

The Practice of French-English Translation in Chad: A Case Study of Students from Pascal Yoadimnadj High School and the University of Doba.

Ndoubangar Tompté

Department of English, University of Doba, Doba, Chad

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.910000716>

Received: 29 October 2025; Accepted: 03 November 2025; Published: 21 November 2025

ABSTRACT

In earlier times, Chad, a French-speaking country, cooperated with multinational oil companies, leading to growing demand for English as a business communication medium. For English learners in Chad, both oral and written translation are essential for obtaining better job opportunities with oil companies. French-English translation is included in the secondary school curriculum in Chad. Although there are no professional training institutions, educators have proactively trained English learners in translation to help bridge communication gaps through local translation services.

This study examines the types of errors that occur in French–English translation practice at the high school and university levels in Chad. Data were collected from the scripts of 240 high school and university students from the University of Doba. The scripts were analyzed using Nida and Taber’s (1969) formal/dynamic equivalence framework.

The results highlight the complexity of French–English translation at the academic level, which is largely influenced by lexical and grammatical errors originating from the source text (ST) register, as well as variations in the participants’ translations. The findings also reveal an unfavorable sociolinguistic environment and inadequate foundational training for EFL learners, both of which negatively impact the practice of French–English translation in Chad.

These findings significantly contribute to understanding how error fossilization leads to deviations from Standard English, ultimately resulting in the emergence of New Englishes. The results underscore the need for education policymakers in Chad to develop more robust and specialized training programs to ensure that English–French translators from Chad remain competitive in the translation industry, despite the growing challenge posed by machine translation, which increasingly threatens to replace certain aspects of human translation.

Keywords: Translation, French-English translation, Equivalence in Translation, Dynamic Translation, Chad.

INTRODUCTION

People live in various speech communities where mutual understanding is not always guaranteed. To communicate and engage in business, they rely on different media, such as their mother tongues or a lingua franca. In multicultural contexts, the demand for translation services becomes essential.

Chad recognizes French and Arabic as its official languages, with English playing a minor role. However, for business and international cooperation, these official languages often prove insufficient. In order to engage with a range of English-speaking countries, such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Nigeria, Chad has integrated English as a foreign language into the curricula at all levels of higher public and private education. The English syllabus encompasses a variety of social domains, including the translation of text types studied in class.

Translation practice in Chad relies on theme and version approaches, with a focus on French-to-English and English-to-French translation. The methodology is eclectic, drawing from various translation strategies. However, there is no dedicated school for professional translators in Chad; instead, many locally trained translators work in offices. The rise of oil exploitation activities has led to an increased use of English as the working language for multinational companies. As a result, learning English has become a pathway for young Chadians seeking well-paid jobs.

A brief history of English in Chad is outlined in the following section. Prior to independence, British and American entities began promoting English language teaching through various organizations, such as the American Peace Corps. According to Anderson (2008), English has since opened up educational, technological, vocational, and even geographical opportunities for Chadians. Many organizations and companies from English-speaking countries have operated in Chad for decades, maintaining English as their working language. This has, however, led to a problem of mutual intelligibility among workers, as not all are proficient in English.

This study examines translation practices at one high school and one university in Doba, focusing on the types of errors students make in written translation. In practice, translation training in Chad is not a formalized program but rather an exercise aimed at helping students understand messages in English source texts. Texts on themes such as environmental issues and pollution are selected to educate learners and facilitate translation exercises into French. However, these translation exercises are largely text-based, which limits the integration of more communicative approaches that could enhance translation training.

Another phenomenon influencing both students and teachers is the use of machine translation. University students studying English through subjects such as phonetics, oral expression, syntax, and literature frequently rely on mobile phones to complete their assignments. This study investigates the various translation errors made by high school and university students, some of whom use smartphones during evaluations and exercises, despite the prohibition of phone use during assessments.

To contextualize this study within the broader research landscape, a literature review is presented in the following sections to address any gaps identified in existing studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Major sources of difficulty in French–English translation, and vice versa, are rooted in both cultural and personal factors.

