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Integrated Problem and Decision Reporting as a Translator Training Tool

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ABSTRACT
Systematic reporting of problems and decisions encountered by translation students in their translation assignments has been used by the author for 25 years. Though it requires efforts from the students, it costs little in terms of information collection for the trainer and contributes much to both parties, including: readily available information about the students' problems, both individual and collective, information about their translation strategies, a means to raise their awareness of various components of the translation process and to promote best efforts towards maximum quality, a means to help them retain or boost their self-esteem even if the end-result is still mediocre, information about inter-subjective difficulties in source texts. The method has shown its didactic usefulness in a process-oriented training approach over the years, and, as a convenient type of retrospection, holds some promise for local and multi-centre empirical studies into translation expertise acquisition, especially now that electronic means allow relatively convenient processing of large amounts of information.

KEYWORDS
Translation problems, translation strategies, translation students, awareness, retrospection, information collection, translation quality, process-oriented training. IPDR.

1. Introduction

One of the more encouraging advances in the literature on translator training over the past two decades or so is a shift from what Kiraly (1999) calls "teacher-centered" to "learning-centered classrooms" in translator education. While "constructivist" theories he refers to may seem a bit abstract to the practising translator trainer, some findings from cognitive psychology on the acquisition of cognitive skills may be easier to view as relevant, especially against the background of one's intuition as a translator and/or translator trainer. The approach to translator training presented here is predicated on experience and intuition rather than on formal theories, and postulates that translation is first and foremost a set of cognitive skills, though it also requires knowledge.

Such skills, like other cognitive skills, are acquired and mature over a long period, generally far longer than the few months or years that translation students spend in the classroom - among other examples from the literature, in an empirical study of translation, Jensen and Jakobsen (2000: 114) found that "the translational behaviour of young professionals may be closer to that of semi-professionals (graduate students) than to that of professionals with eight or more years of experience". Since translation involves not repetitive tasks which can be learned during an initial period, and then practised until they are automated, but tasks which vary, depending inter alia on the source-text unit being translated, it makes sense to provide trainees with tools to guide them in their

autonomous progression along the learning curve after they leave the classroom.

A small set of simple explanatory concepts and models which do not require the acquisition of much theoretical knowledge may be a good example of such a tool (a few are offered in Gile 1995), but is not enough to achieve high efficiency in the classroom. I believe two other important factors are awareness by trainees of what they are doing when they translate (also see Hansen 1999, Hönig 1995), and awareness by instructors of what trainees are doing, as opposed to awareness of the characteristics of the product.

Against this background, this paper discusses a simple approach I have been using over close to 25 years, solemnly christened *Integrated Problem and Decision Reporting* (IPDR) for the purposes of this paper.

2. Integrated Problem and Decision Reporting

2.1. What is IPDR ?

Discussing translation students' problems and solutions in the classroom is common practice. Also common is the view that both students and trainers should be able to justify their solutions (see for example Brunette 2000, Rochard 2000). IPDR's distinctive features arise from the fact that this report on problems encountered, on steps taken to solve them, and on the rationale for the final decisions made, either in the form of footnotes or as a set of comments and explanations which follow the translation, is an *integral part of translation assignments*. While IPDR is only one way to obtain this information, it collects it systematically, in written form, from the students, without cues from the instructor except the initial instruction and feedback when reports are inadequate.

I started using the method in 1979, when teaching scientific and technical translation from Japanese into French (Gile 1983). Due to the large distance between cultural and textual norms in French and in Japanese, which required much analysis and bold translation decisions, I thought it would be helpful to have the students' explicit account of why and how they translated the Japanese texts into French as they did. After a puzzled reaction as to what exactly they should write and why they should write it (a reaction which I encounter with every new translation class I teach in any language combination), students accepted the principle and complied with it. Direct comments received from them over the years, as well as indirect feedback through other instructors to whom they talked, suggest that they like it (Gyde Hansen, who is now experimenting with the method in Copenhagen, reports a similar reaction from her students). As is explained further down, the system also proved useful from the instructor's viewpoint. I have therefore made IPDR mandatory in all my translation classes (the students' focus shifts as they advance along the

learning curve, but there are always problems, decisions and solutions, and IPDR turned out to be useful in advanced classes as well).

