Carrying out Hurtado's Evaluation Method on English Learners at Faculty of Education

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to guide the teachers about how the evaluation process should be and it highlights the effectiveness and suitability of adopting Hurtado's method of evaluation on English learners at the Faculty of Education at Hadhramout University, Yemen. This method was applied to the correction of students' translations of the final exam containing different texts to be translated in both directions between English and Arabic. The exam was done by 66 students on the undergraduate degree course of Translation (1). The hypothesis regarding the suitability and effectiveness of using Hurtado's method and the possibility to improve the quality of the evaluating the students' translations in future based on this method has not been verified. This study concluded that this method was found out to be too lenient to give impartial translation quality evaluation for the students' translations.

KEYWORDS: *students' translations, Hurtado's method, evaluation, translation errors*

1. Introduction

It is really puzzling for translation teachers to evaluate their students' performance in the translation exams due to the fact that the types of translation mistakes are manifold and there is no one translation method, strategy or approach that can tackle all these mismatches of translation. If using one strategy per se can make the teacher handle some translation mistakes fairly, it might not be applicable for others. There is no way to treat all the semantic, cultural, structural, and stylistic mistakes alike. Each case should be treated and evaluated on its own (See de Beaugrande, 1978: 135, Hatim, 2001: 155). On the other hand, a close survey at the related literature on Translation Quality Assessment shows that most of the related studies have been theoretical or descriptive and have focused mainly on (1) Basing quality assessment on text linguistic analysis (House 1981); (2) Establishing the criteria for a "good translation" (Newmark 1991); (3) Defining the nature of translation errors as opposed to language errors (House 1981, Kussmaul

1995); (4) Establishing the relative nature of translation errors (Williams 1989, Pym 1992, Kussmaul 1995); (5) Assessment based on the psycholinguistic theory of "scenes and frames" (Bensoussan & Rosenhouse 1994, Snell-Hornby 1995); (6) The need to evaluate quality not only at the linguistic but also the pragmatic level (Sager 1989, Williams 1989, Hewson 1995, Kussmaul 1995, Hatim & Mason 1997); among other related things.

In addition, the empirical studies concerning Translation Quality Assessment have been relatively few in number such as: (1) Campbell (1991) examines translation tests to see to what extent they examine translation competence and reveal translation processes rather than comparisons between source and target texts. The study has been applied on 38 respondents who belong to four different ability groups. The test papers have been in English-Arabic translation. The researcher adopted analysis using ten criteria such as lexical variety ratio, average word length, words omitted, etc. On the basis of the correlation matrix for the 38 subjects and ten analyses, Campbell proposes the existence of three separate factors: lexical coding of meaning, global target language competence and lexical transfer competence. This study is similar to Séguinot (1989, 1990) in that it examines the processes of translation as reflected in the quality of the translator's work, although Séguinot concentrates on students' mistakes, whereas Campbell examines other aspects as well. However, these other aspects are mainly linguistic and Campbell ignores higher textual levels and the students' ability to manage the pragmatic elements in a translation. It is also noticeable that Campbell does not use a factor analysis to determine the nature of the components of translation competence.

(2) Stansfield et al. (1992) also aim to "identify the variables that constitute translation ability". (Stansfield et al. 1992: 455) and their study is based on work carried out for the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to develop and validate job-related tests of translation ability. The initial tests conducted with FBI employees indicated that translation competence should be divided into two different skills: (a) Accuracy, which is the degree of accuracy with

which the translator transfers the content from the source to the target text; and (b) Expression, which refers to the quality of the translator's expression of this content in the target language. The researchers offer translation skill-level descriptions for each of these aspects of translation competence and applied them to the correction of the subsequent tests held with the FBI employees. A study of the criterion-related validity of these results was then conducted. Stansfield et al. claim that this validation study supports their division of translation competence into two different constructs, although it also indicates that Accuracy appears to be "the more valid measure of translation ability" (Stansfield et al. 1992: 461).

