

Research Article

A Study of Translation Techniques in DIPES II Abstracts from French into English

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Abstract

In an academic context where English increasingly serves as the dominant language of scholarly communication, the quality of dissertation abstracts translated from French into English is crucial for the international visibility and credibility of research produced in francophone institutions. This study identifies the translation techniques used by DIPES II student-teachers of the Department of French Language and Literatures of HTTC Maroua in rendering dissertation abstracts from French into English. Using a qualitative approach, the research analyses a parallel corpus of French abstracts and their corresponding English translations, applying Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2004) taxonomy to identify the strategies employed. The analysis reveals a dominant use of calque, characterised by literal transfer of French structures into English, alongside less frequent and often inconsistent instances of modulation, transposition and omission. These findings indicate strong L1 interference, limited mastery of English academic discourse conventions, and insufficient control of translation strategies. The study concludes that translation quality remains hindered by structural and rhetorical weaknesses, and recommends explicit training in translation techniques and academic writing to improve the clarity, fidelity, and overall linguistic accuracy of English abstracts produced by student-teachers.

Keywords

Translation, Abstract, Translation Techniques, Calque, Modulation

1. Introduction

The translation of academic texts is widely acknowledged as a cognitively demanding and genre-sensitive activity that goes beyond simple bilingual competence. It requires a high level of linguistic accuracy, discourse awareness, and familiarity with disciplinary conventions in both the source and target languages (Baker, [2]; Karoly, [7]). Recent studies emphasise that academic translation, particularly at the level of abstracts, involves not only lexical and syntactic choices but also rhetorical and pragmatic decision-making shaped by the norms of international academic communication (Hyland, [5]).

In multilingual contexts such as Cameroon, where English and French coexist as official languages, translation plays a crucial role in enabling access to knowledge and ensuring the circulation of scholarly research across linguistic communities. Scholars argue that in such settings, academic translation functions as a bridge between local research production and global academic visibility, especially within English-dominated scholarly spaces (Pym, [11]). Consequently, the quality of translated academic texts has direct implications for the credibility, dissemination, and reception of research outputs.

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Within teacher-training institutions, the translation of dissertation abstracts constitutes a particularly significant academic practice (Hisyam & Sujatmiko [4]). The abstract serves as the primary gateway to a research work, summarising its objectives, methodology, and findings while adhering to strict conventions of clarity, conciseness, and formality (Swales & Feak, [13]). Inadequate translation of abstracts may therefore distort meaning, weaken rhetorical impact, and limit international readability (Ufnalska, [14]). This challenge is especially pronounced among EFL learners, who often struggle with academic register, syntactic restructuring, and genre-appropriate expression in the target language (Hyland, [5]).

Empirical research on EFL translation performance consistently reports strong first-language interference, frequent reliance on literal translation, and overuse of calque as dominant strategies, often at the expense of communicative effectiveness (Molina & Hurtado Albir, [10]; Jupri et al., [6]). While such strategies may preserve surface meaning, they frequently result in structurally awkward or pragmatically inappropriate target texts. Recent pedagogical studies further suggest that limited exposure to explicit translation training contributes to learners' insufficient control of modulation, transposition, and other meaning-oriented techniques (Al-Shokhada & Algamal [1]).

Against this backdrop, evaluating the translation techniques employed by student-teachers provides valuable insight into their developing translation competence and their ability to negotiate linguistic and rhetorical differences between French and English academic discourse. By analysing translated dissertation abstracts, it becomes possible to identify dominant patterns, recurrent weaknesses, and areas requiring pedagogical intervention.

2. Review of Literature

The analysis of how translations are produced is fundamental to understanding their quality. A prominent study in this area was conducted by Rezita et al [12], who investigated the translation techniques used in abstracts of nationally accredited Indonesian journals. Employing Molina and Albir's (2004) taxonomy, their mixed-methods research revealed that Established Equivalent (25.2%), Borrowing (23.4%), and Literal Translation (21.7%) were the most dominant techniques. This suggests that translators of these academic texts primarily sought direct, pre-existing equivalents for terms, often importing source language words directly when necessary.