I do not require any particular reporting format, but besides reporting all problems, the students must include full references of sources consulted, and preferably the context in which target-language terms or expressions which they chose were found (generally a sentence, sometimes a whole paragraph). As is explained further down, this turned out to be useful in indicating problems with source consultation methodology.

2.2. Basic IPDR rationale

Initially, IPDR was intended to fulfil a dual task: giving the instructor a better view of the students' progression, and helping students think about their translation problems and actions. Eventually, it showed it could do more.

2.2.1. The instructors' viewpoint

Two fundamental challenges for instructors are:

a. How to interpret a student's target text, and in particular, how to identify the student's problems and strategies.

On the assumptions that:

- several translation strategies can be used to solve translation problems depending on the context and on the purpose of the translation,
- students understand this, and implement translation strategies on this basis,

it is sometimes difficult, when reading a student's translation, to judge by the sole target text which is an error and which is only a strategy, albeit one that the instructor would not necessarily choose him/herself. This is obviously not the case of spelling errors and grammar errors, but omissions, additions and other shifts from the source text can result not only from a lack of mastery of the source language, from an insufficiently careful reading of the source text, etc., but also from a deliberate will to respond to what the student perceives as a need for explication, for redundancy reduction, or for removal of irrelevant information which might be detrimental to the translation's function or contrary to the commission received. Moreover, some sentence structures or lexical choices which may appear erroneous to the instructor may actually be legitimate in the target group's sociolect and just happen to be unknown to the instructor (as is apparent when students provide solid information about the source and context upon which they base their decisions).

One way to find out is to study each translation carefully and ask each student whenever a doubt arises. This, however, is not feasible in classes of more than a handful of students, if only because of the time required for individual dialogues. As is illustrated in the examples presented further down, IPDR goes a long way towards fulfilling the need, because students report any problem they consider significant, and the information is there for the taking.

b. How to monitor and assess the status of a whole class, or group of students

When assessing the overall situation of a group, the straightforward method requires analysis of the situation of each individual, followed by the preparation of a synopsis. In practical terms, instructors can identify general weaknesses as well as specific problems which are salient enough in several students' assignments to draw their attention, but subtler problems and other relevant phenomena can easily remain undetected. IPDR turned out to improve the situation markedly, again because the reports highlight such phenomena even when they are not salient at surface level in the target texts.

As illustrated in examples further down, IPDR also showed its usefulness in monitoring the effects, both positive and negative, of the instructor's methodological explanations, thus suggesting additional explanations or remedial action when required.

2.2.2. The trainees' viewpoint

a. Unlearning inappropriate reflexes and learning new procedures

As is often mentioned in publications about translator training (see for example Lavault 1993), most beginners suffer from the influence of many years of school translation focused on "language equivalence". Acquiring a new approach implies unlearning old reflexes, and thinking about the relevant process probably helps. When students are asked to explain every problem they encountered and every action they took, they necessarily think about them.

One objection to this claim could be that if students have acquired reflexes, they may proceed more or less automatically and not even notice some problems. This would reduce the usefulness of IPDR, just as the TAP methodology does not give access to automated translation components (see for example Kiraly 1990: 130, Jääskeläinen 2000). This is where some basic theoretical/methodological/conceptual guidance is useful: for instance, a reminder about the communication role of professional translation, including the importance of readability of the target text for the end-reader (Gile 1995, chapter 2), makes students aware that when their target text sounds "unnatural" in the target language - as happens

often when they translate on the basis of language equivalences - they have a problem; no matter how trivial this statement may read to most colleagues who practise or teach professional translation, many language teachers who teach translation at university, even in the framework of programmes aimed at training professional translators, tend to ignore the readability norm and give preference to formal "fidelity" over naturalness of the target text.