In recent decades, translation studies have increasingly recognized translation as a social, cultural, political, ethical, and ideology-driven process (House, 1997). While House (1997) acknowledges the importance of these considerations, he emphasizes that translation remains, at its core, a linguistic act.

A thorough review of previous works on translation errors led Saridaki (2023) to approach these errors in a taxonomic manner, based on how they manifest in translated texts, where elements of different text types are often intermingled. Saridaki also identified a variety of causes for these errors, ranging from a lack of comprehension to the misuse of register—factors that can be attributed to different levels, including linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural dimensions.

Using a descriptive method, Mindari (2021) aimed to identify students' errors in translating news item texts. The data were obtained through translation scripts, with ten third-year students from the English Department at Padang University participating in the study. Data analysis involved identifying and classifying errors, tabulating them, and verifying the findings.

The results revealed that students made errors when translating news item texts from English to Indonesian. These errors were classified into grammatical, lexical, textual, and contextual categories. The most frequent errors were related to lexical meaning, followed by errors in contextual meaning. Grammatical errors ranked

third, while textual errors were the least frequent. The study identified several factors influencing these errors, including students' English proficiency, limited vocabulary, interference from the first language, differences in grammatical structures, and a lack of understanding of the text's context.

A study by Ramatillah (2020) examined translation errors, identifying some as familiar and others as specific to certain translators due to differences in cultural backgrounds. He argued that these errors could be addressed using existing solutions. His paper provides useful insights for translators, particularly those who frequently encounter similar errors. Ramatillah concluded that no matter how experienced a translator may be, they cannot completely avoid such errors, which remain a persistent challenge in the translation process.

Building on extensive reading, Putri (2019) aimed to identify the types of errors faced by translators and explore their causes. The researcher conducted library-based research and found that the most common errors in translation occur at the surface structure level, including semantic, lexical, morphological, and grammatical errors. However, Putri also pointed out another category of errors related to deep structure, stemming from cultural differences between the source and target languages.

Furthermore, House (2014) emphasizes that while translation is fundamentally a linguistic-textual operation, it is significantly influenced by a range of extra-linguistic factors and conditions. This interaction between the 'inner' linguistic-textual factors and the 'outer' extra-linguistic contextual factors makes translation a complex phenomenon. House asserts that although translation is primarily a linguistic-textual process, it is consistently shaped by various conditioning and constraining factors, which affect its execution, performance, and ultimately, translation quality. This study examines both intra- and extra-linguistic factors that influence translation quality, aligning with the study of Chadian translation, with the key distinction that the former takes a global perspective, while the latter focuses on a local context.

A further perspective is provided by Soku (2009), who considers the complexity of language structures as a starting point for understanding the challenges translators face in producing an adequate translation. Soku argues that through careful analysis of the source language, literal translation can be avoided. He suggests that meaningful translation occurs when the translator fully understands the message being conveyed. To achieve this, the translator must thoroughly study the source text, conduct a semantic analysis, and then seek an equivalent expression that naturally conveys the same message in the target language. This approach ensures an accurate and acceptable translation. The study focuses on the comprehension of the source text as a key factor in producing an adequate translation. Similarly, in the Chadian context, the study also investigates the extent to which students comprehend English-language source texts.

According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, different linguistic communities perceive, segment, and structure reality in distinct ways (Gorlée, 1994: 105). Translation plays a crucial role in bridging the cultural gap between two such communities, making communication possible.

In a similar vein, Bassnett (1992: 14) likens language to “the heart within the body of culture,” emphasizing that “the surgeon, operating on the heart, cannot neglect the body that surrounds it; likewise, the translator who treats the text in isolation from its culture does so at their peril.”

Sapir (1956) further asserts that no two languages are ever sufficiently similar to represent the same social reality. Since translation involves two languages, it is inevitably influenced by two cultures—the source culture (SC) and the target culture (TC).