(3) Waddington (2001) presents paper in which he concentrates on testing in the university context. In order to find out the kinds of methods of correction in Faculties of Translation, he sent out a questionnaire to 48 European and Canadian universities. A total of 52 teachers replied from 20 of these universities and their answers reflected the situation that all the teachers said that they require the students to translate a text. As far as methods of evaluating student translations were concerned, 36.5% of the teachers use a method based on error analysis, 38.5% use a holistic method, and 23% combine error analysis with a holistic appreciation. In accordance with these findings, this paper considers the validity of the results obtained through applying these different types of method to the correction of translations done by students under exam conditions.

The present paper differs from Campbell (1991), Stansfield et al (1992) and Waddington (2001) in the following aspects:

(1) It concentrates on translation course at a different setting (i.e., Hadhramout University) using the languages of Arabic and English.

(2) This study has been carried out on a relatively bigger number of respondents, namely 66 undergraduate students as this sample could give accurate representation and a significant implication of the results.

(3) In order to find out the kind of translation exam and the suitable correction method, I formulated the final exam of the course of translation (1) that considered the level of the respondents as I have been teaching this course for 5 years so far.

(4) The researcher applied only one method which is Hurtado's error analysis method excluding the holistic and other methods in correcting the final exam to see to what extent the former method is applicable.

(5) This study gives consideration to the results obtained through applying this method to the correction process of translations done by students under final exam atmosphere.

2. Description of Experiment

2.1. Hurtado's method of Evaluation

This method takes into account the negative effect of errors as well as the positive effect of solutions of translation problems on the overall quality of the translation. This method is taken from Hurtado (1995) and it is based on error analysis. The possible mistakes are grouped under the following headings:

(1) Inappropriate renderings which affect the understanding of the source text; these are divided into eight categories: contresens (i.e. mistranslation), faux sens (i.e. wrong meaning), nonsens (i.e. nonsensical), addition, omission, unresolved extralinguistic references, loss of meaning, and inappropriate linguistic variation (register, style, dialect, etc.).

(2) Inappropriate renderings which affect expression in the target language; these are divided into five categories: spelling, grammar, lexical items, text and style.

(3) Inadequate renderings which affect the transmission of either the main function or secondary functions of the source text.

In each of the categories a distinction is made between serious errors (–2 points) and minor errors (–1 point) depending on the corrector who has to judge the importance of the negative effect that each one of these errors has on the translation output. All this should be applied to different texts that are supposed to be

translated using different translation directions. There is a fourth category which describes the plus points to be awarded for good (+1 point) or exceptionally good solutions (+2 points) to translation problems. In order to simply understand Hurtado's correction method, consider Table 1 below:

Table 1: A Scale of Hurtado's Evaluation Method

(1) Inappropriate renderings which affect the understanding of the source text		Minor Error	Serious Error
Mistranslation		–1 point	–2 points
Wrong meaning		–1 point	–2 points
Nonsensical		–1 point	–2 points
Addition		–1 point	–2 points
Omission		–1 point	–2 points
Unresolved extralinguistic references		–1 point	–2 points
Loss of meaning		–1 point	–2 points
inappropriate linguistic variation	Register	–1 points	–2 points
	style	–1 points	–2 points
	Dialect	–1 points	–2 points
(2) Inappropriate renderings which affect expression in the target language		*Minor Error*	*Serious Error*
Spelling		–1 point	–2 points
Grammar		–1 point	–2 points
lexical items		–1 point	–2 points
Text and Style		–1 point	–2 points
(3) Inadequate renderings which affect the transmission of the following		*Minor Error*	*Serious Error*
The main function of the source text		–1 point	–2 points
Secondary functions of the source text		–1 point	–2 points
(4) The plus points		*Good Solutions*	*Exceptionally Good Solutions*
		+1 point	+ 2 points

In the case of the translation exam where this method was used, the sum of the negative marks was subtracted from a total of

100. The student needs 50 (i.e. 50%) points to reach the lowest pass mark (which is the normal Yemeni system of evaluation).