More than 30 years ago, Jiří Levý (1967) noted that actual translation work was "pragmatic", and that translators intuitively chose the solutions which promised a maximum effect with a minimum effort. When learning new translation strategies, thinking about them probably helps students remain on the right track instead of drifting away over time due to this law of least effort. With IPDR, a *minimum required* effect is achieved when students explicate their decision, and therefore have a chance to check its compliance with the principles they have been taught.

It is also reasonable to assume that a set of norms and strategies that have not only been practised, but also thought and written about, are more resistant to attrition over time. In particular, between graduation and the time translation processes become automated (in the cognitive sense, meaning inter alia that they require no awareness or deliberate decision making), that is, over several years without guidance from instructors, the awareness of the norms gained by the students may make it easier for them to remain on track.

b. Stressing the value of the intellectual component in translation

IPDR also materializes the idea that translation is far from automatic, and that it requires thinking and decision-making. Clearly, such intellectual processing takes place to some extent regardless of the reporting procedure, but the requirement to report it systematically not only encourages students to take it further, but also recalls and highlights its importance (and reminds them of its existence, when they are tempted to bypass analysis). This aspect of IPDR can be strengthened if the instructor devotes enough attention to the students' reports, both in his written comments on each translation assignment returned to the students and in his comments in class (as illustrated further down).

2.3. Practical implementation of IPDR

Note, for a better understanding of some points made further down, that the type of implementation presented here is predicated on a process-oriented teaching approach, with a strong psychological bias: the focus is on process components rather than on the product per se, errors in the product are viewed essentially as indicators of problems in the translation process, and the instructor counts on positive motivation to drive the students' progress (Gile 1994, 1995). I believe that such a process-

oriented approach is powerful in the initial stages of translation learning, and that after solid methods have been acquired by students, the focus can gradually shift to a more product-oriented approach.

In its didactic version, IPDR proceeds in three phases, the *reporting phase*, *the data analysis phase*, and the *instructor's response phase*. In a research version, the third phase can be replaced or complemented with different or follow-up phases, for instance with further questioning of students on specific problems, action, decisions or other phenomena.

In the *reporting phase*, the students report in writing their translation problems, action and decisions and hand in their assignments.

In the *data-analysis* phase, the instructor, having collected their translation assignments, reads them, writes down individual comments, and prepares a synopsis. A simplified example of such a synopsis is given in the appendix. This synopsis can be archived and used for research at a later stage.

The final *instructor's response phase* takes place in the classroom, when the assignments are returned to students. General comments are made on the source text in view of difficulties encountered by students, with explanations on segments and terms which proved to be of particular interest, and on the students' translations. Errors in their approach and decisions are discussed on the basis of the synopsis, without naming the students who made them. Assignments are then given back to students individually. During this phase, the students' particularly intelligent, creative or otherwise good comments can be read aloud with an appropriate comment for positive reinforcement.

With students not familiar with the system, it generally takes a short while before full compliance is achieved. Some students do not know what to report in spite of instructions received, and some ignore the reporting requirement. Fortunately, there are always enough students who do understand and do comply, so that the third stage can take place, and other students can see examples of successful reporting which they then use for guidance. Non compliance is rapidly taken care of by the instructor's refusal to read translation assignments which do not contain the required reports.

The data analysis phase presents no particular problems. It may be worth stressing that reading the students' comments on each problem takes far less time than their length would suggest.

2.4. Further advantages of IPDR

Over time, it became clear that the benefits of IPDR extended beyond initial expectations.

2.4.1. Psychological advantages

The fact that students are asked to explain their rationale and decisions made when facing problems acknowledges the role of the translator as a thinking person whose personal outlook and decisions are worthy of consideration. Feedback from the students suggests that this aspect of IPDR gives them a good feeling about themselves and about translation. This motivating effect may have been enhanced by the contrast with the attitude of instructors with a more traditional approach, who only "correct" the students' decisions and present their own as the best.

