# AN APPLICATION

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**Abstract**
This is article about an attempted round-trip translation English to Romanian to English using a machine translation engine. It tries to explain explains the mechanism of the round trip-translation. This is followed by a quick presentation of a machine translation engine. Then it introduces the original text in English. The translation into Romanian is discussed. The back-translation is featured to complete the picture.

## Introduction

A few years ago one has attempted to translate a text using a machine translation engine. Its name is Google Translate. It was in 2010, and, one may consider that, at the time, this service was in its infancy. In the mean time its status has changed to the extent that, form being one of many machine translation engines providing automated translation services, back in the day, it has become the rather ubiquitous. The results were acceptable for the time, since it did translate most of the text and has produced a human readable text. However, the quality of the content of the translated text was, as expected, rather poor and left much room for improvement.

## The round-trip translation

This is a method of assessing the ability of a machine translation engine, also known as translation software to translate texts. There are two steps in any round-trip translation, namely the translation and the back-translation. (See Figure 1.)



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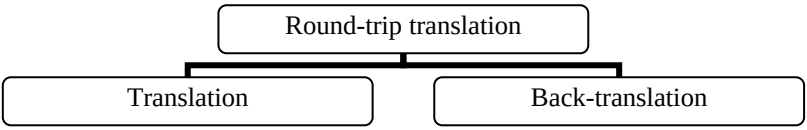



**Figure 1: A graphic representation of the stages of round-trip translation**

The first stage in the process of the round-trip translation is to use a machine translation engine to automatically translate the original text from Language A to Language B. (See Figure 2.)

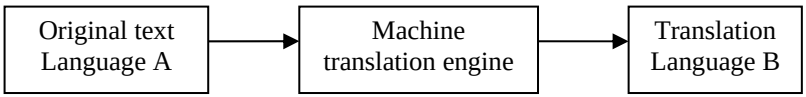



**Figure 2: A graphic representation of the first stage of the round-trip translation**

The second stage in the process of the round-trip translation is to use the same machine translation engine to automatically translate the text from Language B back into Language B. (See Figure 3.)

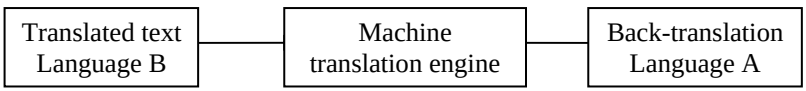



**Figure 3: A graphic representation of the second stage of the round-trip translation**

## The machine translation engine

It is possible to use any of the several machine translation engines available online, but this would create a huge influx of information. For the purposes of this endeavour the translations produced by just of one of them will be discussed. This machine translation engine is Google translate. The reason is that, for the past 10 years, the awareness of and, thus, the use of Google translate has exceeded the others'. However, Google is unlike the other machine translation engines also because its algorithm is not grammar-based, but based on



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statistics. This means it is faster and more efficient when it comes to simple texts, but it still has some shortcomings with more complicated texts

**The original text**

The choice of a text for a round-trip translation fell on a classical piece of twentieth century literature. It is the novel *From Russia with Love* by Ian Fleming[1]. The chosen fragment renders a short conversation between James Bond and his comrade-in-arms Darko Kerim:

*The car sped through the deserted streets, past shadowy mosques from which dazzling minarets lanced up towards the three-quarter moon, under the ruined Aqueduct and across the Ataturk Boulevard and north of the barred entrances to the Grand Bazaar. At the Column of Constantine the car turned right, through mean twisting streets that smelled of garbage, and finally debouched into a long ornamental square in which three stone columns fired themselves like a battery of space-rockets into the spangled sky.*

*'Slow,' said Kerim softly. They crept round the square under the shadow of the lime trees. Down a street on the east side, the lighthouse below the Seraglio Palace gave them a great yellow wink.*

*'Stop.'*

*The car pulled up in the darkness under the limes. Kerim reached for the door handle. 'We shan't be long, James. You sit up front in the driver's seat and if a policeman comes along just say "Ben Bey Kerim'in ortagiyim". Can you remember that? It means "I am Kerim Bey's partner". They'll leave you alone.'*