3. The Hypothesis

The hypothesis was that "the suitability and effectiveness of using Hurtado's method of evaluation is high and that it is possible to improve the quality of the evaluating the students' translations in future based on this method." To verify this hypothesis, the results obtained by applying this method should be reasonable in the sense that students' failure cases should be within the range of 15% to 40% out of the total number of the students.

4. The Study Sample

This study is set to explore and describe issues related to translation evaluation. This study focused on the sample of translation students. Purposeful non-random sampling is the chosen technique to select sample elements. The students should not be discriminated by factors like gender and age in order to attain a higher validity. The students are in the third year of their undergraduate study at the university. The justification for selecting these students is that third year students can put these respondents in a better situation to work more confidently in the exam when compared to students of lower levels. They are supposed to have a relatively good command of English general language skills besides their Arabic (mother tongue). They have attended a translation course (i.e., translation 1) so as to gain the necessary translation skills, which could help them access the written information in their field of study. The study has been applied to the final exam of the first subject of translation 1, which is usually given in the first semester.

5. The Final Translation Exam

The exam paper (See appendix) was quite similar to other final exams of the same course adopted in last 5 years. It consisted of written texts in both translation directions (i.e., from English into Arabic and vice versa) so as to make a balance or moderation in the degree of the exam difficulty assuming that translation into one's

mother tongue is always easier. The exam included four sentences that contained modals and passive voice, plus two general passages. The English passage of the exam paper which the students had to translate discussed a story of a naive Japanese boy who was killed in USA because of his poor English while the Arabic one spoke about Zidane as the best football player in the world. Using dictionaries is allowed in this final exam. The total number of the English texts was 165 words long while the Arabic text was only 85 words long and the students had 3 hours to translate this exam. Since the English text was a bit longer, it was given 55 marks out of 100 while the remaining 45 marks go for the Arabic text.

6. How the Method Was Carried out

To verify the hypothesis, this method was applied to the correction of a third-year translation exam done by 66 English department students in the course of Translation (1) at the Faculty of Education in Hadhramout University, Yemen. This evaluation method was applied by a professional corrector whose major is Arabic-English translation and has got 6 years experience of translation teaching. He applied this method to the 66 translations considering the lessons of the translation syllabus that the students have taken in the translation course of that semester. Applying the correction process was straightforward and systematic in the light of Hurtado's method. One red line is drawn under the minor error which does not really affect the sentence general intended meaning. Two red lines are drawn under the serious error that can affect the general intended meaning. After completing the correction, the more lines are found on the answer sheet, the less level the student will get in accordance with Hurtado's (1995) correction method. This is the way evaluation is carried out to get the result of each student.

7. The Study Results

In order to get high degree of objectivity in the research, the students' translation answer sheets have been corrected horizontally. That is to say, the teacher has corrected the answer of the first question for all the students at first. He then corrected the

answer of the second question. Having used Hurtado (1995) correction method stated above, Table 2 below shows the general detailed result of the students.

Table 2: The General Detailed Result

Student No.	Marks out of 100	Result	Student No.	Marks out of 100	Result
Student 1	94	Pass	Student 34	98	Pass
Student 2	81	Pass	Student 35	59	Pass
Student 3	62	Pass	Student 36	87	Pass
Student 4	85	Pass	Student 37	61	Pass
Student 5	78	Pass	Student 38	56	Pass
Student 6	17	Fail	Student 39	82	Pass
Student 7	30	Fail	Student 40	69	Pass
Student 8	82	Pass	Student 41	95	Pass
Student 9	98	Pass	Student 42	88	Pass
Student 10	93	Pass	Student 43	77	Pass
Student 11	74	Pass	Student 44	83	Pass
Student 12	89	Pass	Student 45	73	Pass
Student 13	78	Pass	Student 46	86	Pass
Student 14	53	Pass	Student 47	87	Pass
Student 15	81	Pass	Student 48	76	Pass
Student 16	72	Pass	Student 49	87	Pass
Student 17	79	Pass	Student 50	81	Pass
Student 18	84	Pass	Student 51	84	Pass
Student 19	50	Pass	Student 52	98	Pass
Student 20	54	Pass	Student 53	43	Fail
Student 21	48	Pass	Student 54	67	Pass
Student 22	93	Pass	Student 55	69	Pass
Student 23	90	Pass	Student 56	65	Pass
Student 24	88	Pass	Student 57	55	Pass
Student 25	62	Pass	Student 58	71	Pass
Student 26	56	Pass	Student 59	46	Fail
Student 27	66	Pass	Student 60	96	Pass
Student 28	55	Pass	Student 61	34	Fail
Student 29	59	Pass	Student 62	58	Pass

