



## 4th International Academic Conference on Teaching, Learning and Education

# Analysis of Students' Common Errors in Translating a Journalistic Text: Coherence and Cohesion Errors

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### Abstract

Any text is an act of communication, which means that it is not a simple linguistic entity, but an entity subject to spatio-temporal influences. Thus, if we admit that the text is the basic unit of translation, during this process it will be necessary to take into account the linguistic elements but also the extralinguistic factors. In this article, we will show, using text translated by undergraduate students, how textual factors such as cohesion and coherence affect the quality of the translation. So, we will try to show that the errors which affect the cohesion and the coherence of the arrival text result, the first from an insufficiently careful reformulation and the second from a partial or erroneous understanding of the original text. Before tackling the heart of the matter, that is the presentation and analysis of errors relating to coherence and cohesion in the texts produced by the students, we believe that it is necessary to refer to some theoretical aspects on which the proposed analysis is based.

**Keywords:** coherence, cohesion, reformulation, cognitive complements

### 1. Introduction

According to Delisle, coherence and cohesion determine to a large extent the degree of readability and clarity of a text (Delisle, 2003). They testify to the rigor of the translator's thought and his aptitude to communicate intelligibly a message.

In principle, cohesion should not pose a problem when translating a text because it is assumed that the translator has a good command of his working languages, which is often the case with professional translators. However, we often see mistakes in apprentice translators due to the fact that each language has its own rules of cohesion. Lack of knowledge of these rules in both languages not only disturbs the cohesion of the target text but also affects the meaning.

Coherence is raised at a logical level. In correlation with the extralinguistic elements, it allows the translator to correctly grasp the logic of the source text and reproduce it in the target text. In the same way, coherence makes it possible to solve the problem of the polysemy of words or sentences.

In a given text, the meaning of a word or a sentence depends on the links that these establish with other textual elements. So coherence is nothing more than the convergence into a unified whole of all the information contained in a statement. According to J. Dancette, it is established by a set of correspondences at the level of concepts, logical relations, organization of situations, and the evoked human experience (Dancette, 2003).



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### 2. Methods of analysis

The object of the translation is the text as a product of the author's intention addressed to a given reader. All text is made up of a macrostructure, namely the message that the author wants to send to his reader. Therefore, the text is the result of the sequence of several sentences, words related to each other and at the syntactic level and on the contextual level. The text as a linked structure requires a "correct" understanding in the full sense of the term which will lead to a correct semantic interpretation and finally to a translation faithful to the meaning of the original author. Here, we are referring to the notion of comprehension as defined by Danica Seleskovitch:

".. [the comprehension of the speech does not appear as the result of a synthesis of linguistic elements [and] does not occur linearly [..], it is done by association of the semantic indices of the words with a prior knowledge, as a function of logical coherence" (Seleskovitch 2001).

It is precisely this logical coherence of which Seleskovitch speaks which, quite often, is by far a concern for apprentice translators. A very frequent tendency and really difficult to root out among trainee translators is the fact of giving primary importance to the solution of lexical and syntactic problems, forgetting to keep an overview of the text that they translate, from which several errors appear. The immediate recourse to the bilingual dictionary as a means of solution constitutes another shortcoming which we will not deal with here (Dado & al. 2013). We are going to illustrate our point, through an old article published by the newspaper *Le Monde*, entitled "Cessons ces trépignements d'enfants gâtés". Written by a writer who is both an essayist, the text presents a structure quite interesting at the linguistic and semantic level. This is why almost time after time it is the subject of a translation by the undergraduate students. We are going to analyze practically some errors of cohesion or coherence present in a text translated from French into Albanian. We will proceed to the following categorization: content errors and form errors.

### 3. Content errors

By content error we mean a lack of coherence. Coherence concerns concepts, ideas expressed and the logical relationships between them. The lack of coherence gives place to nonsense, false sense or misinterpretation. From the corpus explored, we were able to distinguish several situations of target text that derive from a misinterpretation of the logic of the source text by undergraduate students or a difficulty of re-expression:

The target text can be coherent even if it lacks cohesion:

a) *Etrange inversion des temps: avant même d'avoir commencé une vie d'adultes, ces adolescents aux tempes grises pensent déjà à la clore.*

*En: Strange inversion of time: even before having started an adult life, these teenagers with "gray temples" are already thinking of ending it.*

*Al: Një përmbysje kohërash e çuditshme : që para se të fillojnë një jetë prej të rriturish, këta adoleshentë të thinjur para kohe mendojnë tashmë për mbylljen. (the anaphoric recovery is not transmitted in the target text)*

*En: A strange time reversal: that before they start an adult life, these prematurely gray hair teenagers are already thinking about closing down.*



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The target text can be cohesive but not coherent:

*b) Etrange inversion des temps: avant même d'avoir commencé une vie d'adultes, ces adolescents aux tempes grises pensent déjà à la clore.*

*En :* Strange inversion of time: even before having started an adult life, **these teenagers with gray** temples are already thinking of ending it.

