

The Effect of Teaching Terminology on Movie Translation

Author's Detail

¹⁾ Reza Jelveh, ²⁾ A`zam Gharyan, and ³⁾ Akbar Taghipour
University of Isfahan, Iran

Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the effects of teaching terminology on the translation products of movie translators. In the first stage, attempts have been made to create an error-based cinematic glossary of security terms by analyzing over 30 popular action movies in English. In the second stage a text of 30 sentences that were extracted from movies each containing one predetermined security-related term were given to 15 senior translation students to be translated. They also had access to video clips of the movies from which the extracts were taken. After an interval of one week the content of this glossary was taught to the translator with the help of video clips of the movies in five one-hour workshops and an oral test was taken from them. Then, after another one-week interval, the students sat at the same translation test. Results revealed that students' scores had undergone significant variations in the pretest (before teaching) and posttest (after teaching). Findings also showed that 80% of the errors spotted in the Persian translations of the action movies of the year 2012 had already been included in our developed glossary.

Keywords: Teaching Terminology; Movie Translation, Security-Terms, Glossary

1. Introduction

Terminology of a field of study has proven itself to be highly valuable and practical in almost all fields. Terminology can be defined as a set of negotiated terms for a knowledge community which is mostly created by translators and the typical example of someone in need of a terminology volume is undeniably a translator, too. By developing various fields of study, wordlists and term-banks emerged as practical tools to boost productive knowledge, translations, report analysis and consequently enriching the technical literature.

For a long time, translators have developed wordlists mostly in two columns, one for the terms, the other for the definition in the target language, however, its heyday was around 1980 when various technical dictionaries and wordlists came to the scene. Wordlists help translators, interpreters, analysts, etc. to remain consistent in the usage of a term and avoid misconception and verbosity.

National security of a nation as one of the most vital prerequisites of a country has always been a hot issue throughout the world. Intelligence life, just like any other work carries its own language, rules, and culture. Intelligence encompasses a broad range of disciplines and jobs including those that work in national security, law enforcement, and corporate security to name a few. Studies in intelligence are undertaken by think-tanks to support and influence policymakers. Whether protecting a nation or preventing a corporate competitor from conspiracy, intelligence plays a pivotal role across the public and private sectors. The importance of intelligence costs governments huge budgets every year.

To demonstrate the power and the scale of ability in safeguarding national security governments tried various ways among which media was very influential and mind controlling. Creating thousands of movies and series showing the worldwide domination over security details manifests the gravity of this area.

One of the areas that have drawn attentions is the cultural support of intelligence organizations. In other words, governments spend millions of dollars to propagate the services of intelligence organizations. Media as the main source of support have always been a great means to this end. Tens of thousands TV series and movies have furthered this goal. The invincible domination of and control of security agencies and sometimes whitening the so-called dangerous nature of such agencies have been the common theme of these movies.

Due to their strategic and political importance, these types of movies often guzzle huge amounts of money. Therefore, they are expected to meet the expectation of their financiers. Expectations like the manipulation of thoughts and ideology. These sorts of movies are often translated into many languages. Accurate translation of such movies is of great importance. Conveyance of the subtleties of the specific terms related to intelligence protocols can help to have a better understanding of the content of these movies. Translation of these movies requires an adequate knowledge about the terms of intelligence and security.

This project aims to provide a cinematic glossary of terms in popular action movies to help translators in their translations, security forces in their discourse, analysts in their critics, and last but not the least, the language learners who are in search of new words and expressions.

Research Question

Does teaching terminology of security forces help translators to come up with better translations?

Does an error-based glossary of security forces have the potentials to predict the possible errors of movie translators?

2. Review of the Literature

To review attempts that have been made to introduce intelligence and security terms in English, there exist plethora of books that are compiled usually by former American or British

agents. These books are often alphabetical presentation of terms and in some cases narrations of their experiences in the field; however, their target readers are usually the agents, analysts and politicians.

Bob Burton, an American former agent, in his *Top Secret: the Dictionary of Espionage and Intelligence* (2005) directly dealt with highly technical spy terms. In fact, he made a dictionary for intelligence operatives with technical jargon. Burton, in addition to the intelligence terminology, introduced actual contexts to elaborate the terms.

West (2006) then in *Historical Dictionary of International Intelligence* widened his intelligence chronicle to the international scope. West's second contribution included a list of acronyms, a chronology, a bibliography, and hundreds of cross-referenced dictionary entries on the agencies and agents, the operations and equipment, the tradecraft and jargon, and many of the countries involved.

In Iran, Garshasbi's *Dictionary of Intelligence and Security Terms* (2006) serves as the main reference source for security forces. This dictionary, which was composed of terms in politics, international affairs, and security, however, was focused in the terminology of security forces. It covered a range of categories including operations, types of agents, acronyms, etc.