Student 30	90	Pass	Student 63	30	Fail
Student 31	84	Pass	Student 64	76	Pass
Student 32	51	Pass	Student 65	42	Fail
Student 33	82	Pass	Student 66	59	Pass

The first look at Table 2 above indicates that applying this correction method resulted in few failure cases. The student needs 50 (50%) marks to reach the lowest pass mark. This goes in harmony with the normal system of evaluation at Yemeni Universities. In order to precisely calculate the number of those who failed in the exam, we can take a look at Table 3 below.

Table 3: *The General Accumulative Result*

Type	Pass	Fail	Total
Frequency	59	7	66
Percentage	89.39 %	10.61 %	100 %

Table 3 above reveals that 7 cases which is equal to 10.61 % of the whole number of the study respondents did not manage to get even the lowest pass mark. The local policy of the faculty considers this to be low percentage of failure rate which normally approximates (20 %) in most subjects taught in this particular English department. To go further in the analysis, other calculation has been made on the factor of the translation direction to see whether this factor has any impact. Table 4 below shows a detailed outcome of Q1 which contained texts to be translated into Arabic and Q2 which contained a text to be translated into English.

Table 4: *The Impact of the Translation Direction on Failure Rate*

Student No.	Direction to Arabic (55 marks)	Direction to English (45 marks)	Student No.	Direction to Arabic (55 marks)	Direction to English (45 marks)
Student 1	53	41	Student 34	53	45
Student 2	50	31	Student 35	37	22
Student 3	44	18	Student 36	51	36
Student 4	52	33	Student 37	48	13

Student 5	54	24	Student 38	39	17
Student 6	17	0	Student 39	45	37
Student 7	25	5	Student 40	43	26
Student 8	49	33	Student 41	50	45
Student 9	53	45	Student 42	48	40
Student 10	51	42	Student 43	48	29
Student 11	46	28	Student 44	44	39
Student 12	35	36	Student 45	47	26
Student 13	42	36	Student 46	49	37
Student 14	36	17	Student 47	51	36
Student 15	52	29	Student 48	45	31
Student 16	48	24	Student 49	49	38
Student 17	50	29	Student 50	47	34
Student 18	54	30	Student 51	47	37
Student 19	38	12	Student 52	53	45
Student 20	41	13	Student 53	39	4
Student 21	45	3	Student 54	49	18
Student 22	53	40	Student 55	48	21
Student 23	52	38	Student 56	45	20
Student 24	49	39	Student 57	35	20
Student 25	45	17	Student 58	41	30
Student 26	45	11	Student 59	37	9
Student 27	41	25	Student 60	51	45
Student 28	40	15	Student 61	34	0
Student 29	43	16	Student 62	48	10
Student 30	51	39	Student 63	30	0
Student 31	48	36	Student 64	48	28
Student 32	39	12	Student 65	40	2
Student 33	46	36	Student 66	46	13

* *The dark boxes indicate failure while the bright boxes indicate success.*

The table above gives an indication that the factor of translation direction has a significant impact on the students' failure rate. In order to calculate the number of those who failed in each direction, we can take a look at Table 5 below.