*Al:* Përmbysje e çuditshme e kohëve, pa filluar ende një jetë prej të rrituri, **këta adoleshentë të vrenjtur** mendojnë që tani për fundin.

*En:* Strange inversial of times, without even starting an adult life, **these gloomy teenagers** think now for the end

The target text may not be coherent or cohesive, which is worse.

*c) Les jeunes sont donc bien à l'avant-garde du plus grand parti de la France: le parti de la peur.*

*En:* Young people are therefore well at the forefront of the largest party in France: the party of fear.

*Al :* Pra, të rinjtë janë të paralajmëruar nga pjesa tjetër e francezëve që janë më të pasigurt.

*En:* So young people are warned by the rest of the French that they are more insecure.

The target text can be coherent but it does not respect the coherence of the source text:

*d) La passion française pour la grève est moins un signe de vitalité que de routine, bel exemple d'une conquête transformée en rituel, voire en symptôme dépressif.*

*En:* The French passion for the strike is less a sign of vitality than of routine, a fine example of a conquest transformed into a ritual, even into a depressive symptom.

*Al :* Pasioni francez për grevën i cili është më shumë një shenjë gjallërie sesa një shenjë rutine, përbën shembullin e goditur të një beteje të shndërruar në ritual, madje në një simptomë depresioni.

*En:* The French passion for the strike, which is more a sign of vitality than a routine sign, is the striking example of a battle turned into a ritual, even a symptom of depression.

The target text is incoherent itself and comparing to the source text:

*e) Le recours systématique à la grève naît d'un sentiment de dépossession: notre pays a cessé depuis longtemps d'être «la nation indispensable» dont les coutumes et les lois influencent les autres sociétés.*

*En:* The systematic recourse to strikes stems from a feeling of dispossession: our country has long since ceased to be "the indispensable nation" whose customs and laws influence other societies.

*Al :* Kërkesa e vazhdueshme për grevë lind si rezultat i varfërisë: vendi ynë ka kohë që ka



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*rreshtur së qeni "kombi në dispozicion", traditat dhe ligjet e të cilit ndikonin mbi shoqëritë e tjera.*

*En: The constant demand for strikes arises as a result of poverty: our country has long ceased to be an "available nation" whose traditions and laws influenced other societies.*

### 3.1 Analysis of coherence errors

Far from claiming to draw up an exhaustive list of cohesion and coherence errors encountered in apprentice translators, we are of the opinion that most from these errors result from an incorrect or incomplete understanding of the source text and difficulty of re-expression in target language. The result: a translation "unfaithful" to the meaning of the author in the event of coherence errors, "ackward" in the event of cohesion errors, and "unacceptable" in the event of coherence and cohesion errors in same time. To avoid all these errors especially related to the content, Gile suggests that translators do a plausibility test before moving on to the step of reformulating the meaning. It is considered that the meaning identified on the first reading of a statement is that a *meaningful hypothesis*, and to verify it by constantly asking the question: Is there a logical coherence between what I think I understood and the rest of the text? Is there a contradiction between the opinions expressed in different parts of the text or between facts described in the same text? (Gile, 2005). We agree that this applies even to apprentice translators. If the answer to these questions is positive, the apprentice translator can move on to reformulation otherwise he must develop a new hypothesis of meaning, and so on.

Errors in meaning are usually due to insufficient knowledge of source language, insufficiently inattentive reading of the source text, insufficiently inattentive reformulation of the target text, insufficient knowledge of the target language and complements insufficient cognitive skills. All these inadequacies weigh on the comprehension. A lame understanding itself leads to an incorrect semantic interpretation. We will in particular draw attention to the interpretation of the logic of the source text as a source of errors.

