

Difficulties Students face in Sight Translation Exams: A Case Study at the University of Sulaimani- Department of Translation

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Abstract:

The method of orally reproducing a written text in a target language is called sight translation (STr). This method is used as a bridge between translation and interpreting which is now considered as its mode of interpreting. Sight translation is two-toned because it requires both reading and speaking; therefore, students face difficulties and challenges while performing the task.

The purpose of this study is to highlight the problems students face before taking an exam in sight translation and during the exam. To conduct the study, depending on Likert-scaled questions, fifteen senior students participate in a two-part quantitative questionnaire. The first part is a pre-test questionnaire in which students are asked to answer a set of questions to highlight the challenges they face before the exam. Later, the students are asked to translate a text from English into Kurdish, through which the researcher tries to evaluate the students' translation and their abilities to overcome the problems they face in performing sight translation according to sight translation exam criteria. Soon after, the students perform the post-test questionnaire in which they give their reviews about the challenges they had during the exam. The whole questionnaire is designed to validate the results of the students in sight translation exams.

This paper is helpful to understanding the students' challenges in sight translation and helps the translation teachers to make appropriate pedagogical decisions to ease the challenges students face during sight translation.

Keywords: Sight Translation (STr), STr. Difficulties, Textual Difficulties of STr., STr. Exams.

1. Introduction:

Sight translation is a mode of translation that means transforming a written text in the SL into a verbal text in the target language. Understanding a written text in one language and delivering the oral translation of the text in the second language makes the translator perform a double task since s/he reads in one language and renders it in the second one. This kind of translation is common in conference interpreting settings and non-conference settings such as hospitals, courts, and institutions.

STr is also recognized as sight interpreting. The task of STr takes two steps. The first step is understanding the written source text. In the second step, what has been understood in the understanding step will be transformed into its oral or verbal form in the second language simultaneously.

The sight translator's job is not easy because s/he should move back and forth between the SL and the TL. The translator must consider several aspects such as the allotted time-span, linguistic and cultural differences, public speaking skills, fluency, and avoiding hesitation.

Moreover, the ability to deal with unfamiliar SL terms during the translation, following SL register and genre conventions, rendering the text coherently, and the overall quality of the translation are the other important aspects that the translator should consider.

Since the output of ST is verbal, STr can be regarded as a pre-interpreting level to enrich the students' interpreting skills in the undergraduate programs of translation studies. STr can also be seen as a crucial aim to deliver the message conveyed in the SL text accurately. It assists students to develop their linguistic and communication skills since it helps them reduce pauses, hesitation, speaking at a slow pace, sudden changes in tone of voice, overusing fillers, and incomplete statements and thoughts.

2. Literature Review:

STr is a form of translation in which a written text in the SL is transformed into an oral text in the target language. In translation studies programmes, training in STr is crucial since it is a pre-step toward interpreting. STr has a questionable status among the other forms of translation. To some scholars, it is regarded as an easy task, while it is as tricky as simultaneous interpretations to others.

Stansfield (2008) believes that STr is not an easy task. He considers it the most challenging task interpreters face, since, in consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, interpreters render only an oral language into another oral language. Conversely, in STr, translators may have to interpret a well-prepared written language into an oral one and mostly with no opportunity to prepare for it carefully.

According to Lambert (2004), generally, there are two types of STr: rehearsed STr in which the translator is given some preparation time to read the text and go through it quickly before the task of translation; and unrehearsed translation in which the interpreter translates the text on the spot without previous preparation.

Weber (1990: 50) highlighted that, in STr, word-for-word translation should be avoided, while rapid text analysis, rapid transference of information from the SL to the TL, and public speaking techniques are the skills that are highly required for STr. To Angelelli (1999:27) the interpreter, in STr, should translate the text as if the

translator is reading the text in the target language, indicating that the translator should deliver the translation very smoothly with no hesitations or pauses.