Catford (1965) identifies two primary sources of untranslatability: linguistic and cultural. A translator who fails to account for the cultural context is likely to make significant errors. The existence of a cultural gap can interfere with the translation process by affecting the translator's judgment and linguistic choices. In short, Nida (1964) viewed translation as a key means of constructing representations of other cultures. He recognized that translation always involves not only different languages but also different cultures, as the two cannot be neatly separated.

A review of the literature on translation reveals a consensus that translation cannot be divorced from culture. This principle applies directly to the study of Chadian translation. To analyze translation practices in Chad, it is essential to outline the methodological approach used in this study. The following section introduces the methodology.

METHOD

The data for this research were collected from the exam scripts of students at Pascal High School and the University of Doba. This study employs a mixed-methods research approach.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Firstly, the relatively small sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings. While the results may not be applicable to all schools and universities, they can be generalized to some extent within the context of the institutions involved in this study.

The scripts were accessed with the consent of the school's administration, where the researcher serves as a lecturer. Tables 1 and 2 below present the descriptive distribution of informants based on their academic levels.

Table 1: distribution of high school informants N=135

Levels	Male	Female	Total
Upper sixth	58	28	86
Lower sixth	33	16	49
Total	91	44	135

Source: sampled participants

As shown in Table 1 above, there is a higher number of male students compared to females. This disparity can be attributed to the fact that, in Chad, many females do not continue their education beyond the age of eighteen. Instead, they often marry, and those who do continue their education beyond this point are relatively few.

The section below provides the descriptive distribution of students from the University of Doba.

Table 2: Distribution of University students N= 105

Levels	Male	Female	Total
LEA 2	48	18	66
LEA 3	23	16	39
Total	71	34	105

Source: sampled participants

As shown in Table 2 above, male students constitute the majority of informants. The data from the students' translation scripts are analyzed by identifying errors in their translations and categorizing features of their production according to the adopted theoretical framework. This study employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

So far, this section has outlined the methodology of the research. The following section will present the data analysis and interpret the results.

RESULTS

This section analyzes the various outputs of informants from both high schools and the University of Doba, based on the examination of their exam scripts. As a teacher at both levels, the researcher administered different text types for evaluation and then randomly selected scripts for analysis, using the equivalence theory of Nida and Taber (1969) as the theoretical framework.

The following section presents the data analysis for Pascal High School.

Scripts Analysis of High School Students'

A translation exam was organized for Terminal and Première students at Pascal High School in Doba. Prior to administering the exam, authorization was obtained from the principal of the school. The test involved translating a selection of texts from French into English, referred to as "Version." The sample sentences for the translation are provided below.

Sample texts to be translated

1. Beaucoup de personnes acceptent de ne pas être riches.
2. Peu de gens acceptent de ne pas être libres.
3. Are you afraid of the dogs and the spirits.
4. L'Euro a baissé par rapport au Dollar.
5. Ils ne se sont pas vraiment aimés.

The translation of these sentences from French into English is presented below, showcasing one sentence along with its three different translations provided by Pascal High School students.

Version and theme:

Source text

Target text produced by students

1. Beaucoup de personnes acceptent de ne pas être riches.
2. *Most of people accept to be not wealth
3. Many people accept not to be rich
4. *Many persons accept to don't be rich

From the renderings above, it is observed that one of the three translations, (2) is the correct one. If we consider (1) and (3): most of people accept to be not rich, and Many persons accept to don't be rich, there are errors in the translation of "beaucoup" rendered as most. The other error is at the construction of the negation "ne pas être riches" which is translated as "to be not wealth" and "to don't be rich". These errors occurred because of a lack of mastery of grammatical rules of conjugating verbs and choosing the right equivalents. This is also found in (Kartini Rahmatillah (2020), who came out with the same results showing that these types of errors may happen to any translator. Sums of such errors are the main causes of deviations from standard English that give birth to new varieties of Englishes.

The next section analyses the second sentence of the source text.

