

What do translation comments and task completion time tell us about translation students' performance?

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An experiment was conducted on 60 Master students in translation, in which they were asked to complete a translation task from English to French as part of their scientific and technical translation course and post it on the university's learning platform as soon as they were finished. Throughout the course, students were trained to comment their translation choices based on Gile's (2004, 2005) *Integrated Problem and Decision Reporting* (IPDR) and were required to do so for the experiment. The 60 target texts were coded for errors and graded. The completion time of each translation was also noted, and each comment coded according to its type (namely comments on translation, English language, French language, structure, or terminology).

The main goal of this paper is to cross-examine three parameters associated with the experiment based on statistical analyses: the completion time of the translation task, the translation comments written to support translation choices (through their frequency, variety, and precision) and the translation accuracy of the target texts (i.e., the grade received for the translation task based on errors).

Our hypotheses are the following: (i) the higher the completion time, the less accurate the translation and vice versa. Indeed, extended task completion often shows cognitive struggle which may be seen as a "workload indicator" (Sun, 2015, 47); (ii) the more frequent, (iii) varied and (iv) precise the comments, the fewer the errors in the translations.

The results show that (i) students with higher grades spent less time on the task ($r = -0.135$), hinting they are probably capable of taking on a heavier cognitive load. In addition, there is indeed a correlation between the quantity and quality of comments and translation accuracy: students who provided (ii) numerous, (iii) varied and (iv) precise comments tended to make fewer errors overall than those who wrote few comments or comments that were less varied and less precise.

The experiment described in this paper stresses the necessity to study parameters such as task completion time, translation comments and translation accuracy to gain better insight into students' performance and, ultimately, to personalize and enhance translation teaching.

References

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