2.4.2. More serious work by students

Another clear effect of integrated reporting is that it tends to make students do their work more seriously, in particular when searching for and/or checking the meaning of terms in the source language and the appropriate equivalent terms in the target language. Initially, this was due only to the simple rule that I would not accept any translation in which the sources were not indicated for every technical or otherwise difficult term. Thus, instead of having to remind students to always look for appropriate sources and check, and finding it difficult to criticise the students' work if their solutions were right regardless of their having done proper research or not, I could rely on the work to be done more or less properly. From the students' comments, it seems that once they are engaged in the process, they also find pleasure in it, especially when they use the internet, due to the relative ease of discovery of new information and knowledge on the Web.

IPDR also encourages students to devote more efforts to finding out the meaning of unknown words and idioms in the source text and to checking the spelling and grammar of their target language version: they can no longer ignore problems, and as soon as they report them, they have no choice but to also try to solve them through appropriate efforts.

Finally, students report that writing their comments often generates further reflection on the source text and/or on their target text and results in their coming back to the translation and improving it.

2.4.3. IPDR for research

While IPDR was initially launched with a didactic purpose in mind, it may well turn out to be a useful tool for research as well. Introspection of various types has been used in process research, starting with the TAP methodology (which essentially consists in having translators verbalize their thoughts while they translate); more recently, retrospection has become popular, both in translation and in interpreting research (see Tirkkonen-Condit & Jääskaläinen 2000). IPDR offers no revolutionary way

of accessing information not available through other methods, and does not claim to provide comprehensive information; reporting in writing about all the problems and decisions takes time and effort, and students cannot be relied on to do it thoroughly. However, in terms of cost/benefit ratio:

1. The raw information is made available to the researcher in a directly readable form, instead of having to be inferred from the students' target texts.
2. Samples are as large as classes, without any need to recruit subjects for special experiments. The availability of this information on samples is particularly valuable, as it allows overcoming the obstacle of inter-individual variability at a very low cost.
3. It is easy to set up multi-centre studies, simply by choosing the same source texts and by sharing the students' translations and IPDR's. This allows inter-language, inter-culture, inter-teaching methods comparisons with large samples.

Moreover, the information is basically valid. While students may make up some of the actions they report, the risk is probably low, because of both the explicitness requirement and the possibility that they be challenged in class when their translation is returned to them. IPDR does not suffer from the problem of potentially jeopardized validity due to interference between the translation task and an additional online task such as verbalizing. Neither does it force the student to work in a particular environment, with a particular computer and software, and under specific time limitations. Note, however, that IPDR is not an online task. As explained above, it can have a direct influence on the process, insofar as when writing about a segment they have translated, students often have second thoughts and re-translate it. The information obtained through IPDR therefore reflects a subject's "best efforts" at a given time rather than a spontaneous, "caught-in-the-act" process.

To illustrate the potential value of IPDR for research, a few examples of evidence it has provided in translation classes are given further down.

1. What is really difficult about source texts.

When performing experiments, translation researchers tend to rely on surface characteristics and on an overall impression of what might be or might not be difficult for students, depending on the level of technicality of the text, on background knowledge believed necessary to understand it, on sentence complexity, on the presence of rare words, etc. In my experience, it has often turned out that students overcame easily some expected difficulties, while stumbling over others I had not detected. Besides its intrinsic value as information on what makes texts difficult to translate at various stages of translation expertise, such information is valuable when selecting source texts for further experiments.

2. Learning stages

IPDR has provided encouraging evidence that it is possible to teach students very rapidly to unlearn word-for-word, thoughtless translation and turn to analysis and reformulation, in spite of the many years spent with the "language-equivalence paradigm". Again, the advantage is not so much the information per se, but the fact that it is given by relatively large samples of students, as opposed to single individuals.

