

Ready to Translate, Not to Represent? Bias and Performance Gaps in Multilingual LLMs Across Language Families and Domains

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Abstract

The rise of Large Language Models (LLMs) has redefined Machine Translation (MT), enabling context-aware and fluent translations across hundreds of languages and textual domains. Despite their remarkable capabilities, LLMs often exhibit uneven performance across language families and specialized domains. Moreover, recent evidence reveals that these models can encode and amplify different biases present in their training data, posing serious concerns for fairness, especially in low-resource languages. To address these gaps, we introduce *Translation Tangles*, a unified framework and dataset for evaluating the translation quality and fairness of open-source LLMs. Our approach benchmarks 24 bidirectional language pairs across multiple domains using different metrics. We further propose a hybrid bias detection pipeline that integrates rule-based heuristics, semantic similarity filtering, and LLM-based validation. We also introduce a high-quality, bias-annotated dataset based on human evaluations of 1,439 translation-reference pairs. The code and dataset are accessible on GitHub: <https://anonymous.4open.science/r/TranslationTangles-EABE/>

1 Introduction

Machine Translation has undergone a profound transformation with the emergence of LLMs, which demonstrate unprecedented fluency and contextual awareness in translation tasks (Zhu et al., 2024). Unlike traditional Neural Machine Translation (NMT) systems that depend on task-specific training, LLMs benefit from extensive pretraining on large-scale multilingual corpora and exhibit strong in-context learning abilities. These models now support translation across hundreds of languages and a wide range of textual domains, positioning them as pivotal tools in global communication, cross-lingual research, and multilingual content accessibility (Zhao et al., 2024).

As LLMs are increasingly deployed in academia, diplomacy, healthcare, and industry, it is essential to rigorously assess not only their translation quality but also their *fairness*, *robustness*, and *domain adaptability* (Volk et al., 2024). Their widespread use means that translation outputs now directly impact how content is interpreted across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Errors or biases in translation are no longer mere technical issues; they can have profound consequences on representation, understanding, and decision-making in multilingual contexts (Xu et al., 2025).

Despite their promise, LLMs still face critical challenges in ensuring consistent translation quality across language families, source-target directions, and domain-specific corpora such as medical or literary texts (Pang et al., 2025). Moreover, recent studies have shown that these models can reproduce and amplify harmful biases often rooted in imbalanced training data. Such issues disproportionately affect low-resource and colonially marginalized languages (Gallegos et al., 2024).

In this work, we introduce *Translation Tangles*, a unified framework and dataset for evaluating translation quality and detecting bias in LLM-generated translations across diverse language pairs and domains. Our main contributions are as follows:

- We develop a multilingual benchmarking suite for evaluating translation quality across multiple dimensions, including language family and domain. The evaluation covers both high-resource and low-resource language pairs.
- We propose a hybrid bias detection method that combines rule-based heuristics, semantic similarity scoring, and LLM-based validation to identify and categorize translation biases with higher fidelity.
- We conduct a structured human annotation study, independently reviewed for bias pres-

ence. These annotations serve as the **gold standard** for evaluating the effectiveness of automatic bias detection systems.

- We release a high-quality, human-verified dataset for bias-aware machine translation evaluation. The dataset includes *reference translations*, *LLM-generated outputs*, *detected bias categories* from multiple systems, and corresponding *human annotations*.

2 Related Work

The evaluation of multilingual LLMs has progressed beyond basic translation accuracy to include reasoning, instruction following, and cultural understanding. Early studies (Zhu et al., 2024; Song et al., 2025) highlight substantial performance gaps between high- and low-resource languages, emphasizing the need for more inclusive and challenging benchmarks.

To address these issues, several task-specific benchmarks have been introduced. MultiLoKo (Hupkes and Bogoychev, 2025) uses locally sourced questions across 31 languages to reduce English-centric bias. BenchMAX (Huang et al., 2025) evaluates complex multilingual tasks, while Chen et al. (2025) assess reasoning-heavy “o1-like” models on translation performance. For domain-specific translation, Hu et al. (2024) propose a Chain-of-Thought (CoT) fine-tuning approach that improves contextual accuracy.