Samiee Nasr's two-volume *Common Cinematic Expressions in Police Movies* (2001) was one of the first works that drew attentions to movies as a source of information for language learners. Samiee in his first volume collected a body of sentences and expressions used in movies. He categorized the sentences into several topics and divided them into 10 chapters and each chapter covered three to five police issues. However, his target audiences as he himself noted in the preface were the English language learners. These two volumes contained separate glossaries that were extracted from the sentences. The author compiled more than 3000

English *sentences, slangs, and expressions* in the two volumes and brought their Persian translations too. The theme of these sentences was mainly police movies, however, included some expressions within the scope of intelligence.

Having analyzed the works done on the subject of terminology of intelligence service and espionage we came across several significant issues or drawbacks:

Firstly, major dictionaries and glossaries developed are designed for security agents and operatives to the extent that few of them are used in movies. In other words, they are too technical to be used by ordinary people. Hence, they might not be proper sources for understanding police movies. Secondly, with regard to the expanse of terms we can assume that these works are mainly reference books that in case of necessity one (mostly an agent) can refer to. The excessive inclusion of these dictionaries inevitably leads to the inclusion of many non-relevant or easy words or expression leading the works far from being concise and to the point. Thirdly, none of the works mentioned above takes the role of movie translators and generally translation into account. Put it simply, they are not designed to solve any of the problems of translators` community.

3. Methodology

This study aimed to build up a cinematic glossary of police forces to help movie translators in their translation works. We used the following resources to come by with the results of the study.

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study were 15 MA students from the University of Isfahan who acted as translators in this project. They were both males (7 students) and females (8 students). All of these translators have been graduated with BA degree of translation.

3.2. Materials

3.2.1. Police Movies

The most important material of this study was the subtitle corpus of English police movies. The full corpus of 30 popular police movies were selected to be examined in order to build up the glossary. These movies have been selected on the basis of their recency and popularity. The list of the movies runs as follows:

Mission Impossible 1 (1996); The World Is Not Enough (1999); Mission Impossible 2 (2000); Spy Games (2001); The Tailor of Panama (2001); Triple X 1 (2002); Bourn Identity (2002); Bourn Supremacy (2004); Triple X 2 (2005); Mission Impossible 3 (2006); Shooter (2007); Hit Man (2007); Bourn Ultimatum (2007); Wanted (2008); Quantum of Solace (2008); Body of Lies (2008); Echelon Conspiracy (2009); Salt (2010); Unthinkable (2010); Fair Play (2010); Inception (2010); Operation Endgame (2010); Deadly Impact (2010); Macgruber (2010); Five Minarets in New York (2010); The Dept (2011); Mission Impossible 4 (2011); Hana (2011); Devil`s Double (2011); Killer Elite (2011).

3.2.2. The Developed Glossary

The glossary made is another source of material that was used as a tool in this study. By this glossary we made a comparison between the quality of translation performance of the translators.

3.2.3. Students` Translations

Students` translations were the yardstick by which the significance of the proposed glossary was put into a test. Once a text was given to them without the glossary and the other time they translated the text with the glossary and the translation quality was evaluated by two raters.

3.3. Procedures

The first step to this project was the selection of the most popular movies that involved the issue of security. To this end we selected the best seller movies in the recent decades.

In the second step, we analyzed the translations of these movies in terms of

equivalences for the security terms and related expressions and singled out those terms and expressions that had been mistranslated or misinterpreted. Collection of the mistranslated expressions led to a bulk of erroneous terminology.

The third step was to put these erroneous terms into an alphabetical order and finding the most appropriate English/Persian definitions for them. The correct definitions were obtained through three major sources: English Dictionaries of Intelligence or Military Terminology; Persian Dictionaries of Intelligence or Political Terminology; and the situational contexts of the movies in which a word or expression was used.

In the fourth step of the project, the glossary was presented to two language experts and two intelligence experts. Their professional suggestions were employed in the modification of the glossary.

The next major step of this project was to put the significance of the proposed glossary into a test. To this end, we selected 30 sentences from three of the most popular intelligence movies of the year 2012. Each sentence of this text contained several security-related terms and at least one erroneous word or expression that was mistranslated by the movie translators. The text was given to them and they were asked to translate it into Persian and they could use as many resources as they deem necessary. They also had access to video clips of the movies from which the extracts were taken. After an interval of one week the content of this glossary was taught to the translators with the help of video clips of the movies in five session workshop. In session five an oral test was taken from them. After about one month, the same text was given to the same translators and their translations were evaluated. In order to evaluate the translations, two experts evaluated and scored students' translations. Then statistical methods were used by SPSS Software to ensure inter-rater reliability at one hand and significance of the glossary on translation quality of the translators on the other hand.