3. Internet as a source for ad hoc information acquisition.

One aspect of the translation process which is particularly well covered by IPDR is ad hoc information acquisition (the information specifically sought to translate a given source text). Evidence shows not only that over the past few years, the Internet has virtually replaced hard-copy texts as a resource for student translators (at least at Université Lyon 2), but also that reliance on web sites is often excessive, in particular with the search for specific collocations (see the examples further down).

4. Information on the effect of teaching strategies

Needless to say, IPDR is an excellent way to assess the impact of teaching interventions and to detect the need for remedial action. Once again, the advantage of IPDR lies in problems being highlighted and information being made available by the students, instead of having to be elicited from them, and the information is immediately available for the whole class.

As far as I know, IPDR has not been specifically chosen as a strategy for research so far, and the effective advantages of the method for specific research projects have yet to be explored. Its main limitation probably lies in the non-comprehensive nature of the data spontaneously provided by the students, and further exploration might lead to the introduction of some more specific questions and/or instructions. For instance, students might be asked to answer a set of questions on the relative difficulty of the text or on selected aspects of the assignment that researchers might be interested in, possibly with assessments using numerical scales for difficulty, for the relative importance of various factors, for the relative length of various translation components, etc.

3. Examples

The following examples illustrate the statements and claims made above. All are taken from English-into-French translation exercises in my translation classes over the last year. The students' comments in French were translated for this paper.

Example 1

The source text, on compounds which activate life-extending genes, contained the following sentence:
"David Sinclair… and colleagues identify several naturally occurring small molecules that extend the life of yeast cells..."

A student translated it into French as
David Sinclair… et des collègues ont identifié plusieurs petites molécules qui augmentent la longévité des cellules de levure

thus omitting "naturally occurring". Without indications from the student, the reason for the omission was not clear. Did she simply forget this part of the sentence when writing the French version ? IPDR provided the answer: the student wrote that she was "bothered" by "naturally occurring" and decided not to reword it in the target text, because she found that this resulted in no loss.

This not only revealed the reason for the omission, but also suggested that the student gave some thought to the pros and cons of rewording or omitting that particular segment. That this decision was an error was easily demonstrated by asking the student whether she did not think that some medical drugs were "man-made molecules" which were designed to give cells certain properties, in which case "naturally occurring" would be a non-trivial piece of information. The student readily accepted the idea and suggested herself that she should have retained it.

Example 2

In a text on why human cloning experiments should be banned (www.raclife.org),
"Cloning is the production of a duplicate organism without the process of reproduction" was translated as:
Le clonage est la duplication d'un organisme en dehors du processus naturel de la reproduction,
with the addition of *naturel*, which is not found in the source text.

Without IPDR, instructors who find the translation acceptable might not pay attention to the addition. In her report, the student showed that she gave some thought to the issue and made a decision on the basis of an analysis, plus ad hoc information acquisition on the internet with appropriate sources ("For the sake of clarity, I added the word *naturel*, since we are dealing with two bases for reproduction. This distinction is made in most sites I consulted www.cne-ethique.fr, www.inr-marseille.com"). This was a good reason to commend her on both, presumably strengthening her motivation and her confidence in the approach and norms she chose to observe.

Example 3

In *A companion to film theory*, by Robert Stam and Toby Miller, Blackwell Publishers, 1999, the first part of:
"Believing that the myth of Oedipus Rex mirrors the desires and events of infant sexuality, Freud based his descriptions on the Greek myth in which Oedipus, unwittingly, kills his father and marries his mother."
was translated into :
Convaincu que le mythe de l'Oedipe-Roi reflète les désirs et les manifestations de la sexualité infantile….

To explain her use of *manifestations* for "events", the student cited a source which says *Elles lui procurent une sensation de plaisir proche de l'orgasme dans laquelle Freud voit la première manifestation de la sexualité infantile* (members.lycos.fr/transadat/deveenf.html). This showed that the shift was due not to a misunderstanding of "event", but to excessive reliance on idioms or lexical units the student found in her sources, to the extent that they were copied and pasted into a target text without closer analysis of their meaning in their original context.