In example a) the translation of the expression "des adolescents aux tempes grises" gave the students a hard time. There was only one student who translated it correctly. Asked about the meaning, the majority of students responded that it indicated a state of nervousness in adolescents. This group of students had translated this expression by "të vrenjtur" (see ex.b). Just insufficient attention to source text reading and students instead of "tempes grises" (transl. gray temples) read "temps gris" (transl.: bad weather) even claiming that there had a possible spelling error in the original text. Another part had literally translated it without being able to explain it. In the text it is about the strikes on the pension reform in France. The general understanding of this text (others texts too) also required an acquisition of *ad hoc* knowledge<sup>1</sup>, namely knowledge of French actuality. From protagonists of these strikes, apart from the unions, there were also high school students who participated in the demonstration.

The first sentence of the text provides us with this detail as well as the reason for their participation in strikes, namely their future retirement. The tongue-in-cheek phrase "Ces adolescents aux tempes grises" may be interpreted as high school students aged in advance and demonstrating for already secure a retirement. So understanding is a very important step in

<sup>1</sup> GILE talks about the importance of ad hoc knowledge acquisition, complement pre-existing knowledge and knowledge acquired during reading and from the analysis of the source text, p.137.



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translation process. In this phase, the apprentice translator must mobilize language skills and knowledge acquired in reading the text and at the same time he must acquire ad hoc knowledge. All this knowledge will help him to understand the source text.

### 4. Formal errors

The lack of cohesion constitutes an error of form. In the corpus of texts translated by the apprentice translators the most more frequent that we were able to note are:

- Omission of the original anaphora:

f) *Nos voisins européens ont été surpris de nous voir descendre dans la rue pour deux années de travail supplémentaires quand eux-mêmes ont déjà accepté la retraite à 65 voire 67 ans. Ils y ont vu un trépignement d'enfants gâtés qui préfèrent casser leurs jouets plutôt que d'accepter une réforme, au demeurant incomplète.*

*En: Our European neighbors were surprised to see us take to the streets for two additional years of work when they themselves had already accepted retirement at 65 or even 67 years old. They saw in it a stamping of spoiled children who prefer to break their toys rather than accept a reform, moreover incomplete.*

*Al: Fqinjët tanë europianë u habitën kur na panë të dyndemi në rrugë për dy vite pune shitesë, ndërkohë që ata vetë kanë pranuar tashmë pensionin në moshën 65 ose 67 vjecare. Ata panënjë këmbëngulje prej fëmijësh të llastuar të cilët më mirë thyejnë lodrat e tyre, sesa pranojnë një reformë, në dukje të paplotë.*

*En: Our European neighbors were surprised to see us flock to the streets for two extra years of work, while they themselves have already accepted the pension at the age of 65 or 67. They saw the insistence of spoiled children who better break their toys than accept a seemingly incomplete reform.*

g) *Olivier Besancenot n'avait-t-il pas proposé en 2003 de créer un grand parti de la grève? Les enfants pourraient en faire partie avant d'avoir occupé le moindre emploi!*

*En: Did not Olivier Besancenot propose in 2003 to create a large strike party? Children could be part of it before having held any job!*

*Al: A nuk kishte propozuar Olivier Besancenot-i, krijimin e një partie të madhe të grevës në 2003-shin? Fëmijët mund të bëheshin pjesë pa zënë as punën më të vogël.*

*En: Had not Olivier Besancenot proposed the creation of a large strike party in 2003? Children could become part ?? without having to worry about even the smallest of tasks.*

- incorrect relative pronouns

h) *Le recours systématique à la grève naît d'un sentiment de dépossession: notre pays a cessé depuis longtemps d'être « la nation indispensable » dont les coutumes et les lois influencent les autres sociétés.*

*En: Systematic recourse to strikes does not come from a sense of deprivation: it pays a lot of attention to the long-term "nation indescribable" in which the customs and laws influencing other societies*



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*Al: Gjetja e grevës si zgjidhje, në mënyrë sistematike lind nga një ndjenjë çlirimi : vendi ynë prej shumë kohësh ka rreshtur se qeni « kombi i domosdoshëm » ku zakonet dhe ligjet ndikojnë në shoqëritë e tjera.*

*En: Finding strike as a solution, systematically arises from a sense of liberation: our country has long ceased to be the "necessary nation" where customs and laws influence other societies.*

- Lexical and expression clumsy: these are words and expressions that are not suitable for the context, but thanks to the context there is the possibility of understanding the author's intention:

*i) En définitive, la fatigue française ne naît pas d'un surcroît d'activité mais d'un excès d'abstention.*

*En: As a conclusion, French fatigue does not arise from an excess of activity but from an excess of abstention*

*Al: Si përfundim, lodhja franceze nuk vjen nga një shtesë e aktiviteteve por nga një mospjesmarrje e tepruar.*

*En: In conclusion, French fatigue does not come from an addition of activities but from an excessive non-participation.*

### 4.1 Analysis of cohesion errors

Throughout the reformulation the apprentice translator must ask the question (we are the ones proposing it) if the text product is acceptable or not from the point of view of its clarity and its linguistic quality. Indeed, in this phase, Gile talks about acceptability and fidelity test where it is a question of producing statements in the target language and check their linguistic acceptability and information fidelity (Gile, 2005). But from our experience, we conclude that the two main reasons for form errors are due to students not paying enough attention to the reformulation and find it difficult to distance themselves from the linguistic structures of the source text when reformulating in target language. They don't apply that famous Gile acceptability test or even if they do this test is faulty. Students no doubt forget that the two linguistic systems, that of French and Albanian are different, which means that it will be difficult to always find exact equivalences. Gouadec makes a very interesting observation about the reformulation he calls re-expression or restitution: "*As a creative work, the restitution is relied on in respect of French grammar and is accompanied by the creation of stylistic (or rhetorical) effects comparable in degree and quality to those produced by the author in the source text*" (Gouadec 1994).

If we analyze the examples mentioned in the section of cohesion errors, we will see that the first reason has the supremacy. In the case of anaphors, we can say that the complex written texts present several anaphoric strings to inside. Comprehension reading helps to recognize the first mention of the textual referent and of the other links of the chain, so other anaphoric times. In example f) we found that many students had omitted the anaphora "y" of the source text. Indeed, this pronoun is used to take up any an idea, namely "*Les européens ont vu dans notre comportement (= use of strikes for the slightest discontent), un trépigement d'enfants gâtés*



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[...]. Translate by "Ata panë" (They saw), without no reference to the previous context, it is to cut a in a way, the logical chain that links the statements inside of the translation unit by compromising comprehension. The same remark applies to example g), but with a very small distinction: the context is more favorable to grasp the meaning, that is to say that it does not cause great ambiguity, even if the student does not have not reproduced in target text the anaphoric recovery.

As for the few errors noted relating to clumsiness lexicals and relative pronouns, we can say that they too derive from insufficiently inattentive reformulation. "*La fatigue française*" implies the fatigue of the French people. Literal translation of this phrase, in Albanian sounds unusual, bizarre. Same remark for "*le moindre emploi*" in example g) translated by number of students by "*pa zënë as punën më të vogël*". Indeed, when asked about the meaning of these statements, the students testified to a correct understanding of the text, namely "*la fatigue des français*" and "*Pa qenë asnjëherë të punësuar*" and once their translation is projected on the wall or written on the board, they were able to correct immediately the texts produced by themselves. Indeed, this shows both a lack of attention but also the impossibility to escape of the linguistic structures power of the source language. Delisle's following observation about English and French which applies to any language pair and to any translator or apprentice translator, supports our idea even more than a correct reformulation in the target language requires a very good knowledge of that language:

*"In the absence of any hard and fast rule, it is by his intimate knowledge of the language and often by his linguistic sensitivity that the translator will avoid these subtle syntactic anglicisms"* (Delisle, 2003).

### 5. Conclusion

In translation, the teacher will often only be able to help the student to progress if he knows the type of mistakes he is likely to make: thus, it may be relevant to guide the learner so that he understands the origin of his errors in order to avoid their recurrence.

So, understanding the source text is an exercise prior to translation of journalistic text but not only. Logic dictates that we start by understanding the text; practice shows that many students are often quick to translate the text right away by committing there a serious error which leads to errors at the level of coherence and at the level of cohesion. Apart from an incorrect understanding of source text, cohesion errors are also due to an inattentive reformulation in the target language and a difficulty of move away from the linguistic structures of the source language. That is why students should do a plausibility test before moving on to the step of reformulating the meaning in order to avoid coherence errors and an acceptability and fidelity test in order to provide a translation product which is acceptable from the point of view of its clarity and its linguistic quality. It is even thanks to an enrichment of cognitive complements that the students will manage to avoid these errors as much as possible.