Table 5: *Total of the Impact of the Translation Direction on Failure Rate*

	Direction to Arabic (55 marks)	*Direction to English (45 marks)*
Total of Failure	2	25
percentage	3.03 %	37.88 %

Table 5 displayed the students' result on each question with different translation direction. It has been found out that there is a profound impact of the translation direction on failure rate. Most failure cases happened in the Q2 which requires translation to go from Arabic into English. 25 students (37.88 %) were unsuccessful and got below 50 % of the marks allotted for this question namely 45 marks despite the fact that Q2 was only given 45 when compared to Q1 which was given 55 by the translation exam designer to lessen the impact of this factor. Therefore, this is a strong indication that students' competence of the English language, especially in writing skill, is remarkably poor.

8. Discussions

Critics may say that the Hurtado's method of evaluation is reasonable, but it does not have enough degree of precision and objectivity because of its partial reliance on the corrector's personal anticipation and appreciation. For example, the corrector can subtract 1 or 2 marks according to his own ability to behave in a sensible way and make personal decision. There is no definite criterion to choose either one as exactly as it can be seen in applying the other error analysis method (Cf. Kussmaul 1995:129) in which correction process can result in objectively calculated marks without the corrector's emotional interference. However, Hurtado's method proponents defend it by saying that it is logically fine due to the fact that the corrector would usually be a reliable professional teacher who can fairly take the right decision with this regard. In addition, all students were evaluated without bias because answer sheets of the final exam are given to the corrector

after hiding the names of the students. This procedure is done for final exam of all courses by a control committee in the faculty.

On the other hand, taking a close look at the students' general accumulative result (Table 3) has given a general impression that this method is too lenient or rather loose. It needs a certain amount of tightness and strictness. This can be manifested in the number of the failure cases which reached 7 students only (10.61 %) when compared to the other error analysis method that is accused of "eating the students' marks" and resulted in the failure rate to reach at least one third out of the total. This denotes that Hurtado's method is more lenient in favour of the students. Therefore, when 59 students (89.39 %) get success, it will be considered too much as if students can easily pass the exam without exerting much effort.

This probably happened due to the fact that the Hurtado's method pushes the corrector to be lenient and it confines him/her to subtract 2 marks maximum for an error even though some lexical, grammatical, or spelling errors were too serious and deserve more marks to be subtracted because such mistakes can completely distort the translation. Any spelling serious mistake, for instance, was penalized with -2 marks only out of 100. However, the scale of Hurtado's method was unjustifiable or rather unfair simply because one should bear in mind that the students were given 3 hours long which is considered enough time to check the spelling in dictionary. Consequently, this supports the idea that the Hurtado's correction method was not strict enough to make only the studious respondents pass the exam. Other students who might not be studious enough can pass the exam too.

On the other hand, this method consider lexical mistake to be trivial as well. In the other error analysis method, by contrast, the penalty of subtracting 4 marks is carried out for the inappropriate lexical item which means that a student chose a wrong word or selected a wrong meaning out of many meanings of a polysemous word. However, the penalty of the latter method was reasonable simply because committing such a serious mistake could negatively affect the general meaning of the adjacent sentences or probably the

whole passage. Other lexical mistakes include the omission mistake which happens when the student skip translating a lexical item while loss of meaning can happen when the corrector felt that the meaning of a translated sentence was blurred or incomplete. The latter two cases were penalized seriously, a way that is also reasonable as these mistakes can also affect the meaning of the whole SL text negatively. In Hurtado's method, these mistakes are considered serious, but they are penalized with -2 only.

Moreover, it was observed that the direction of the translation was a remarkable factor and had a clear connection with the degree of difficulty of the exam questions. In accordance with result shown in Table 5 above, it was quite clear that most mistakes were committed in the question in which students were asked to translate a text from Arabic into English. This supported the assumption that translating into one's mother tongue is easier.

9. Conclusions

The conclusions of the study can be summed up in the fact that if Hurtado's correction method is accused of being too lenient and allows many students to be part of the successful group, it remains somewhat dependable only because it was justly applied to all students without distinction.

The other accusation of Hurtado's method is that it allows some room of evaluation to depend on the corrector's subjective intuition which might be too flexible and hard to measure. However, this intuition is sensible and trustworthy since the subjective range is limited and the correction process is always carried out by professional translation teachers.