Incidentally, over the past few years, as the Internet has become increasingly used by students as an information resource for translation, I have found many such cases where the source and the context were appropriate, but the actual lexical unit or idiom adopted by the student was selected on the strength of appearances, without systematic analysis of its actual meaning.

Discussing these examples in class, without naming the student who made the mistake but stressing that the search for appropriate sources was a good move and that the sources which were used were good, paves the way to relatively painless remedial action.

Example 4

In a text about the nature of scientific theories, taken from John Anderson's classic, *Cognitive Psychology and Its Implications* (San Francisco, W.H. Freeman and Company, 1980), the sentence "What is important is that the theory be accurate in predicting a subject's actions under a certain condition" gave rise to a number of problems, one of which is representative of an important category of obstacles students encounter:

In their translation, several students avoided *prédire*, which is appropriate in this context, and chose *prévoir*, which corresponds to "anticipation" in a very wide sense. Some explained that in French, *prédire* was used in the parapsychological sense, and one cited a general dictionary of French, the *Petit Robert*, to back up her claim. Other students reported that they had

similar reservations, but when they looked up *prédire* in scientific sites on the internet, they found evidence that it is used in this context.

These reports were cited in class to stress that languages for special purposes borrowed words from everyday language with special meanings and/or special uses, and to remind students of the limitations of general dictionaries as a source for terminological and lexical information for specialised translation.

Explanations about the differences between LSP's and non specialised language were also found necessary when several students reported they decided to avoid using the same term (such as *cerveau* – 'the brain') twice or three times in a row in a set of sentences, in order to comply with the stylistic rule of non-repetition. The instructor had to point out that in specialised language, the use of different terms for the same concept may mislead readers into believing that the author refers to different concepts, and that the rule of non-repetition is weaker in LSP than in everyday language.

As to the risks associated with the use of general language dictionaries, they can be recalled as often as necessary when similar problems arise, always using some students' appropriate choices and sources to counter other students' inappropriate choices and sources, rather than being prescriptive from one's position as an instructor.

Example 5

In the same cognitive psychology textbook, the author asks how one goes about studying human cognitive functioning, and answers: "An obvious but naïve answer is that one studies the physiological mechanisms that underlie the behaviour". One student reworded "studies" as *explorer* ('explore'), explaining that she found the idiom *explorer le cerveau* ('explore the brain') on many internet sites and in several paper documents. While this wording might not have caught the instructor's attention without the comment, IPDR drew his attention to the fact that the student relied on the sole existence of a collocation in a context similar to the target text's as a sufficient basis to use it as an equivalent. This finding is similar to an observation made in Example 3.

Conversely, there are many examples of students not daring to associate words which they have not found as a collocation on the internet. For instance, for "inspect their brain…", one student thought of *examiner leur cerveau*, but eventually decided against it because in all the Web sites she looked up, she never found the collocation *examiner + cerveau*. The relatively large number of such cases indicates the risk of students considering Web sites as a sort of super-dictionary and a substitute for analysis, and shows that at least in some classes, further explanations are required on the use of the Web.

Example 6

Yet another type of frequently occurring event was the choice of term A over term B simply because it was found many more times when performing a "search" operation on a search engine such as Google. It is interesting that this quantitative difference was taken by the students as a qualitative indication. On one hand, it showed that they had understood that their approach to terminological choices was supposed to be descriptive more than prescriptive, in other words, that they had to find out what the sociolect of their target group was, and follow its usage rather than impose their own. On the other hand, it revealed that their analysis of the data obtained was still too superficial. For instance, they had understood that when writing for a French target group, their preference should go to French web sites, as opposed to Canadian sites, Swiss sites or Belgian sites, because of potential differences in the national varieties of French. What they did not take into account when basing their terminological decision on an overall quantitative indication given by their search engine was that Canadian sites were much more numerous than French, Swiss or Belgian sites, and that the large number of hits for one term may have come from a majority of Canadian sites, whereas a majority of French sites may well use another term.