*Bond snorted. 'Thanks very much. But you'll be surprised to hear I'm coming with you.*

[1] Fleming, I. [2004]. From Russia with Love, London: Penguin Classics, p. 219



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At a glance one is bound to notice several characteristics of the text which may be problematic for any translation. These characteristics concern the semantics, the syntax, the morphology of the text. (See Figure 4)

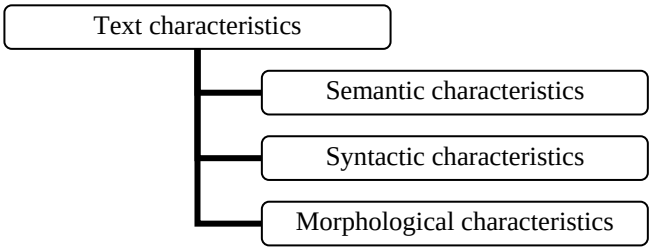



**Figure 4: A graphic representation of the characteristics of the text**

The most obvious semantic characteristics of the text refer to the language of the text, the structure of the text and to the expressivity of the text. (See Figure 5.)

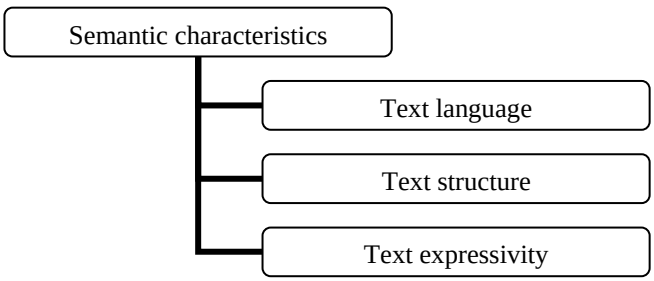



**Figure 5: A graphic representation of the semantic characteristics of the text**

When it comes to the problematic of the language of the text, one may be quick to point out that the text is in English. However on a closer lecture, a key sentence proves to be in Turkish (i.e. *"Ben Bey Kerim'in ortagiyim"*). Furthermore, there are Turkish names (i.e. *Ataturk Boulevard*, *Grand Bazaar*, *Kerim*, *Seraglio Palace*).



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Having this in mind, a more appropriate manner of describing the language of the text would be to say that most of the text is in English with a clearly marked sentence in Turkish. (See Figure 6.)

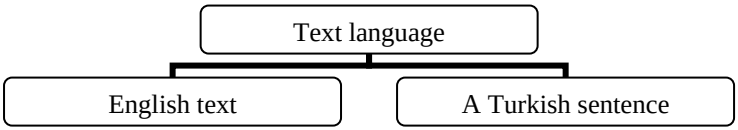



**Figure 6: A graphic representation of the language of the text**

The structure of the text is also intricate since it involves the use of two forms of textual expression which are closely intertwined. These are the narrative and the dialogue. (See Figure 7.)

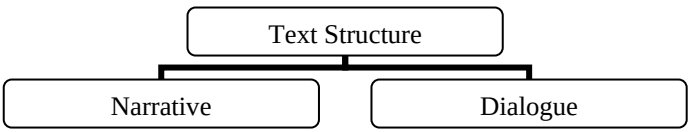



**Figure 7: A graphic representation of the structure of the text**

There are two types of narrative. Firstly, there is the background story which sets the stage. Secondly there is the supporting information which supplements the dialogue. (See Figure 8.)

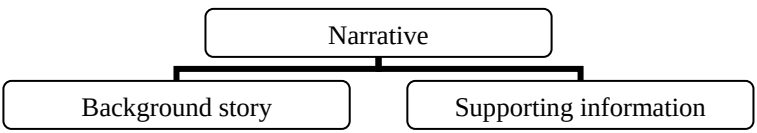



**Figure 8: A graphic representation of the types of narrative**

The dialogue itself consists of the exchange of words between Darko Kerim and James Bond. The roles are simple, Kerim instructs Bond as to what to do while Bond replies as to what he intends to do. (See Figure 9.)