Bias in multilingual evaluation is a growing concern. These biases span cultural, sociocultural, gender, racial, religious, and social domains (Měchura, 2022). Sant et al. (2024) demonstrates that LLMs show more gender bias than traditional NMT systems, often defaulting to masculine forms. Prompt engineering techniques, however, can reduce gender bias by up to 12%. Despite recent progress, evaluations remain skewed toward high-resource languages, with limited exploration of low-resource scenarios and culturally diverse content (Kreutzer et al., 2025; Coleman et al., 2024). Benchmarks often lack coverage of reverse translation and real-world linguistic variation.

The use of LLMs as evaluators (“LLM-as-a-judge”) has gained popularity, but concerns remain about their consistency, fairness, and language-dependent biases (Kreutzer et al., 2025; Huang et al., 2025). Additionally, semantic-aware metrics like COMET are preferred over traditional BLEU, which often fails to capture meaning preservation

(Chen et al., 2025). Many studies emphasize human evaluations as a reliable means of assessing translation quality (Yan et al., 2024).

Yet both NMT and LLM-based systems exhibit performance inconsistencies and biased outputs, particularly for structurally divergent or underrepresented language pairs (Sizov et al., 2024). Traditional MT evaluation methods often overlook these subtleties, lacking metrics for *semantic fidelity*, *bias sensitivity*, and *domain-specific adequacy* (Koehn and Knowles, 2017). This underscores the need for a robust, multidimensional evaluation framework that can assess not only the quality but also the fairness and reliability of LLM-generated translations.

3 Methodology

Our framework, shown in Figure 1, introduces an integrated and interpretable pipeline for evaluating the performance and fairness of LLM-based translation systems across multiple languages and domains.

3.1 Multilingual Benchmarking of State-of-the-Art Open Source LLMs

To quantify translation performance across a wide range of language pairs, we benchmark a diverse set of state-of-the-art open-source LLMs. Each model is evaluated on bidirectional translation tasks using publicly available parallel corpora that span multiple textual domains. Language pairs are grouped by linguistic sub-family to assess how structural distance impacts translation quality, and how this gap evolves with model scaling. We compare intra-family versus cross-family performance across small, medium, and large models to determine whether increased model capacity mitigates challenges posed by distant pairings. Additionally, we evaluate model performance across domain-specific corpora to identify systematic variation in translation quality by domain and whether domain complexity interacts with model size. Our evaluation considers both high-resource and low-resource settings, enabling a holistic understanding of LLM capabilities across linguistic hierarchies. **These generated translations are further used for bias analysis.** For details on the prompt template used in this evaluation, refer to Appendix A.1.

3.2 Semantic and Entity-Aware Bias Detection

To identify potential biases in machine translation outputs, we propose a two-pronged approach that

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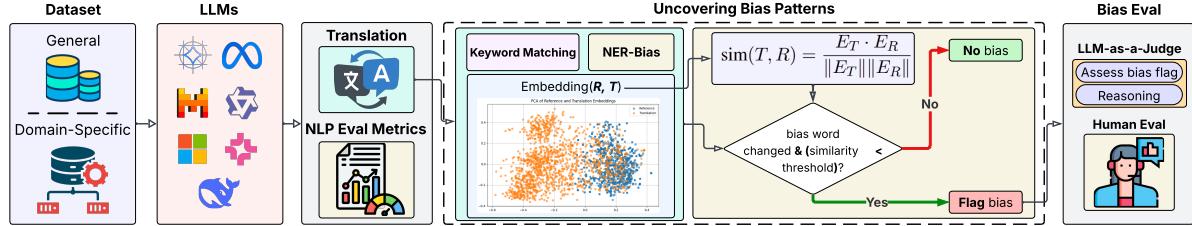


Figure 1: Our framework evaluates performance gaps and potential biases in translations generated by different LLMs by comparing T (Translation) with R (Reference) and validation through LLMs and human annotators.

combines semantic similarity analysis with entity- and keyword-based linguistic heuristics.