A key finding from their research was the variation in technique usage across journals of different accreditation levels. High and medium-level journals exhibited a greater diversity of translation techniques (nine each) compared to low-level journals (eight techniques). This implies that the quality and sophistication of a journal may be correlated with the translational competence of its authors, who in many cases are acting as self-translators. The study also noted the conspicuous ab-

sence of techniques like Adaptation, Compensation, and Discursive Creation, attributing this to the factual, non-literary nature of academic abstracts, which seldom require the creative or cultural adaptation typical of literary texts. The work of Rezita et al. [12] establishes a clear precedent for using translation technique analysis to diagnose the strategies employed by non-professional translators in an academic context, directly informing the methodological approach of the present study.

While identifying translation techniques is informative, it does not fully account for the accuracy and acceptability of the final translated product. This requires a robust framework for Translation Quality Assessment (TQA). Koçer Gldal and Tarakcioglu [8] address this need by proposing a comprehensive TQA model specifically designed for academic translations. Their Academic Translation Quality Assessment Model (ATQAM) is a two-step, error-analysis-based holistic model. The first step involves a Text/Discourse Analysis (register, move, and digital text analysis), which paves the way for the second step, a Translation Analysis focusing on Accuracy (e.g., mistranslation, omission) and Fluency (e.g., linguistic inconsistency, and conventional errors).

Their empirical application of this model to 50 Turkish-English research article abstracts yielded critical insights. The most prevalent error category was Linguistic Issues, accounting for 61% of all errors, underscoring the significant challenge non-native speakers face with the grammatical and syntactic structures of the target language. Furthermore, their study quantitatively demonstrated that translations produced by professional translators had higher mean quality scores (91.7) than those translated by authors themselves or other non-professionals. Similarly, traditional human translation yielded higher quality scores (90.4) than translations produced with Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tools (79.9), a finding that challenges assumptions about the efficacy of technology in this specific domain.

The quality of a translated abstract is also contingent upon the writer's mastery of the target language's academic conventions, including metadiscursive features. Demanou and Tabe [3] investigated one such feature—hedging—in the DIPES II dissertation abstracts of HTTC Maroua students. Hedging is a crucial rhetorical strategy used to express tentativeness, politeness, and scholarly humility.

Their disciplinary and move analysis revealed an unsatisfactory representation of hedges overall, with hedges constituting only 2.6% of the entire corpus. The most common strategies were relatively simple forms: markers of intentional vagueness (e.g., some, many), accuracy hedges (e.g., may, could), and writer-oriented hedges (e.g., the results suggest). More complex, reader-oriented hedges (e.g., it appears that) were virtually absent. The study also found disciplinary variations, with students in Bilingual Letters using hedges more frequently and appropriately than those in History, and that the Findings/Results move contained the highest concentration of hedges.

This research highlights a critical deficit in the pragmatic and rhetorical competence of the very population under study in this present research. It suggests that even before translation issues are considered, HTTC Maroua students may struggle with the discursive norms of academic English, which will inevitably be reflected in—and compounded by—their translation output.

Mairamou [9] carried out research on the analysis of the translation of cultural references in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* from English into French. The research aim was to analyse how cultural references are translated in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* from English into French. This study has been conducted on the translation of a French translator, Michel Ligny. Being based on the Skopos theory of Christiane Nord and Michel Ballard's translation techniques, the work described and compared the techniques the original text with its translated version. The collected data registers three cultural markers namely proper nouns, proverbs and songs. Corpus-base analysis was applied on the corpus in order to extract cultural markers and justify their translation. The findings revealed that the translator mainly used report and literal translation techniques for rendering these elements especially proper nouns and proverbs. Besides the multiple types of the instrumental translation of Nord, it is observed that Ligny chooses mostly the equifunctional translation. Hence, the translator also encountered some difficulties related to culture, sense, style and syntax; then recommends the use of a glossary, footnote or even a paraphrase.