3.4. Rating Scale

Evaluation of the accuracy of the expressions and concepts of the text was done basically on the basis of error-free rendition of the expressions and concepts. Errors in this study were defined as those mistranslations which seriously impaired the transference of meaning. An important point that needs to be mentioned is that other translation quality criteria such as naturalness and the like were not the focus of analysis in the translation assessment and analysis of the present study. The conveyance of the meaning of the specific pre-determined expressions and concepts was the yardstick in our evaluation.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.2. The Error-Based Cinematic Glossary of Security Terms

Having analyzed more than 30 movies in a sentence by sentence trend, we found certain security-related words or expressions that were mistranslated, at least once, by movie translators. We singled out each of the erroneous words that were spotted in the Persian translations of the movies. The criteria of labeling "error" were the dictionary definitions of these words as well as the context of situations. Detection of erroneous words and expressions led to a collection of about 200 words which built up an error-based cinematic glossary of security forces. These words included names of agencies, weapons, operative forces, various titles and expressions (see appendix A).

4.3. Significance of the Glossary

In the last phase of the project the applicability of the glossary was put to a test. To this end, three popular action movies of the year 2012 including *Taken*, *Bourne Legacy*, and *Sky Fall* were selected. Their Persian translations of security terms were analyzed and 30 sentences that contained at least one security term with erroneous translation were randomly selected to be given to the translators as their translation task.

We detected 36 instances of mistranslations of security-related expressions in these three movies. Analysis showed that 29 of the mistranslated expressions (80%) had already been

spotted during the developing stage of the glossary. In other words, the errors were included and somewhat anticipated in our proposed glossary. This indicated that the glossary was successful in its anticipation of translators' errors to a great extent. However, there were seven security terms that were not in the glossary, yet we added to it later. The words included: *Heads-Up*, *Mobile*, *Encode*, *Decode*, *Defector*, *Cryptanalysis*, and *Surveillance Sweep*.

Above all, results of the translation evaluations showed that the difference between the scores of pretest (before teaching the terminology) and posttest (after teaching the terminology) was significant ($\text{sig}=.001/t=-10.194$). In other words, translators' performance was noticeably better when they exposed to the content of the glossary. The mean scores of rater 1 and 2 in pretest were respectively 18.2 and 18.7 from 30. The mean scores of rater 1 and 2 in posttest were, however, 25.5 and 25.6 respectively.

5. Conclusion

In this project, we attempted to analyze more than 30 popular action movies to create a glossary based on errors translators committed in translation of security-related terms and expressions. This glossary contained about 200 terms. The English and Persian definitions of these terms were obtained through military dictionaries as well as professional experts.

To examine the significance of this glossary, three popular action movie of the year 2012 were

analyzed and security-related mistranslations were detected which showed that the glossary had included 80% of the errors in these three movies. This study also showed that translators' performance was significantly improved when they become familiar to the content glossary.

This study showed that an error-based glossary can highly assist translators in their translation products and many more of other types of glossaries can be compiled to facilitate the translation process in different genres. Another major implication of this study is that error-based glossaries can be a turning point in the life of glossaries and dictionaries in the case that they devoid the unnecessary terms and expressions and that they are strictly to the point that obviate the need for unnecessarily comprehensive dictionaries.

References

- Burton, B. (2005). *Top secret: The Dictionary of Espionage and Intelligence*. NY: Citadel Press.
- Collins English Dictionary (2006). Harper Collins Publishers.
- Garshasbi, A. (2006). *Dictionary of Intelligence and Security Terms*. Tehran: Zabankade.
- Samiee Nasr, M. (2001). *Common Cinematic Expressions in Police Movies*. Tehran: Yadvare Ketab.
- West, N. (2006). *Historical Dictionary of International Intelligence*. USA: The Scarecrow Press.

Appendix A:

The error-based cinematic glossary which is the main contribution of this study. Due to the space limitations, we just have brought the list of terms and expressions.

A	Code Black (Red)	Exfiltrate	J
Active Measures	Collateral Damage	Exonerate	Jam
Affiliation	Comm	Expose	John Doe
Alias	Company	Extraction (Pullout)	K
Ambush	Compromise	F	Keep Tabs on Somebody
A.P.B	Confess	Fail-Safe Plan	K.G.B
Assassination	Conspiracy	False Flag Operation	Kidnap
Asset	Contact	Federal Agent (Fed)	Kill Squad
At Large	Contingency Plan	Fit the Profile	Krav Maga
B	Copy	Flak Jacket	L