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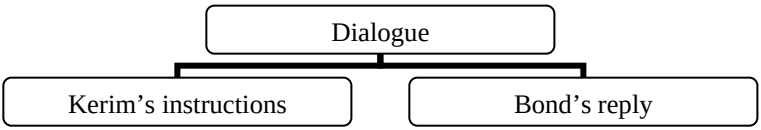



**Figure 9: A graphic representation of the dialogue between Kerim and Bond**

Another matter of the semantics is the expressivity of the text. It is partially achieved by using idioms (i.e. *We shan't be long…*, *…you'll be surprised to hear…*).

As for the syntactic characteristics, it is worth taking a look at the size of the sentences. There are different-sized sentences: from the middle-sized to the very short. In the narrated background story sentences tend to be middle-sized. The supporting information ranges from short to middle-sized. In the dialogue, Kerim’s instructions range from very to short sentences, while Bond’s reply is made up of two short sentences.

To gain an insight into the morphological characteristics of the text one needs to look at the tenses of the verbs to notice certain differences. When the background story and the supporting information are being narrated, the verbs in are in the past tense (i.e. *sped*, *lanced up*, *turned*, *smelled*, *fired into*, *debouched into*, *crept round*, *gave*, *pulled up*, *reached for*, and *snorted*). During the dialogue one can notice some difference between the speech of Kerim and that of Bond. Kerim’s speech seems to follow a pattern designed to build up suspense. First, there are very strict indications on what to do are expressed by verbs in the imperative (i.e. *Slow*, *Stop*). Further explanations use mostly the present simple (i.e. *sit*, *comes along*, *say*, *Can*, *means*). The reply of Bond is decidedly shorter but no less dramatic as seen in the use of the present continuous (i.e. *'m coming*).

**The translation**

The first stage of the round-trip translation involved the machine translation of the original text from English into Romanian. (See Figure 10.)



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**Figure 10: A graphic representation of the first stage of the round-trip translation**

The following paragraphs are the output of the use of the selected machine translation engine.

*Masina accelerat pe străzi pustii, moschei trecut umbră din care minarete orbitor lanced în sus, spre luna de trei sferturi, în conformitate cu Apeductului ruinat şi peste Bulevardul Ataturk şi la nord de intrări prescris la Marele Bazar. La Coloana lui Constantin masina virat la dreapta, prin răsucirea străzi înseamnă că mirosea a gunoi şi, în final debouched într-un pătrat ornamentale lungă în care trei coloane de piatra s-au tras ca o baterie de rachete spațiale în cer paiete.*

*"Slow", a spus Kerim încet. Ei s-au furişat rotund pătrat sub umbra tei. Pe o strada pe latura de est, la farul de mai jos Palatul Serai le-a dat un pupic mare galben.*

*"Stop".*

*Masina a oprit în întuneric sub var. Kerim a ajuns pentru mânerul uşii. "Noi nu trebuie să fie lung, James. Tu stai în față pe scaunul şoferului şi în cazul în care un polițist vine de-a lungul spune doar "Ben Bey ortagiyim Kerim'in". Poate vă amintiți asta? Aceasta înseamnă "Eu sunt partenerul lui Kerim Bey". Ele vor lăsa în pace. "*

*Bond inhalat. 'Vă mulțumim foarte mult. Dar vei fi surprins să aud eu vin cu tine.*

A careful reading of this text, the translation into Romanian of the original text, may very well shed light on several types of shortcomings entailed with it. One is bound to find out that there are semantic shortcomings, syntactic shortcomings, morphological shortcomings as well as lexical shortcomings. (See Figure 11.)



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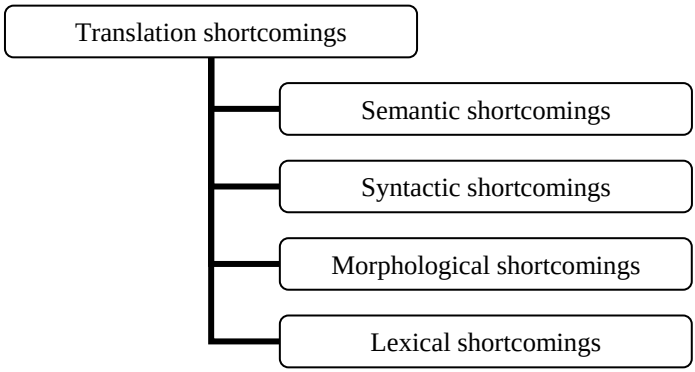