Moreover, according to Brady (1989: 143) and Lambert (2004:298) sight translators face difficulty in delivering the translation in the TL due to time stress and the oral nature of the task of translation in STr. Another difficulty in STr is the concurrency of reading and TL production. As Weber (1990: 46) states, the interpreter is required to read the source text, think of the translation, and restructure the text in the (Agrifoglio 2004: 54) TL at the same time.

Similarly, Agrifoglio (2004: 54) affirms that the task of STr is not an easy one, as he states that the interpreter needs to read ahead to identify the keywords and recognize the units of translation in order to make smooth oral performance. He also asserts that the main problem of STr is coordination of reading, memory, and production.

In the task of STr, the translator is required to store up information in his/her short-memory awaiting enough information from the source text to reproduce it orally in the target text. With longer and more complex sentences, the interpreter needs extra processing efforts because the syntactic differences between the two languages create a challenge to the interpreter to bring together both the reading in the SL and the production of the text in the TL.

According to a study by Ivars (2008:92), understanding the ST is the primary reason for STr problems, while the secondary problem in STr is finding a TL equivalent. Therefore, incomprehensibility of the SL leads to deviating from the SL text message.

Many scholars think that STr is regarded as an exercise or a technique to enhance simultaneous and consecutive translation skills. For example, Weber (1990) asserts that most of the skills that are used in STr are also required for conference interpreting. Furthermore, Viaggio (1995) explains the significance and effectiveness of STr in performing simultaneous interpreting. Thus, the effectiveness of STr as a practice for the other modes of interpreting, such as simultaneous and later to the consecutive interpreting, highlights the importance of STr in the obligatory translation studies programs for undergraduate studies.

3. Research questions:

After giving the above consideration concerning STr in translation studies programs for undergraduate students, the paper sets out to answer some questions. Firstly, what are the most common pre-exam difficulties students face during STr? Then, what are the most common difficulties students face during STr exams? Finally, what is the best pedagogical approach to teach STr classes in the undergraduate Translation Studies Programs to overcome the problems students face during the exams?

4. Research design and methodology:

To answer the questions mentioned above, the study was conducted at the University of Sulaimanyiah, College of Languages in the Department of Translation. The students were asked to answer a set of 20 questions in a pre-test questionnaire. Later, they sat for STr midterm examinations in 2019-2020 and translated a text from English to Kurdish, the records of which were carefully transcribed and analyzed. Finally, they also answered 20 other questions in the post-test questionnaire.

4.1 Source Text:

An English text about COVID-19 was selected from The Guardian because COVID-19 was a topical issue at the time of conducting this study, and as such, it was assumed that the students would be familiar with the subject matter. It consisted of 466 words in total, written in 12-point Guardian Text Egyptian-reg font size from The Guardian. The text was a newspaper article which included simple and complicated sentences, passive and active sentences, idioms, phrasal verbs, different types of tenses: plural, possessive and third-person singular 's', and many political, administrative and medical terms.

4.2. Participants:

De Beaugrande (2003) believes that for any translation study, it is better to take authentic students' translations as a sample. Therefore, to highlight the problems students face in STr exams, 15 junior undergraduate students (7 males and 8 females) from the Department of Translation, College of Languages were selected.

4.3. The Procedure:

The participants were instructed on what to do step by step. They were asked to fill in the pre-exam questionnaire form before starting the STr exam. A set of 20 statements were given and were well-explained to each of the participants by the researcher before they chose their own suitable answer according to their STr experience. Next, each student was given 4.5 minutes to read the source text. The participants were asked to highlight the parts of the source text that they could not finish reading during the allocated time. Thereafter, the participants started the STr exam.

Their translation was fully recorded and the mistranslations of the terminologies, tenses, sentences, phrasal verbs, idioms, the usage of plural and possessive 's' and any other mistranslations were carefully examined. The untranslated sentences, phrases, and terminologies were marked and the time they spent on translating the whole text was also recoded. Eventually, the researcher read and explained each of the 20 statements in the post-exam questionnaire, and the students were asked to choose the most appropriate option they had been given in the questionnaire.