Individually, these four studies provide valuable insights: Rezita et al. [12] show how non-professional translators in an academic setting approach the task (techniques). Koçer G üldal and Tarakcioglu [8] provide a model for evaluating the success of such translations (quality assessment) and Demanou and Tabe [3] identify specific linguistic and rhetorical weaknesses in the English academic writing of HTTC Maroua DIPES II students (rhetorical competence). Mairamou [9] analysed the translation of cultural references.

However, a significant gap exists at the intersection of these research streams. No study has yet used Molina and Albir's (2004) taxonomy to specifically evaluate the translation technique of DIPES II abstracts. While Rezita et al [12] analyzed the translation of abstracts, they did not focus on them as translations from a French source text.

3. Methodology

This section details the fundamental components of this investigation: the corpus that forms the basis of the analysis and the population from which it was sourced. A clear description of these elements is essential for establishing the scope, validity, and reliability of the research findings.

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design

to investigate the translation techniques used in the English translations of DIPES II dissertation abstracts originally written in French. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study focuses on the identification, description, and interpretation of linguistic and translational phenomena within naturally occurring academic texts. The analysis is primarily based on Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2004) taxonomy of translation techniques.

3.2. Corpus and Population of the Study

The corpus of the study consists of a parallel bilingual collection of French dissertation abstracts and their corresponding English translations produced by DIPES II student-teachers from the Department of French Language and Literatures of French Expression at the Higher Teachers' Training College (HTTC) of Maroua. The abstracts were selected because they constitute authentic academic texts reflecting the students' translation practices in a bilingual educational environment.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select the corpus. Only dissertations containing both the original French abstract and its English translated version were retained for analysis. In total, 26 dissertation abstracts produced between 2023-2024 were collected and analyzed. The corpus therefore represents a substantial body of naturally occurring academic translation data produced by non-professional translators in an EFL context.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected from archived DIPES II dissertations available in the Department of French Language and Literatures of French Expression at HTTC Maroua. The researcher extracted the French abstracts and their corresponding English versions and organized them into a parallel corpus for comparative analysis. Each pair of abstracts was coded and systematically arranged to facilitate line-by-line examination of translation choices and structural transformations.

3.4. Analytical Framework

The analysis was guided by Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2004) model of translation techniques. This framework was selected because it enables the identification of micro-level translation procedures used in transferring meaning from the source language (French) to the target language (English). Particular attention was paid to the techniques that appeared most frequently in the corpus, namely calque, modulation, transposition, and omission.

Each English abstract was carefully compared with its French source text in order to identify recurrent translation patterns, structural interference, lexical transfer, and rhetorical adjustments. Instances of translation techniques were manually identified, classified, and grouped according to the categories proposed by Molina and Hurtado Albir (2004). Fre-

quencies and percentages were subsequently calculated to determine the predominance of each technique within the corpus.

3.5. Method of Data Analysis

The analysis followed three major stages. First, the researcher conducted a comparative reading of the source texts and target texts to identify linguistic correspondences and translation shifts. Second, the identified translation techniques were categorized according to the analytical framework adopted for the study. Finally, the data were interpreted qualitatively in relation to translation competence, French linguistic interference, and the conventions of English academic discourse.

The interpretation of the findings focused not only on the frequency of translation techniques but also on their implications for academic translation quality. Emphasis was placed on how the identified techniques reflected the students' mastery of English academic writing conventions and their ability to negotiate structural differences between French and English.

3.6. Reliability and Validity

To ensure the reliability of the analysis, repeated readings of the corpus were carried out during the coding process. The classification of translation techniques was based strictly on the definitions and categories proposed by Molina and Hurtado Albir (2004) in order to minimize subjective interpretation. Furthermore, examples extracted from the corpus were systematically cross-checked with their source texts to ensure analytical consistency and accuracy.