Source text

Target text produced by students

1. Peu de gens acceptent de ne pas être libre.

2. *Little people accept to be not free
3. Few people accept not to be free
4. *Less people accept to don't be free

The renderings above show a correct translation of the source text from French into English as shown in (2). The two other renderings are not accurate in terms of grammaticality and equivalence. The rules of translating “peu” from French to English are not mastered. Instead of “few”, participants preferred “little” and “less” is wrongly used. The problem of the negation construct is also done where “ne pas être libre” is poorly translated as in (1) and (2). These errors are also found in Tia Aprilianti Putri Tiaputri (2019) who talked of surface structure and deep structure of errors. The third sentence from the source text is analyzed in turn below.

Source text

Target text produced by students

1. Are you afraid of dogs and spirits?
2. *Etes-vous peur des esprits des chiens?
3. Avez-vous crainte de l'esprit saint et des chiens?
4. Craignez-vous les chiens et les mauvais esprits?

Renderings of the third sentence show (2) and (3) to be correct translations, although in (2), there is a bad equivalence made between esprit and Holy Spirit. Translation in (1) is not correct with wrong use of the verb “to be afraid” translated as “être peur” instead of “avoir peur”. The following section displays renderings of the fourth sentence of the source text.

Source text

Target text produced by students

1. L'Euro a baissé par rapport au Dollar.
2. *The Euro is lower than the dollar.
3. Euro has decreased compared to dollar.
4. *Euro bent down against dollar.

From the three renderings above, (2) is the rendering with correct equivalence while (1) and (3) are incorrect translations, which are wrong choices of corresponding words. Proper nouns do not use the definite article in English as it is in French. In addition, the use of comparative is not correct since the source text used a simple clause in affirmative form. The equivalent of the verb “baisser” is wrongly chosen. The right equivalent of the French verb is “decrease” in English. These types of errors are found in work of (Tia Aprilianti Putri Tiaputri; 2019) where errors are classified as semantic, lexical, morphology, and grammar errors corresponding to surface structure errors and deep structure errors that are cultural differences between the texts to be translated.

The section that follows analyses the fifth sentence of the source text.

Source text

Target text produced by students

1. Ils ne se sont pas vraiment aimés.
2. *They have not love themselves really
3. *They did not love themselves very well.
4. They did not really love one another

Of the renditions made above, (3) is the closest to the correct translation in terms of formal and dynamic equivalence. (1) and (2) are incorrect renditions grammatically because the French verb “s’aimer” is wrongly translated using the auxiliary “have” instead of “did” to complete the action of the verb “love”.

In general, errors that have occurred in the translation of the Pascal high school students fall under grammatical and lexical errors. They serve as a point of comparison between different languages and cultures. A summary of error types that occurred in the renditions of the High School Students shows the distribution below.

Table 3: Distribution of errors in the translation by High School students: N=135

Error types	Occurrences	Percentage
Wrong/missing definite articles	33	24,44%
Subject-verb agreement	16	11,85%
Wrong/missing pronoun	31	22,96%
Misplaced modifier	5	03,70%
Wrong word usage	36	26,67%
Misspelling	19	14,07%
Omission/incompletion	27	20,00%
Redundancy errors	11	08,15%
Word formation errors	23	17,04%

The table above presents the types of errors found in the translations of high school students. These errors are primarily grammatical and lexical, which can be attributed to insufficient training or lack of adequate practice in translation. Some of these errors remain uncorrected, while others persist, potentially contributing to the development of new varieties of English. From these errors, it can be inferred that they may affect the market competitiveness of Chadian translators, thereby reducing their employability if such issues persist into their professional careers. The following section analyzes the translations produced by university students at the University of Doba.

University students’ scripts analyses

As with the Pascal High School participants, this section analyzes the translations produced by students from the University of Doba. A sample of five (5) sentences was provided to the students for translation. The researcher used the students' scripts after obtaining consent from the Department of English, where he serves as a lecturer. A sample of the sentences to be translated is provided below.

Sample sentences to be translated

Theme: Translate the following text into English.