4.4. Data Collection:

The statements or questions were given in the Likert scale form in which 5 options were offered to the participants to choose their most appropriate option. Later, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) V.23 was used to analyze the data that were collected and were given in the data collection sections, data analysis and discussions. In order to know what problems students faced in STr exams, a pre-test questionnaire and a post-test questionnaire were prepared as the following:

A. Pre-test Questionnaire:

In the pre-test questionnaire, a set of 20 statements were given to the students before the exam to know about the students' impression of the exam prior to going through them, and the students' actual thinking about the exam even before they go through them. The statements are about the most important aspects of STr and STr exams. The table below shows the statements and the students' opinions about each statement after collecting the data and analyzing them via SPSS-V. 23:

No.	Questionnaire statements	Disagree	Agree
1	The oral nature of the test is difficult for you and it may affect your quality of the translation.	33	67
2	Practicing public speaking techniques before exams is needed.	20	80
3	Reading different texts continuously helps you in STr exams	13	87
4	Stored information is needed in short-term and long-term memory to reformulate the source text into the target text.	6.7	93.3
5	STr needs rapid text analysis skills.	0	100
6	Rapid conversion of information is a challenge while sight translating a text.	20	80
7	Some preparation time should be allowed to the students to read the text before the task (rehearsed STr).	0	100
8	Public speaking techniques are highly needed for STr	33.3	66.7
9	You can deliver the translation smoothly without hesitations or pauses.	60	40
10	Time stress is one of the main difficulties in STr exams.	26.7	73.3
11	The oral nature of STr task is a challenge in the exam.	46.6	53.3
12	SL reading and TL production concurrently in STr is a challenging task.	20	80
13	It is a difficult cognitive process to read the source text while thinking of its translation.	13.3	86.7
14	Reading ahead to identify the keywords and units of translation is essential for STr	0	100

15	Long and complex sentences require extra processing effort throughout the task of STr	13.3	86.7
16	Syntactic differences between the SL and the TL create a challenge to coordinate reading and smooth target production.	13.3	86.7
17	SL comprehension creates difficulty while performing STr.	13.3	86.7
18	Finding TL expressions is challenging throughout the whole task.	20	80
19	Reading speed can be very challenging while sight translating an English text to Kurdish.	26.7	73.3
20	Quality of the second language text is more important than following the exact lexical meanings of the source text.	20	80

B. Textual Difficulties Students Face in STr Exams:

According to the students, there are many textual difficulties. Many of them are related to the terminologies, while some others are related to the phrasal verbs, idioms, tenses, 's' types, and the usage of voice. The table below illustrates the number and types of mistakes made by the students during the sight Tr. exam:

Students code	Mistakes in terminologies' meaning	Mistakes in restructuring the SL sentences in the TL.	Mistakes in phrasal verbs	Mistakes in idioms' meaning	Mistakes in tenses	Mistakes in plural/ possessive/ 3 rd person singular 's'	Mistakes in active/ passive structure
1	10						
2	23	6	3	1			
3	21	4			3		
4	41	5		1	2		
5	22	7	2		2		
6	30	15	3	1	1		
7	16	6	2	1			
8	33	16	2			1	

9	24	8		1			2
10	15		1	1			2
11	27	12	2	1			
12	27	3	3	1		1	
13	13	4					
14	40		2	1			
15	24	3	1				
Average %	100%	80%	66.66%	60%	26.6%	13.33%	13.33%

C. Post-Test Questionnaire:

The same set of statements that were given in the pre-test questionnaire were also given to the students in the post-test questionnaire. This was meant to evaluate their pre-test answers and to know about the extent to which their answers changed and how the STr exam affected their choices and insights. Comparing their answers in the pre-test questionnaire to the post-test questionnaire, one can notice a great change. This is because, by the time of the exam, they had become familiar with their weak points due to taking into consideration those points that they detected to have problems with in the pre-test questionnaire. The post-test questionnaire determined the students' weak points that they had to work on. The table below shows how the students' insights about STr Exams have changed in the post-test questionnaire.