**Figure 11: A graphic representation of the shortcomings of the first stage of the first round-trip translation**

The semantic shortcomings revolve mostly around the word-for-word translation of idioms The list of idioms translated in this manner is rather long (i.e. *gave them a great yellow wink → le-a dat un pupic mare galben* instead of *le-a transmis o clipire mare galbenă*, *reached for the door handle → a ajuns pentru mânerul uşii* instead of *s-a întins să apuce mânerul uşii*, *We shan't be long → Noi nu trebuie să fie lung* instead of *Nu stăm mult*, *comes along → vine de-a lungul* instead of *apare*, *you'll be surprised to hear I'm coming with you → vei fi surprins să aud eu vin cu tine*, which is actually impolite in Romanian and should be replaced with something more polite such as *dar, din păcate, vin cu tine*.) It is also worth noting that the sentence in Turkish has been left untranslated.

The syntactic shortcomings are easily explained by the differences between the source language, English and the target language, Romanian. The English past tense simple is usually translated with the Romanian present perfect, however Romanian present perfect is usually listed in dictionaries without the verb to be. As such the text features verbs in the present perfect which are missing the auxiliary verb (i.e. *The car sped → Masina accelerat* instead of *Maşina a accelerat*, *the car turned right → masina virat la dreapta* instead of *masina a virat la dreapta*).



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Tow morphological shortcomings have been identified. The first problem is that of using the wrong number in the context, that is plural instead of singular (i.e. *Thanks → Vă mulțumim* instead of *Vă mulțumesc*). This is explained by the fact that expressing politeness is a very difficult feat to accomplish. The original text only implies that the thanking is to be done to a single person. However the next morphological shortcoming is even more difficult to overcome. It is a fact that the English third person plural personal pronoun is identical for all genders while the Romanian third person plural personal pronoun is different for every gender. Since the artificial intelligence of the Machine translation engine can only partially understand the context it has chosen the wrong gender (e.g. *They'll leave you alone → Ele vor lăsa în pace* instead of *(Ei) Te vor lăsa în pace*).

Most of the lexical shortcomings centre around ttranslating a word using another meaning than the one required by the context (i.e. *past shadowy mosques → moschei trecut umbră* instead of , *the barred entrances → intrări prescris* instead of *intrările blocate, through mean twisting streets → prin răsucirea străzi înseamnă* instead of *pe străzile şerpuitoare, a long ornamental square → un pătrat ornamentale lungă* instead of *o piață lungă ornamentală, the spangled sky → cer paiete* instead of *cerul împodobit, under the limes → sub var* instead of *sub tei, snorted → inhalat* instead of *gâfâit*).

And last but not least, there are a number of words which have not been translated for internal reasons (i.e. *lanced, debouched*).

**The back-translation**

The second stage of the round-trip translation involved the machine translation of the original text from Romanian back into English. (See Figure 11.)




**Figure 12: A graphic representation of the second stage of the round-trip translation**



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*The car accelerated deserted streets, past mosques feeble shadow of the dazzling minarets up at month three quarters, according to Aqueduct ruined and over Ataturk Boulevard and north of the prescribed entries at the Grand Bazaar. Column of Constantine in the car turned right, by turning the streets means that reeked of garbage and finally debouched in a square in which three long ornamental stone columns have been drawn as a space missile battery in the sky sparkles.*

*"Slow," Kerim said slowly. They sneaked under the shade of lime round square. On a street on the east side, below the lighthouse Seraglio Palace gave a big kiss yellow.*

*"Stop."*

*The car stopped in the dark under var. Kerim reached for the door handle. "We should not be long, James. You sit in front of the driver's seat and if a policeman comes along just say" Ben Bey ortagiyim Kerim'in. Perhaps you remember that? This means "I am his partner Kerim Bey. They will leave alone. "*

*Bond inhaled. 'Thank you very much. But you'll be surprised to hear coming with you.*

Much like in the of the translation, there are shortcomings in the back-translation which can be assigned a place on the Semantic, Morphological and Lexical levels. (See Figure 13.)

