arrive to' (< Sp. 'llegar a', Fr. 'arriver à'), 'call to his secretary' (< Sp. 'llamó a su secretaria') with a double interference with French: 'Fr. 'appeler à (…)'. This confusing translation in the English target text are the main consequence of a thorough knowledge of French (their language B) and, undoubtfully, their mother tongue, Spanish (language A).

Table 3: Spanish / French < > English Interferences

Source Example Interference 1: Spanish	[1] Llegar [2] Una [3] Llamar	[1] a [2] vez [3] a	(lugar) (tiempo) (persona)
Interference 2: French	[1] Arriver	[1] à	(lieu)
Wrong Target Translation (English)	[1] Arrive [2] One [3] Call	[1] to (< a / à) [2] time [3] to	(place) (time) (person)
Correct Target Translation (English)	[1] Arrive [2] Once [3] Call	**AT/IN** [2] -- [3] --	(place) (time) (person)

5. Percentage of Mistakes

This percentage of mistakes committed in the Spanish-English translation of both groups [Language and Civilization C1 (English) / General Translation C2 (English)]:

Table 4: Main Mistakes in Individual Target Texts

Mistakes	Number of mistakes
False Meaning	5/10
No Meaning	3/5
Omission	8/4
Misspelling (barbarism)	9/10
Wrong Morphology (barbarism)	13/15
Calque	6/4
Wrong Syntax	14/20

These percentages reveal two main figures to consider: the wrong inflection of words (mainly in adjectives and verbs) and the wrong syntax, which is the result of the linguistic interference with their languages A and B. Both are key fields during the translation process, and they can have serious consequences for their target texts.

However, we cannot avoid false meanings and Incorrect (No) meaning, as they appear in both groups (23 mistakes). The omission of necessary information in the target text (12 mistakes) could result in serious misunderstandings by the target reader.

6. Recommendations

As the results reveal, language C (L3 in English) students may face with several problems when translating a text from Spanish into English. These issues may be categorized into the following levels: Lexical, Syntactical, and Stylistic.

6.1. Lexical Observations

These percentages reveal a homogeneous level of mistakes in all the different sections. The use of terminology with a wrong or total lack of meaning within the text is important to comment on in class. Close contact and feedback are essential for the internal correction of mistakes that translation students need to consider in their target texts.

The number of lexical problems in the target text (wrong morphology, misspellings, and calques) is another issue that translation lectures need to monitor in class. It is, therefore, crucial that frequent problems in language C (English) classes need to be controlled and corrected from the very beginning.

6.2. Syntactical Observations

The structural interference of the source languages (Spanish / French) is noticeable in both groups. Many students have similar problems in the structure of the target text (English) that have their corresponding equivalence in the source language.

Contrastive comments in class are highly advisable, as translation students are aware of the differences in syntax. Some of the grammatical problems that were observed in the tests are likely to be corrected in specific classes, which help translation students understand their own mistakes.

In the case of syntax, most of the students had a word-for-word translation, common in reverse and direct translations that translators need to avoid. The linguistic features of both English and Spanish do not share similarities, so a homogeneous and a word-for-word translation is unlikely to happen in the target text.

6.3. Stylistic Observations

This text additionally incorporates the register with the words 'no ha comprao ná', included to see how translation students reflect this change in the target text. It is, therefore, important to consider the syntactical structure of both languages, so the use of contrastive analysis is essential in most cases, as explained in Auni and Manan (2024) within the morphological field, or the contrast of two or more languages.

Even though this was a fragment that was harder to translate into Spanish, some of them rendered good target texts, such as an omission of the final 't' (bough'), which showed a surprising result in the target texts.

7. Conclusion

All in all, translation lecturers should consider the next ideas in their translation teaching process (when English is their students' third language, language C):

- First and foremost, translation lecturers need to consider their different levels of English as their third language in order to establish certain increasing texts in their classes.
- Furthermore, translation students should face translation without any helping tool, so that they are aware of the linguistic problems that they need to solve in their following courses. Students rely on glossaries, online resources, and external tools, so they are not aware of possible problems they may have during their translation process.
- Importance of language interferences during their translation process. As the results and further recommendations show, students should be provided with a solid basis for English as their third language.
- Lectures should monitor their translation students in order to control many mistakes that future translators can have when translating. This study showed several mistakes that translation lecturers need to deal with in class in order to face the problem at early stages of their academic career.
- Translation students need to study these possible interferences that could prevent them from rendering an acceptable translation.
- Importance of monitoring the different levels of English (language C) and deal with basic mistakes in grammar that can have serious consequences in future translations.

Interferences in the target text have been studied by many authors. As a matter of fact, Presas (1996) established the processes of transference and problem-solving operations in the translation process. Both cases have been observed in this test, as the transference from language A or B (Spanish/French) into language C (English) has revealed the transference and problem-solving techniques in the translation of the text included above.

In some cases, these interferences from Spanish into English had some positive results, such as the use of 'locality' or 'province', both in the English language, with wider use in Spanish ('localidad'), but with a more limited use in English. In addition, some students rephrased the target text in order to avoid the lack of vocabulary in specific words, which was a positive descriptive translation that became an efficient problem-solving technique.

However, this interference is more problematic in the wrong use of terminology in the target text (English) from the influence of their languages A and B. This is noticeable in most of the text, as translation students in language C (English) committed mistakes within the lexical and syntactical levels.

Therefore, it is highly advisable to monitor language C (English) from several perspectives, such as more control in writing, continuous feedback during the course,

and assimilation of individual problems in order to deal of them efficiently in early courses.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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