No.	Questionnaire statements	Disagree	Agree
1	The oral nature of the test was difficult for you and it affected your quality of the translation.	26.7	73.3
2	Practicing public speaking techniques before exams was needed.	13.3	86.7
3	Reading different texts continuously helped you in STr exams.	0.0	100.0
4	Stored information was needed in short-term and long-term memory to reformulate the source text into the target text.	0.0	100.0
5	The STr test needed rapid text analysis skills.	0.0	100.0
6	Rapid conversion of information was a challenge while sight translating the text.	13.3	86.7

7	Some preparation time was needed to allow to the students to read the text before the task (rehearsed STr).	0.0	100.0
8	Public speaking techniques were highly needed for the STr of the text.	6.7	93.3
9	You delivered the translation smoothly without hesitations or pauses during the exam.	73.3	26.7
10	Time stress was one of the main difficulties in the STr exam.	20.0	80.0
11	The oral nature of STr task was a challenge in the exam.	33.3	66.7
12	SL reading and TL production concurrently in STr was a challenging task during the exam.	20.0	80.0
13	It was a difficult cognitive process to read the source text while thinking of its translation in the exam.	20.0	80.0
14	Reading ahead to identify the keywords and units of translation was essential for the exam.	0.0	100.0
15	The long and complex sentences required extra processing effort throughout the task of STr exam.	6.7	93.3
16	Syntactic differences between the source and the TL created a challenge to coordinate reading and smooth target production during the exam.	40.0	60.0
17	SL comprehension created difficulty while performing the STr exam.	26.7	73.3
18	Finding TL expressions was challenging throughout the whole task during the exam.	0.0	100.0
19	Reading speed was challenging while sight translating the English text to a Kurdish one during the exam.	26.7	73.3
20	Quality of the second language text was more important than following the exact lexical meanings of the source text in the exam.	0.0	100.0

5. Results and Discussion:

5.1 The pre-test:

As it is mentioned before, the study focuses on the difficulties the students experience in STr exams. The results of the pre-test questionnaire demonstrated that 100% of the students believed that rapid text analysis, some preparation time before the task of STr, and reading ahead to identify the keywords and units of translation were all the most essential basics for the exams. While 93.3% of them considered stored information in short-term and long-term memory to reformulate the source text in the target text. Moreover, 87% of the students were certain that reading different texts continuously helped them in STr exams. Furthermore, 86.75% of the students were of the opinion that, cognitively, it was a difficult process to read the source text while thinking of the translation. They also believed that long and complex sentences required extra effort in the task of STr. Along with syntactic differences between the SL and the TL, SL comprehension made it difficult to perform STr smoothly.

80% of the respondents considered practicing public speaking techniques before the exam was needed. They also thought that the rapid conversion of information and source text reading and TL production concurrently, finding TL expression, and quality of the second language text rather than lexical meanings of the source text were among the main difficulties during the STr exams. Besides, 73.3 of the students thought that reading speed and time stress made difficulties for them during STr exams. Along with that, only 67% of the students considered the oral nature of STr as a difficulty to affect the quality of their translation, and 66.7% of the students thought that public speaking skills were highly needed for STr. Finally, only 40% of them thought that they could deliver the translation smoothly without hesitation and pauses in the pre-test questionnaire.

5.2 . The Test:

Regarding the STr test, the table of Textual Difficulties Students Face in STr Exams section shows that all the students made mistakes in the political and medical related terminologies, while 80% of the students made mistakes in restructuring and reformulating the SL sentences in the TL structure. Furthermore, 66.66% of the participants mistranslated the phrasal verbs, and 60% of them made mistakes in translating the idioms. In addition, 26.6% of the respondents mistranslated the tenses, which means that their translation of the tenses was not acceptable in the TL according to the audience, and their translation of the tenses semantically and grammatically sounded odd according to the nature of the TL. Last but not least, 13.33% of the participants made grammatical mistakes in plural, possessive and 3rd person singular 's' and also in translating active and passive sentences.