Bargaining Chip	Counter Intelligence	Frame Somebody	Langley
Black Budget Project	Cover Story	Friendly Shot	Lay Low
Black Ops	Cover-Up	F.S.B	Leak
Blackmail	Covert Operation	Fugitive	Lethal Injection
(Security) Breach	Cyanide	G	Leverage
Bring Somebody In	D	Ghost Protocol	Low-Key
Bug Sweeper/Detector	Dark	Go-Bag	M
C	Deadline	Grab Team	Magazine
Call	Debrief	Green	Manhunt
Call the Shots	Decoy	Green Light	Marksmanship
Cancel Somebody	D.O.D	H	Martial Law
Captor	Dossier	Handler	Masquerade as Somebody
Cease Fire	Double	Have a Lead on Someone	Massacre
Chain of Command	Double Agent	Headquarters (HQ)	Mayday
Charge	Double Cross	Hit	Mercenary
C.I.A	Drone	Hit Man (Hitter)	M.I.5
Civil War	Duress Code	Hit Squad	M.I.6
Classified	E	Hostage	MIA
Clean Patch	Echelon	I	Mole
Clean Sweep	Electrocution Device	Infiltrate	Mossad
Cleaner	E.T.A	Inside Job	Mugshot
Clear	Ethnic Cleansing	Intercept	N
Clear Somebody's Name	Exchange Fire	I.R.G.C	Narc Somebody Out
Clearance	Execution	W	Neutralize
N.O.C	S.D.R	Walk-In	
N.S.A	Self-Destruct	Whereabouts	
O	Set up a Perimeter	Whistleblower	
O'clock	Set Somebody Up	Wire	
Off-Grid	Shadow Government	W.M.D	
Off-Limits	Sharpshooter		
Off-the-Record	Shoot-To-Kill Watchlist		
On the Run	Shredder		
Ops	Silencer/Suppressor		
P	Situation		
Payback	Sleeper Agent		
Pin Somebody Down	Sniper		
Pinpoint	Stand By		
Plan B	Strike Team		
Ploy	T		
Point Blank	Tactical Team		
Prime Suspect	Tail		
Pro	Take Somebody Out		
Q	Tap		
Quid Pro Quo	Task Force		
R	Threat Level		
Reaper	Tip Somebody Off		
Reconnaissance	Trace		
Recruit	Tracker		
Red Herring	Traitor		
Red Flag	Transmitter		
Rig the Camera	Treason		
Roger	Turncoat		
Rogue Asset	Have a Twenty		
Run-Down	Twenty Four/Seven (24/7)		
S	U		
Sabotage	Undercover		
	Under the radar		

Safe House
S.A.S

V
(Have) Visual

Appendix B:

The sentences that were extracted from the three spy movies of the year 2012. It is as well the task that were given to the students to translate in the pretest and posttest phase. The intelligence-related terms are underlined as well.

- 1- I am the one who call the shots in this operation.
- 2- I was the first recruit to get out alive, I am going to make certain that I am not the last.
- 3- They told me I killed a cob, I was 18 so they were able to charge me with murder one, I was sentenced to die with lethal injection.
- 4- Six years ago I was taken out of prison and was forced to become an assassin for a secret unit of government, a black ops program called Division that is now gone rogue.
- 5- He`s been identified as Jason Bourne, he is still at large and considered extremely dangerous.
- 6- It is a remote for the electrocution device, in case he needs a little motivation.
- 7- The girl has been inside these walls long enough to know how we operate, if she contacts with someone that`s the breach in security.
- 8- I wasn`t just any cleaner. I was Division`s cleaner, in house, I was a reaper. I cancelled other agents.
- 9- Division is in a Code Black, there won`t be any back-up.
- 10- He is a way better double agent than I ever could possibly be.
- 11- It`s not a good time, to blow your cover, keep waiting for the follow-ups.
- 12- I did a surveillance sweep, and there`s no one physically watching my apartment.
- 13- Seemingly we got a situation at the site, prep a team to intercept.
- 14- `Timeout` was a duress code under His authority.
- 15- We didn`t open fire, he was probably killed by a friendly shot.
- 16- He`s exposed, someone must have tipped him off.
- 17- I wear wires when I meet him, I hope to get him to talk.
- 18- Things got complicated ... they ran a series of false-flag missions in the Middle East.
- 19- I got a twenty on the subject.
- 20- Many intelligence experts believe it was an inside job.
- 21- They`ve jammed everything.
- 22- I owe my life to that flak jacket.
- 23- He was taken out by the sharpshooter.
- 24- They`ve gone dark since the operation.
- 25- That was an active act of sabotage.
- 26- They managed to destroy everything by the shredder.
- 27- I want a run-down on the John Doe.
- 28- I need a clean patch to his office.
- 29- Set up a perimeter ... no one gets in or out.
- 30- We need to find that leak before it`s too late.