Example 7

A different kind of finding emerged a couple of times from poor translations which had been done, according to the students' reports, with help from experts in the field. One student translated a text on liposuction, and thanked in her IPDR two medical doctors who specialise in liposuction. She said that they have excellent knowledge of English, had e-mail exchanges and telephone conversations with her, and checked her translation. And yet, her short target text (543 words) contained several unmistakable errors, such as:

- "Some of the older techniques have been abandoned because of their poor safety record" was translated into *Certaines des plus anciennes techniques ont été abandonnées à cause de leur faible fiabilité*. ('because of their poor reliability').

- "The initial reports of UAL were unrealistically enthusiastic" was translated into *Les premiers comptes rendus sur la liposuccion aux ultrasons internes étaient incroyablement enthousiastes* ('incredibly enthusiastic').

Moreover, this student's French text contained several grammatical errors and many infelicities.

This finding, and especially the fact that it occurs often in translation work done with the help of experts, suggests that such experts with the appropriate knowledge cannot necessarily be relied on to detect all errors in a translation, and that students should be made aware of the fact and learn how to "use" their human sources more efficiently.

4. Conclusion

Basically, the principle of IPDR is very simple: a systematic requirement for written introspective reporting by students whenever they hand in a translation assignment. Nevertheless, in this author's experience, the method has proved valuable at various stages of the learning/teaching process. In beginners' classes, it has enhanced the students' awareness of various key components of the translation process, gently guided them into performing critical translation steps more seriously, helped them feel better about translation and about themselves, and provided the instructor with information on their performance and their problems, thus allowing him to come in when necessary with more efficient teaching strategies, all this at little cost. In more advanced stages, where the students' focus was no longer on the basics, it has provided the instructor with information about technical difficulties, both in the source text and in ad hoc information acquisition. The value of the method for research remains to be examined more closely.

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Appendix: An example of an IPDR synopsis

The following is an example of the synopsis prepared after the students handed in a translation assignment. The text was prepared in French originally; it was translated and adapted for this paper. Comments in brackets indicate some of the instructor's actions in class as a response.

Source text:

(Segments which were found problematic in the students' translations and reports are in italics).

> For most people, seeing and hearing are as *effortless* as breathing. We take for granted our ability to recognize objects and people, *read words*, and understand *utterances* almost instantaneously. However, *an enormous amount of information processing* underlies these feats… it becomes apparent that perceptual information processing is non trivial when we consider people who cannot *successfully process* perceptual information. One case described in the *literature* concerns a soldier who suffered *brain damage* due to accidental carbon monoxide poisoning. He could recognize objects through their feel, smell, or sound, but was unable to discriminate a circle from a square or recognize faces or letters…. His system was able to *register* visual information, but *somehow* his brain damage resulted in a loss of ability to *combine visual information into perceptual experience*.

Possible translation into French, prepared by the instructor:

> *La plupart d'entre nous voient et entendent aussi naturellement qu'ils respirent. Nous tenons pour acquise notre capacité à reconnaître des objets et des personnes, à lire et à comprendre ce qui se dit presque instantanément. Et pourtant, il s'agit là de performances que sous-tend un énorme travail de traitement de l'information... On comprend que la chose n'est pas triviale quand on voit des personnes qui*

> *n'arrivent pas à traiter l'information perceptuelle. La littérature rapporte le cas d'un soldat atteint de lésions cérébrales à la suite d'une intoxication accidentelle au monoxyde de carbone. Il reconnaissait des objets à travers le toucher, l'odorat ou l'ouïe, mais ne pouvait distinguer un cercle d'un carré, ni reconnaître des visages ou des lettres… Son cerveau enregistrait des informations visuelles, mais il se trouve que ses lésions cérébrales l'empêchaient de les intégrer en une véritable expérience perceptive.*