5.3 The post-test:

The post-test questionnaire changes all the results shown in the pre-test questionnaire. It corrects all the ideas that the students mistakenly had about STr and the STr exams. The students' concerns in the pre-test questionnaire were definitely changed in the post-questionnaire which was the effect of the exam that the students took right after the pre-test questionnaire.

In the post-test questionnaire, all the students prioritized reading different texts continuously, and believed that stored information in short-term and long-term memory to reformulate the ST was highly needed. 100% of the students believed that rapid text analysis, preparation time before STr, reading ahead to identify the keywords

and units of translation, finding TL expressions, and how the quality of the TL is much more important than following the exact lexical meanings of the SL were among the most difficult challenges they face in the exams.

Regarding public speaking techniques and long and complex sentences that require extra processing effort throughout, the task of STr comes in second. For each of them, only 93.3% of the students had difficulty with in the task of STr.

Additionally, 86.7% of students had difficulty practicing public speaking skills before the exams and rapid conversion of information during the exams. That means that the students' third concern was related to public speaking skills and rapid conversion of the information that was sight translated from the SL into the TL.

Furthermore, time stress, SL reading and TL production concurrently, and the cognitive process of the SL reading while thinking of the translation were the difficulties of 80% of the students. However, 73.3% of the students had challenges with oral nature of the test, SL comprehension, and reading speed while performing the STr task. At the same time only 60% of the students found difficulty with syntactic differences between the SL and the TL, and only 26.7% of them realized that they could deliver the translation smoothly and without hesitations and pauses, meaning that 73.3 % of the students hesitated and paused while sight translating the texts during the exams.

6. Conclusion:

This study aimed to investigate the difficulties students face in STr exams in translating texts from English into Kurdish. All in all, the findings revealed that the textual difficulties of STr exams were mostly related to grammar-related issues like restructuring and reformulating the SL sentences in the TL structure, phrasal verbs, idioms, tenses, and plural, possessive, and 3rd person singular 's', syntactic differences between the two languages as well as the active and passive sentences.

Other difficulties were cognitive-related difficulties such as rapid conversion of information from the SL into the TL, the process of SL reading and TL production concurrently, the cognitive process of the SL reading while thinking of the translation, along with the oral nature of the test.

Moreover, semantic-related difficulties included meaning of the terminologies, finding the meaning of SL expressions in the TL, the quality of the TL rather than following the exact lexical meanings of the SL, besides the meaningful restructuring and reformulating of the SL long and complex sentences in the TL.

Other problems that students faced were cognitive-related difficulties such as rapid text analysis, time stress, public speaking skills, SL comprehension, reading speed, and translation hesitation and pauses.

In order to assist the students to overcome their difficulties, the STr instructor should help the students read different texts continuously, focusing on translating the terminologies, phrasal verbs, idioms, active and passive sentences, etc. The students should be allowed to rehearse sight translating the texts prior to the class for the first few STr classes, but when they get used to STr techniques, the instructor should hand them the texts to sight translate while they are having STr classes to get used to sight translating in real-life situations.

ئەو كيشانەى ئە تاقىكردنه وهكانى وهرگىرانى زارهكى دهقدا ڤووبه ڤووى خویندكار دهبيتته وه تويزينه وهيهكى بارودوخيانهيه، ئە بهشى وهرگىرانى زانكۆى سلیمانى

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ڤوخته:

ئەو مېتۆدهى، كه دهقیكى نوسراوى به شیوهى زارهكى له زمانى بهرامبهردا پېبه رههه م دههینریت پىی دهگوتریت وهرگىرانى زارهكى دهق. ئەم مېتۆده وهكو پردىك بهكاردههینریت له نیوان وهرگىرانى نوسراو و وهرگىرانى زارهكیدا. كه له ئىستادا وهكو شیوازیكى دیکهى وهرگىرانى زارهكى ته ماشادهكریت. وهرگىرانى زارهكى دهق كاریكى دوو ڤهههنده، چونكه ههه م پىویستی به خویندنه وه وهه م پىویستی به نوسینیش ههیه. ههر بۆیه خویندكار له كاتى جیهه جیکردنى ئەو كارهدا ڤووبه ڤووى كیشه و ئاستهنگ دهبيتته وه.