1. Laissez-moi régler ce problème seul : il y a trop de gens impliqués.
2. Plus un navire est âgé, plus les risques d’accidents se multiplient.
3. Il semblerait qu’en Grande Bretagne des centaines de milliers de bovins aient dû être abattus.
4. À la fin des années 60, nous étions quasiment tous étudiants, pas toi ?

5. Comment ne pas mesurer les conséquences qu'induirait un retour en arrière ?

Students from the University of Doba translated the sentences above as part of their final-year exam. A selection of student scripts was randomly chosen and analyzed. The translations are retyped below by the researcher and analyzed accordingly.

Production of University Students

Source text

Target text produced by students

1. Laissez-moi régler ce problème seul : il y a trop de gens impliqués.
2. *Let I resolve this problem alone.
3. *Let me resolve this problem alone, there are many implicated people.
4. Let me solve this problem alone, there are too many people involved.

The translations provided by the students in (1) and (2) are incorrect. There are errors in the impersonal use of "let" and in the translation of "trop," which is incorrectly rendered as "many." These mistakes are both grammatical and lexical. Specifically, they involve incorrect use of pronouns and misspellings. The second sentence of the source text is translated below.

Source text

Target text produced by students

1. Plus un navire est âgé, plus les risques d'accidents se multiplient.
2. *More old is a ship, more risk multiply its accident.
3. *More a pakebote is aged or old; more the risks of accidents multiply.
4. The older a ship, the greater risks of accidents.

Of the above translations, (3) is the correct one, and the two others are wrong and fall under the poor translation of "plus...plus" from French into English. This is a poor use of irregular comparatives or double comparatives: "the + comparative + second comparative as done in (3). It is the wrong word usage. The third clause of the source text is translated in turn.

Source text

Target text produced by students

1. Il semblerait qu'en Grande Bretagne des centaines de milliers de bovins aient dû être abattus.
2. *It samed in Great Britain hundred thousands of oxen have been shout .
3. *It would seem that in Great Britain certain of hundreds of thousands of castle should have to be bit.
4. *It would seem that in Great Britain, hundreds of thousands of catle had to be slaughtered.

None of the renditions above is correct. In (1), there is the use of wrong verbs and poor use of numbers, in (2) the same errors are added to poor use of mass nouns. The same errors are found in (3) coupled with misspelling errors. A correct translation should be: it seemed that I Great Britain, hundreds of thousands of cattle would have been slaughtered. The fourth clause of the source text is done and shown below.

Source text

Target text produced by students

1. À la fin des années 60, nous étions quasiment tous étudiants, pas toi ?

2. *At the end of sixteen years, we were quasiment all students, not you?
3. *At the end of 60 years, we were quasily all students, not you?
4. By the end of the 60s, we were almost all students, weren't you?

It is clear that translation (3) is correct, but the two others are wrong with poor use of years, wrong equivalents, and lexical errors like the use of wrong years. Adaptation of L1 to L2 word errors is also found in the translations. The last sentence of the source text to be translated is done below.

Source text

Target text produced by students

1. Comment ne pas mesurer les conséquences qu'induirait un retour en arrière ?
2. *How don't measure consequences that will return back or come back?
3. *How not measure the consequences that would deceive a back return?
4. How not to measure the consequences that a step back would induce?

Of the renditions made by University students of the last clause of the source text, (3) is the correct one. However, (1) and (2) are incorrect. There is a poor use of negation construction in a conditional tense sentence and a wrong use of words. Wrong rendition of the French group "retour en arrière" translated as "return back and back return" instead of an equivalence like "to step back".

Summing up error types that occurred in the renditions of the University students, the distribution is shown below.