1. Problems in the first sentence:

1.1. effortless :

This first sentence explains that most people see and hear without thinking about it, without devoting attention to it, just as they breathe without having to devote any attention to it. One's first reaction is to attempt to translate it by using the notion of effort, but most students found that since they don't have in French a word or idiom equivalent to *effortless* in English, their French sentence was clumsy. Many of them therefore chose, rightly so, to do without the word *effort* and its derivatives, and to refer to seeing and hearing as "natural", as in:

La plupart d'entre nous voient et entendent aussi naturellement qu'ils respirent.

[approve the choice and point out that though the wording is different, the message to readers is the same]

2. Problems in the second sentence:

2.1. Read words.

The problem here was with comprehension. It is reasonable to assume that the author meant 'understanding the message conveyed in writing', not only at the level of words. In French, a word-for-word translation such as *lire des mots* is clumsy. One possibility would be to do away with 'words' and translate by *lire* ('read'), which, in the context, implies reading words.

2.2. Utterances

Many students did not understand what the word meant in the context. Definitions in the dictionaries they used were not always explicit enough.

[Highlight the dictionaries' limitations and the importance of analysis, which should lead to the conclusion that here, 'utterances' is used for spoken words, as opposed to written words]

3. Problems in the third sentence:

3.1. An enormous amount of information processing

A major comprehension problem occurred for many students, who misunderstood this as meaning 'processing an enormous amount of information'. It is the processing work that was huge, not necessarily the information being processed.

[Explain to the students that there can be a huge amount of processing work on a small amount of information.]

One student wanted to avoid repeating *traitement* ('processing') in her translation, looked for a synonym, and found *organisation perceptive (structurer et présenter une information)* on www.umontreal.ca/giardina /fu-travaux.

[Explain that in spite of appearances, this is not really a synonym, that the idea of selecting a synonym was risky because the students do not have the necessary background information, and that the non-repetition rule is much weaker in LSP than in everyday language, so she need not have worried]

4. Problems in the fourth sentence:

4.1 Successfully process :

Many students realise that in the French wording, 'successfully' was redundant and could be omitted.

[approve this deliberate omission]

5. Problems in the fifth sentence:

5.1. In the literature

This word is known to students in its everyday language meaning, and was rejected by many, who said that this text did not deal with literature, and did not try to check whether it was also used with a different meaning in specialised texts.

Other students talked about *littérature scientifique* to adapt it to the context, and one took the wrong decision of speaking about *ouvrages*, a term which is inappropriate here, since it refers mostly to books, while most of the literature in psychology is in the form of papers. Lack of specialised background knowledge.

[Remind students of differences in the meaning and usage of words between everyday language and in LSP, and suggest that they check on the Web]

5.2. Brain damage

Most students used *lésions cérébrales*, which is fine, but one wrote *encéphalopathie*, which she found in two medical dictionaries.

[Explain that:
1. The term used in psychology may not be the same as the one used in medicine
2. Encéphalopathie may be too complex and abstract for beginning psychology students, the target group for this textbook.]

6. No special comment about the sixth sentence

7. Problems in the seventh sentence:

7.1. His system
What the author meant here was the cognitive system, that is, an abstract entity. Many students did not feel happy about *le système* in French, and chose *son cerveau* ('his brain'), in the abstract sense, after checking this use of the word in sites on cognition. Good choice.

7.2. Register

Some students translated by *stocker*, which means 'store'.

[Explain the difference between very short-term registration in sensory stores, short term processing in working memory, and long-term storage]

7.3. Somehow

Many students found this difficult to translate. Some chose *d'une manière ou d'une autre*, which does not sound very good in French and gives the comment too much salience.

[Approve the choice of students who decided that the best option under the circumstances would be to omit it]

7.4. Combine visual information into perceptual experience
May students found this difficult to translate.

[Explain the meaning of these words: attribute meaning to what was perceived by the senses]

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