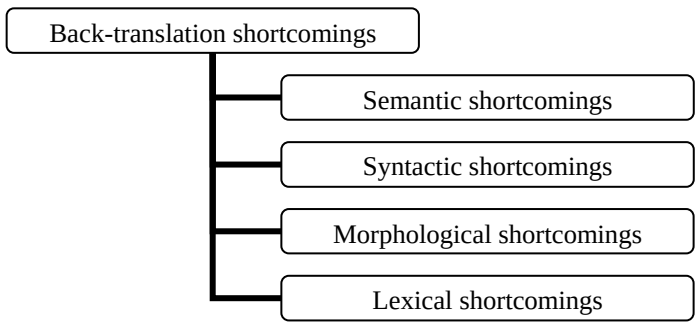



**Figure 13: A graphic representation of the shortcomings of the second stage of the first round-trip translation**



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On the semantic level there are a few cases of idioms calqued from Romanian (i.e. *north of the prescribed entries at the Grand Bazaar* instead of *north of the barred entrances to the Grand Bazaar*, *The car accelerated deserted streets* instead of *The car sped through the deserted streets*, *gave a big kiss yellow* instead of *gave them a great yellow wink*, *You sit in front of the driver's seat* instead of *You sit up front in the driver's seat*, *Perhaps you remember that?* instead of *Can you remember that?*)

On the syntactic level, there are shortcomings which have to do with the wrong word order (i.e. *Column of Constantine in the car turned right* instead of *At the Column of Constantine the car turned right*, *by turning the streets means that reeked of garbage* instead of *through mean twisting streets that smelled of garbage*, *Kerim said slowly* instead of *said Kerim softly*, *On a street on the east side* instead of *Down a street on the east side*, *below the lighthouse Seraglio Palace* instead of *the lighthouse below the Seraglio Palace*, *gave a big kiss yellow* instead of *gave them a great yellow wink*, *I am his partner Kerim Bey*. instead of *I am Kerim Bey's partner*).

On a morphological level one will notice the use of the wrong tense (i.e. *We should not be long, James.* instead of *We shan't be long, James.*) and the missing parts of speech (i.e. *gave a big kiss yellow* instead of *gave them a great yellow wink*, *But you'll be surprised to hear coming with you*. instead of *But you'll be surprised to hear I'm coming with you.*)

On a lexical level one will find lexical material which was not translated from Romanian (i.e. *The car stopped in the dark under var*. instead of *The car pulled up in the darkness under the limes.*) as well as word-for-word translation from Romanian where the context requires a different wording (i.e. *by turning the streets means that reeked of garbage* instead of *through mean twisting streets that smelled of garbage*, *Bond inhaled*. instead of *Bond snorted.*)

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## DER MECHANISMUS DER RUNDREISE-ÜBERSETZUNG
*Zusammenfassung*

*Schlüsselwörter*: Anwendung, Literatur, Round-Trip-Übersetzung

Dies ist ein Artikel über eine versuchte Round-Trip-Übersetzung von Englisch in Rumänisch nach Englisch mit Hilfe eines Online-Übersetzungsdienstes. Es wird versucht, den Mechanismus der Rundreise-Übersetzung zu erklären. Daran schließt sich eine schnelle Präsentation eines Online-Übersetzungsdienstes an. Der Artikel stellt dann den Originaltext in Englisch vor. Die Übersetzung ins Rumänische wird diskutiert. Die Rückübersetzung wird vorgestellt, um das Bild zu vervollständigen.

## O APLICAȚIE
*Rezumat*

Cuvinte-cheie: *aplicația, literatură, traducere dus-întors*

Acest articol este o încercare de a realiza o traducere dus-întors cu ajutorul unui serviciu de traducere automată. La început se explică mecanismul unei traduceri dus-întors. Această explicație este urmată de o scurtă prezentare a unui serviciu de traducere automată. Apoi este prezentat textul original în limba engleză. Ulterior se discută traducerea în limba română. În final, urmează traducerea textului din limba română înapoi în limba engleză.



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