تويزينه وهكه تیشك دهخاته سهه ر ئەو كيشانهى، كه خویندكار له پيش تاقىكردنه وه وهه روهها له كاتى تاقىكردنه وهى وهرگىرانى زارهكى دهقدا ڤووبه ڤوویاندهبيتته وه، بۆ به ئه نجامگه یاندنى ئەم تويزينه وههش پشت به شیوازی ڤرسيارکردن به پىوه رى ليکیرت به ستراره وه ۱۵ خویندكارى قوناغى چواره م له ههردوو بهشى ڤاڤرسییه چه نديتییه كه دا به سداریبیان کردوو ه. له بهشى یه كه مى ڤاڤرسییه كه دا خویندكارهكان وهلامى كومه له ڤرسيارىك دهدهنه وه سه بارهت بهو كیشه و ئاستهنگانهى، كه له پيش تاقىكردنه وهى وهرگىرانى زارهكى دهقدا، له گه ل ئەو كيشانهى خویندكارهكان له كاتى وهرگىرانى دهقیك به شیوازی زارهكى له زمانى ئینگلیزییه وه بۆ زمانى كوردى ڤووبه ڤوویان دهبنه وه، له سهه ر ئەو بنه مایه تويزهر هه ولدهدات كاری وهرگىرانى خویندكارهكان و تواناكانیان بۆ زالبوون به سهه ر ئەو كیشه و ئاستهنگانهى، كه له كاتى ئه نجامدانى تاقىكردنه وهدا ڤووبه ڤوویان دهبنه وه، به پىی پىوه رهكانى هه لسهنگاندنى وهرگىرانى زارهكى دهق، هه لسهنگینیت. دواتر، خویندكارهكان وهلامى ڤرسيارهكانى بهشى دووه مى ڤاڤرسییه كه دهدهنه وه، كه تپیدا بۆچوونى خویمان ده ربارهى ئەو ئاستهنگانهى له كاتى تاقىكردنه وه كه دا هاتونه ته به رده میان، ده رده بڤن. ته وایى ڤاڤرسییه كهش وا داڤیژراوه، كه ئه نجامى ئەو تاقىكردنه وهیهى خویندكارهكان له وهرگىرانى زارهكى دهقدا کردوو یانه، پشتراستبكاتته وه.

ئەم توژینه‌وه‌یه یارمه‌تیمان دەدات بۆ تیگه‌یشتن له‌و کیشه و ئاسته‌نگانه‌ی خویندکاران له‌ تاقیکردنه‌وه‌ی زاره‌کی ده‌قدا پووبه‌روویان ده‌بنه‌وه، هه‌روه‌ها یارمه‌تی وانه‌بیژانی بوای وهرگیران ده‌دات، بۆئێوه‌ی بریاری دروست بده‌ن و گونجاوترین ریگای وانه‌وتنه‌وه هه‌لبژیرن، به‌ جوړیک ئه‌و ئاسته‌نگانه ئاسانبکه‌ن، که‌ دینه به‌رده‌م خویندکارله تاقیکردنه‌وه‌ی وهرگیرانی زاره‌کی ده‌قدا.

کیله وشه‌کان: وهرگیران، وهرگیرانی زاره‌کی ده‌ق، ئاسته‌نگه‌کانی وهرگیرانی زاره‌کی ده‌ق، تاقیکردنه‌وه‌کانی وهرگیرانی زاره‌کی ده‌ق.

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