4. Results

4.1. Calque

Also called loan translation, a calque is a word or phrase borrowed from another language by literal word-for-word or root-for-root translation [15]. Below are some of the evidences of calque extracted from the abstracts of the dissertation.

Table 1. Calque.

French (SL)	ENGLISH (TL)
Cette étude fait une analyse de...	This study makes an analysis of...
La problématique de cette étude est...	The problematic of this study is...
Le présent travail a pour objectif d'examiner...	The present work has for objective to examine...
Nous avons opté pour une approche qualitative...	The present work has for objective to examine...
Nos résultats prouvent que...	Our results prove that...

In Table 1 several instances of calque, also known as loan translation, where French structures are translated literally into English are identified. For example, the French phrase "Cette étude fait une analyse de..." was rendered as "This study makes an analysis of...", reflecting a word-for-word transfer rather than the idiomatic English "This study analyses...". Similarly, "La problématique de cette étude est..." was translated as "The problematic of this study is...", demonstrating the influence of false friends, as the English term problematic does not convey the intended meaning in academic contexts; the natural rendering would be "The research problem of this study is...". Other instances, such as "Le présent travail a pour objectif d'examiner..." rendered as "The present work has for objective to examine...", show structural calques that mirror French syntax but are non-idiomatic in English; a more conventional expression would be "This study

aims to examine...". Even when literal translations are grammatically correct, such as "Nos résultats prouvent que..." translated as "Our results prove that...", they may still sound unnatural in formal academic English, where "Our results show that..." is preferred. Overall, these examples illustrate the pervasive influence of French as the first language on English academic writing among Cameroonian EFL learners.

4.2. Modulation

Modulation is a translation technique in which the perspective, point of view, or conceptual emphasis of the source language is changed to produce a more natural or idiomatic expression in the target language [15]. Unlike calque or literal translation, modulation does not translate words directly but conveys the same meaning by changing the way it is expressed.

Table 2. Modulation.

French (SL)	English Modulated Version (TL)	Type of Modulation
Il est important de noter que...	Notably,...	Change in phrasing; concise English
Les résultats montrent une augmentation...	An increase is observed in the results...	Perspective shifted from active observation to passive reporting
On peut conclure que...	The findings suggest that...	Conceptual shift to cautious academic phrasing
Cette étude met en évidence...	This study highlights...	Idiomatic English; “puts in evidence” → “highlights”
Il convient de souligner que...	It is worth emphasizing that...	Phrasing changed to idiomatic English

As shown in Table 2, the examination of dissertation abstracts reveals multiple instances of modulation in translation into English. Modulation involves changing the point of view, phrasing, or grammatical structure of the source language to convey the same meaning in a way that is natural and idiomatic in English. For example, the French expression “Il est important de noter que...” is rendered as “Notably...”, producing a more concise and academically appropriate English expression. Similarly, “On peut conclure que...” becomes “The findings suggest that...”, reflecting a shift toward cautious reporting typical of English academic writing. Other instances, such as “Cette étude met en évidence...” → “This

study highlights...” and “Cette approche permet d’identifier...” → “This approach enables identification of...”, illustrate changes in verb forms, nominalization, and structural adjustments to achieve idiomatic expression.

4.3. Transposition

In translation studies, transposition refers to a strategy where the grammatical category or word class of a lexical item is changed from the source language to the target language while preserving meaning. In a linguistic context, this can involve:

Table 3. Transposition.