On the other hand, a disadvantage of this method is that it cannot easily distinguish the studious top respondents since the number of those who passed the exam are too many and that the failure cases are too few and below the normal range. This might give a negative impression that this method is too lenient to the extent that it can give very little chance to see the individual differences among students. The lenience of this method is also manifested, according to the results, in the fact that those students are not much accountable for the lexical, grammatical, or spelling

errors. Actually, it is generally felt that the penalty is smaller than the mistake committed. It should be borne in mind that when the penalty is small, the students do not ask about it or try to correct themselves. They may carelessly repeat committing the same mistake many times. On the contrary, if the evaluation scale is strict and penalty is tough, this encourages the students to understand their mistakes and they would become keen to correct themselves and avoid doing the same mistake in future. Therefore, there is a kind of worry that students will not improve in translation if they were given easy success like that. In addition, the result has shown that carrying out this correction method resulted in failure cases to be less than the reasonable range of 15% to 40% which was mentioned in the study hypothesis. This would make us say that the hypothesis regarding the suitability of using this evaluation analysis method has not been verified.

Indeed, the commonsense supports that idea that to get an easy success in the first attempt to someone who might lack the required translation competence is not better than getting it after many attempts. Being too lenient like this will be negatively reflected in the long run on the evaluation quality system and the teaching process at large and the graduates would be of low standard. Consequently, this is not good for the university academic reputation. That is why some school examiners say that marking has become more lenient in recent years.

Finally, it is concluded that the exam questions were sensible and rather easy. This has been proved by the result in which (89.39 %) of the students has scored pass mark. Despite the relative simplicity of the exam, possibility of using dictionaries, and the long time allowed, the total failure cases (10.61 %) are not too little though. This failure rate in this simple exam is a clear indication that the translation competence of a considerable number of students is rather poor and a recommendation is, therefore, worth mentioning here. It is that there should be an entrance (written and oral) exam for the new comers who want to join the English department in this particular faculty so that only those with highest potentials who should not exceed 35 students per year are to be accepted.

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APPENDIX
FINAL EXAM IN THE SUBJECT OF TRANSLATION (1)

Final Exam of the First Semester 2013-2014

Class: Third Year   **Date: Thursday 23/1/2014**
Department: English   **Time Allowed: 3 hours**
Course: Translation (1)   **Examiner: Dr. Adel Bahameed**

Answer ALL the following questions:

1) *Translate the following texts into Arabic:*

   a) Boys should clean their room twice a week.   (5 marks)

   b) My leg was hurt yesterday, so I must not play basketball.   (5 marks)

   c) This big house was built by Ali before 8 years.   (5 marks)

   d) Many students lose marks simply because they do not read the questions properly. (5 marks)

   e) The Japanese Boy

       A Japanese boy went to USA to study English. One day, he went to a birthday party. This party was organized by other Japanese students. But the boy got the wrong address. He got lost in the town. When he saw a nice building of the international bank, he stopped and knocked the door. He thought that it was the house of his friend. The policeman thought that this boy might be a thief. The policeman asked the boy to raise his hands up and stop moving. The Japanese boy did not understand because his English was poor. He continued moving and tried to enter the bank. The policeman shot him. The boy died immediately. (35 marks)

2) *Translate the following text into English:*

a) (45 marks)

<div dir="rtl">

زيدان أفضل لاعب

كان زيدان لاعب مشهور في كرة قدم. وُلد في فرنسا في ١٩٧٢. أصله من الجزائر. يُعتبر زيدان معجزة في تاريخ كرة القدم. أصبح الشعب الفرنسي فخور به. وكل الناس أحبته. حصل فريق بلاده على كأس العالم في كرة القدم. يستطيع زيدان أن يلعب جيداً. ويستطيع ان يعطي الكرة في الوقت المناسب لتسجيل الهدف. حصل زيدان على جائزة أفضل لاعب في العالم ٣ مرات. شعر الناس بالمفاجأة عندما أختير كأفضل لاعب في أوروبا. لعب كثير من المباريات الدولية. وقد أحرز كثيراً من الاهداف.

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