Table 4: Distribution of errors in the translation by University students: N=105

Error types	Occurrences	Percentages
Wrong/missing definite articles	30	28,57%
Wrong/missing preposition	35	33,33%
Subject-verb agreement	16	15,24%
Wrong/missing pronoun	31	29,52%
Misplaced modifier	5	04,61%
Wrong word usage	26	24,76%
Wrong/missing word	23	21,90%
Misspelling	22	20,95%
Omission/incompletion	11	10,48%
Redundancy errors	13	12,38%
Word formation errors	32	30,48%
Adaptation of L1 to L2 words	8	07,62%

From the table above, it is evident that university students' translations are similarly plagued by grammatical and lexical errors, much like those of high school students. The most frequent errors involve incorrect or missing prepositions, accounting for 33.33%. This suggests that not all participants have fully mastered grammar and lexicon as outlined in the curriculum.

In summary, the errors made by students at the University of Doba can be attributed to factors such as an unfavorable sociolinguistic environment, poor-quality instruction, and students' attitudes toward learning English. Sociolinguistic factors include the influence of French and Arabic, as well as the excessive use of the mother tongue. In a similar vein, Saridaki (2023) examined translation errors through a taxonomic approach, identifying how errors emerge in translated texts and how elements of different text types are often mixed.

To address these issues, teachers should implement communicative activities to foster fluency in language use. A comparative analysis of the translations by high school students and university students is presented to offer a broader perspective on the results. If left unaddressed, these errors could diminish the employability of future translators, hindering their career growth and obstructing the fulfillment of the academic goals set by the government. The following section analyzes both sets of translation errors.

CONCLUSION

Given the grammatical and lexical errors identified in the students' translations, it is questionable to apply the equivalence theory to support their renderings. Common pitfalls in translation, especially among inexperienced translators, include the use of false equivalents, such as "false friends" and false cognates. The findings indicate features in the students' translations that deviate from Standard English and align more closely with general features of World Englishes, as noted by Safotso (2012) and Mesthrie & Bhatt (2012). Globally, the results show that university participants face issues such as incorrect prepositions, improper word formation, and transfer from their first language (L1) to the second language (L2). High school students, on the other hand, struggle with word usage errors, which are typically linked to foundational grammar and lexical knowledge. The equivalence theory of translation (Nida, 1964) emphasizes that a translation should closely reflect the message of the source text. To address these errors and produce quality translations, a stronger focus on advanced grammar and lexical categories is crucial for improving both the quality and competitiveness of translation work in current and future curricula.

The findings of this research should be interpreted with caution, as they are confined to a specific context, sample, and set of conditions under which the study was conducted. The participants come from a particular population, which may not be representative of other settings. Therefore, the results are not generalizable to other contexts or demographic groups. While this study offers valuable insights into translation errors, further research with a larger sample and broader scope is recommended to validate and expand these findings. We strongly encourage policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers to consider this paper as an essential resource for their work.

REFERENCES

1. Anderson, L. (2008). Developmental Expectations of English: Focus on Chad. M A TESOL collection 193. [http //digital collections.sit.edu/ipp](http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp)
2. Catford, J. (1965). *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Gorlée, D. L. (1994). *Semiotics and the Problem of Translation*. Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi.
4. House, J. (2014). *Translation: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
5. House, J. (1997). *Translation Quality Assessment* Mesthrie, R., & Bhatt, R. (2012). *World Englishes, the study of new linguistic varieties*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. Nida, E. and Taber, C. (1969). *The Theory and Practice of Translation*. Leiden: Brill.
7. Putri, T. A. (2019). An analysis of types and causes of translation errors. *Etnolinguist*, V. 312.15028.
8. Rahmatillah, K. (2020). Translation errors in the process of translation. *Journal of English and education*, 7(1) : 14-24

9. Safotso, T. G. (2012). Aspects of Cameroon Francophone English (CamFE) phonology. Theory and practice in Language studies, Vol. 2(12) pp. 2471-2477.
10. Sapir, E.(1956). Selected Writings in Language, Culture and Personality. Berkeley: University of California Press.
11. Saridaki, E. (2023). Translation errors: Q taxonomic approach and their contribution to translator training. International journal of English literature and social science, 8(4), 27-32 ijels.84.6
12. Soku, D. (2009). French-English Translation: theory ad practice. Ghana Universities Press, P. O. Box GP 4219 Accra, Ghana.