French (SL)	English Transposed Version (TL)	Type of Transposition
L’analyse des données	To analyse the data	Noun → Verb; syntactic shift typical in English academic discourse
Il est essentiel de noter	Notably	Verb phrase → Adverb; lexical category changes for concise expression
Le comportement des participants	How participants behave	Noun phrase → Verb phrase; illustrates syntactic and semantic restructuring
Analyser les résultats	Analysis of the results	Verb → Noun; nominalization in English academic style

Table 3 presents multiple instances of transposition, illustrating shifts in grammatical categories from French to English. For example, “L’analyse des données” is rendered as “To analyse the data”, representing a noun-to-verb transposition that facilitates syntactic integration into English sentences. Another notable case is “Il est essentiel de noter” → “Notably”, where a verb phrase is transformed into an adverbial phrase, reflecting conciseness and idiomatic usage. Similarly, “Le comportement des participants” becomes “How participants behave”, showing a noun phrase converted into a verb

phrase. Additionally, “Analyser les résultats” is translated as “Analysis of the results”, demonstrating verb-to-noun nominalization common in English academic writing. These instances demonstrate the importance of transposition in linguistics, particularly in the study of learner interlanguage and morphosyntactic adaptation.

4.4. Omission

In translation studies, omission is a strategy in which the

translator deliberately leaves out a word, phrase, or structure from the source language because it is redundant, untranslatable, or unnecessary in the target language.

Table 4. Omission.

French (SL)	English Version (TL with Omission)	Type of Omission
Cette étude s'inscrit dans le cadre de...	This study examines...	Long introductory formula omitted because it is redundant in English.
Le présent travail propose une analyse de...	This study analyses...	"Le présent travail" omitted; replaced with direct subject.
En ce qui concerne les objectifs de la recherche...	The objectives are...	Introductory discourse marker omitted for conciseness.
Nous avons utilisé une approche descriptive dans cette étude	A descriptive approach was used	Subject pronoun "nous" omitted; English allows passive restructuring.

The data presented in [Table 4](#) reveal several cases of omission, a translation strategy in which certain elements of the French source text are deliberately left out in the English version to produce a clearer and more natural target text. For instance, "Cette étude s'inscrit dans le cadre de..." is reduced to "This study examines...", removing introductory padding that is typical in French academic writing but unnecessary in English. Similarly, "Le présent travail propose une analyse de..." becomes "This study analyses...", omitting the phrase "le présent travail", which would sound redundant if translated literally. Discourse markers such as "En ce qui concerne..." are also omitted because English favours direct, concise statements. Finally, the French subject pronoun "nous" is frequently omitted through passive restructuring. These omissions reflect structural and pragmatic differences between the two languages and highlight how learners adapt their translations to conform to English academic norms while maintaining essential meaning.

Table 5. Percentage and Frequency of Translation Techniques Identified in the Corpus.

Translation techniques	Frequency	Percentage
Modulation	53	34.42%
Calque	46	29.87%
Transposition	32	20.78%
Omission	23	14.93%
Total	154	100%

[Table 5](#) shows that modulation is the most frequently used

translation technique, representing 34.42% of all instances identified in the corpus. This indicates that many DIPES II student-teachers attempted to adjust meaning, perspective, or lexical choices when translating French abstracts into English. Unlike calque, which relies on direct transfer, modulation suggests a certain level of interpretative effort and awareness of the syntactic and semantic differences between French and English. The high frequency of this technique demonstrates that students often tried to rephrase and reorganize content to produce more natural or acceptable English equivalents.

Calque, which accounts for 29.87%, is the second most used technique. Although it is less dominant than modulation, its presence remains significant and reflects cases where learners adhered too closely to French syntactic structures. This shows that literal transfer continues to pose challenges, especially in academic contexts requiring idiomatic clarity.

Transposition appears in 20.78% of the data, indicating that students occasionally changed grammatical categories (e.g., noun to verb) to adapt the French structure to English norms. However, its lower frequency suggests limited syntactic flexibility. Finally, omission, at 14.93%, appears mainly where learners removed redundant French elements or attempted to simplify overly complex structures, though some omissions risked loss of meaning.