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### Annex

#### Cessons ces trépignements d'enfants gâtés !

Les grèves récentes auront montré le spectacle stupéfiant de lycéens manifestant pour leur retraite. Etrange inversion des temps : avant même d'avoir commencé une vie d'adultes, ces adolescents aux tempes grises pensent déjà à la clore. L'avenir doit être écrit à l'avance et l'existence sécurisée du début à la fin. On songe à ce sondage publié il y a quelques années où 70 % des Français de moins de 30 ans se souhaïtaient une carrière de fonctionnaire, protégée de tous les aléas. Les jeunes sont donc bien à l'avant-garde du plus grand parti de la France : le parti de la peur. Les Français ont peur du monde, peur des autres et, plus encore, de leur propre peur. Et ils accroissent leur frayeur en voulant éliminer le moindre risque. C'est un effroi entretenu jour après jour par les médias et l'intelligentsia et qui vient d'abord de notre incapacité à maîtriser un univers devenu trop complexe pour nous. La passion française pour la grève est moins un signe de vitalité que de routine, bel exemple d'une conquête transformée en rituel, voire en symptôme dépressif. Olivier Besancenot n'avait-t-il pas proposé en 2003 de créer un grand parti de la grève ? Les enfants pourraient en faire partie avant d'avoir occupé le moindre emploi ! Même si le mouvement d'octobre a été motivé par la détestation de Nicolas Sarkozy, il fut surtout une façon d'exorciser la méchanceté du monde, cette pression de tous sur chacun que l'on nomme la globalisation. Le recours systématique à la grève naît d'un sentiment de dépossession : notre pays a cessé depuis longtemps d'être «la nation indispensable » dont les coutumes et les lois influencent les autres sociétés. Nos voisins européens ont été surpris de nous voir descendre dans la rue pour deux années de travail supplémentaires quand eux-mêmes ont déjà accepté la retraite à 65 voire 67 ans. Ils y ont vu un trépignement d'enfants gâtés qui préfèrent casser leurs jouets plutôt que d'accepter une réforme, au demeurant incomplète. Dirait-on que nos compatriotes, fidèles à leur esprit frondeur, ont osé se cabrer quand les autres



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peuples se sont couchés ? Mais, au final, la loi est passée et les arrêts de travail n'étaient rien d'autre qu'une grosse colère pour avaliser une décision impopulaire. Il nous faut penser ce paradoxe d'une révolte qui est une forme subtile de renoncement. On s'insurge parce qu'on s'est déjà résigné. La grève est l'autre visage du consentement.

### **Pascal Bruckner, écrivain et essayiste**

Text by Pascal Bruckner, writer and essayist  
(translated from french into english)

### **Let's stop these spoiled childish stampings!**

Recent strikes will have shown the staggering spectacle of high school students demonstrating for their retirement. Strange inversion of time: even before having started an adult life, these teenagers with “gray temples” are already thinking of ending it. The future must be written in advance and existence secured from beginning to end. One thinks of this survey published a few years ago where 70% of French people under 30 wanted a career as a civil servant, protected from all hazards. Young people are therefore at the forefront of the largest party in France: the party of fear. The French are afraid of the world, afraid of others and, even more, of their own fear. And they increase their fear by wanting to eliminate the slightest risk. It is a fear maintained day after day by the media and the intelligentsia and which comes first from our inability to master a universe that has become too complex for us. The French passion for the strike is less a sign of vitality than of routine, a fine example of a conquest transformed into a ritual, even into a depressive symptom. Did not Olivier Besancenot propose in 2003 to create a large strike party? Children could be part of it before having held any job! Even if the October movement was motivated by the detestation of Nicolas Sarkozy, it was above all a way of exorcising the wickedness of the world, this pressure of everyone on everyone that we call globalization. The systematic recourse to strikes stems from a feeling of dispossession: our country has long since ceased to be “the indispensable nation” whose customs and laws influence other societies. Our European neighbors were surprised to see us take to the streets for two additional years of work when they themselves had already accepted retirement at 65 or even 67 years old. They saw in it a stamping of spoiled children who prefer to break their toys rather than accept a reform, moreover incomplete. Will it be said that our compatriots, faithful to their rebellious spirit, dared to rear up when other peoples went to bed? But, in the end, the law passed and the work stoppages were nothing but a big anger to endorse an unpopular decision. We have to think about this paradox of a revolt which is a subtle form of renunciation. We rebel because we have already resigned ourselves. The strike is the other face of consent.