The predominance of modulation suggests that learners are not merely transferring meaning directly but are actively trying to reformulate expressions. However, the substantial presence of calque and the limited use of more advanced structural adjustments indicate that translation competence remains developing rather than fully mastered.

5. Discussion

The findings of the study reveal that the translations pro-

duced by DIPES II student-teachers exhibit significant reliance on translation techniques like modulation, calque, transposition, and omission. These results echo and extend the concerns raised in the previous studies, confirming that the translational difficulties of these learners are not incidental but rather symptomatic of deeper linguistic, methodological, and rhetorical gaps.

First, the presence of calques in the translations aligns strongly with Rezita et al.'s [12] observation that non-professional translators tend to rely on literal and near-literal techniques. However, while Rezita et al. found literal translation and established equivalents among the most frequent strategies in Indonesian journals, the present study shows a more acute problem: students translate French syntax almost word-for-word, producing structurally French but lexically English expressions (e.g., “makes an analysis of,” “the problematic of this study”). This finding suggests a stronger degree of French interference in the Cameroonian EFL context than in the Indonesian context analysed by Rezita et al. [12]. The results therefore support Rezita et al.'s conclusion that non-professional translators favour direct translation but further demonstrate that, in this specific population, literal tendencies often lead to non-idiomatic and semantically awkward English output.

Second, the overwhelming presence of modulation in the corpus indicates that learners occasionally attempt to adjust perspective or phrasing to achieve more natural English expressions. This corresponds to the findings of Koçer Gldal and Tarakcioglu [8], who argue that successful academic translations require attention to fluency and accuracy. Yet, in the present data, many instances of modulation appear to be accidental rather than strategic. Students modulated expressions but often without fully correcting the underlying structural interference. This partial success reinforces the central claim of the ATQAM model: non-professional translators struggle to meet professional standards of fluency due to persistent morphological and syntactic inconsistencies.

Third, the analysis of transposition reveals that while learners occasionally shift grammatical categories (e.g., noun → verb or verb → noun), these shifts are inconsistent and sometimes incomplete. Compared to Koçer Gldal and Tarakcioglu's [8] findings where linguistic errors accounted for 61% of translation problems, the present study likewise reveals that morphological and syntactic restructuring remains a major challenge. These results confirm that the syntactic flexibility required in English academic writing is not yet fully internalized by student-translators who habitually cling to French structural patterns.

Fourth, the identification of omission in several translations reflects attempts to achieve conciseness in English. Some omissions result in improved fluency—for example, dropping heavy French introductory phrases—but others risk removing essential meaning. This partially resonates with Demanou and Tabe's [3] study, which highlights the limited rhetorical awareness of

HTTC Maroua students. Their difficulty with hedging strategies mirrors the present study's evidence of weak mastery of English academic discourse conventions. If learners struggle with hedging even in original English writing, it is unsurprising that translation, which doubles the cognitive and linguistic load, exposes even more deficiencies.

Taken together, the findings confirm that DIPES II student-teachers rely heavily on literal and surface-level translation strategies while demonstrating limited mastery of English academic rhetorical norms.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to evaluate the translation techniques used by DIPES II student-teachers in translating French dissertation abstracts into English, using Molina and Albir's (2004) taxonomy. The analysis revealed that learners rely predominantly on modulation, with secondary use of calque, transposition, and omission. The high frequency of literal structures highlights deep-rooted L1 interference, insufficient mastery of English academic conventions, and limited awareness of translation strategies beyond direct transfer.

The findings support earlier studies, such as Rezita et al. [12], Koçer Gldal and Tarakcioglu [8], by showing that non-professional translators tend to produce linguistically inconsistent translations with numerous syntactic problems.

Abbreviations

ATQAM	Academic Translation Quality Assessment Model
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
HTTC	Higher Teachers' Training College
SL	Source Language
TL	Target Language
TQA	Translation Quality Assessment

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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