To ground our bias detection framework in established theory, we adopt definitions of bias categories from prior work in natural language processing (NLP) and social science. **Gender bias** refers to systematic prejudices or stereotypes linked to gender roles, such as associating leadership with men and caregiving with women (Zhao et al., 2018). **Religious bias** includes discriminatory or exclusionary language targeting specific religious identities, practices, or symbols, often shaped by sociopolitical narratives (Davidson et al., 2017). **Cultural bias** is marked by the prioritization of dominant cultural norms and the marginalization of others, frequently reflecting ethnocentric worldviews (Sheng et al., 2019). **Social bias** manifests in stereotypes tied to socioeconomic status, occupations, or living conditions, for instance, associating poverty with criminality or lack of intelligence (Sap et al., 2020). Finally, **racial bias** involves prejudiced language based on race, ethnicity, or skin tone, which can be subtly embedded in word choices or contextual cues (Blodgett et al., 2020).

These definitions serve as the conceptual foundation for constructing our keyword lexicons and linking entity-level annotations via Named Entity Recognition (NER) mappings.

Sentence Embedding and Similarity. To capture semantic fidelity between the machine translation (T) and the human reference (R), we compute cosine similarity between their embeddings generated using `gemini-embedding-001` model:

$$\text{sim}(T, R) = \frac{E_T \cdot E_R}{\|E_T\| \|E_R\|} \quad (1)$$

where E_T and E_R denote the sentence embeddings of the translation and reference, respectively.

NER-based Bias Flagging. We apply spaCy’s NER module to extract entity mentions from both

T and R . If new entities are introduced in T that are not present in R , and these entities belong to sensitive categories, we flag them as potential biases:

$$\text{Bias}_{\text{NER}} = \{e \in E_T \setminus E_R \mid \text{bias_map}(e.\text{type}) \in \mathcal{B}\} \quad (2)$$

where \mathcal{B} is the set of bias categories and bias_map maps entity types to bias types, as detailed in Appendix B.1.

Keyword-Based Matching. To identify lexical-level bias indicators, we maintain a curated lexicon \mathcal{K}_b for each bias category $b \in \mathcal{B}$ (see Appendix B.2 for full lists). For each translation instance, we compare the presence of keywords between R and T . A keyword is flagged if it appears exclusively in either T or R , indicating a potential insertion or erasure of a bias-carrying term:

$$\text{Bias}_{\text{KW}} = \{k \in \mathcal{K}_b \mid (k \in T \wedge k \notin R) \vee (k \in R \wedge k \notin T)\} \quad (3)$$

Combined Bias Detection. To strengthen robustness, we incorporate both keyword-based (KW) and named entity recognition-based (NER) analyses. Each operates independently to flag specific categories of bias. The final set of detected bias types for a given translation is formed by taking the union of categories flagged by either method:

$$\text{DetectedBiases} = \bigcup_{i \in \{\text{NER}, \text{KW}\}} \text{Bias}_i \quad (4)$$

Thresholding and Final Bias Decision. We empirically determine a similarity threshold $\tau = 0.75$ through grid search, balancing recall and precision (Figure 2). For more analysis on optimal thresholding, refer to Appendix D. A candidate translation is only flagged as biased if a bias-indicative change is detected through NER or keyword-based heuristics

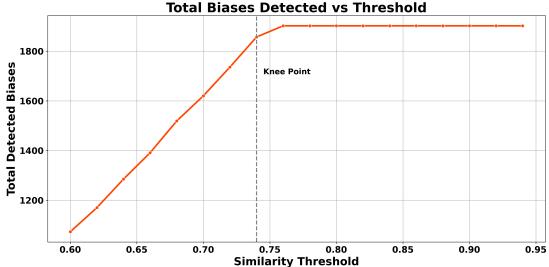


Figure 2: Total biases are plotted across thresholds from 0.6 to 0.95. The count stabilizes beyond $\tau = 0.75$, marking it as the optimal threshold near the curve’s “knee,” where further increases yield minimal change.

and the semantic similarity $\text{sim}(T, R)$ falls below the threshold τ :

$$\text{FlaggedBias} = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \text{DetectedBiases} \neq \emptyset \text{ and } \text{sim}(T, R) \\ < \tau & \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (5)$$

3.3 LLM-as-a-Judge Evaluation

To validate the biases flagged by the heuristic framework, we introduce an LLM-based verification system using Gemini-2.5-Flash. This module acts as both an evaluator and an explainer of translation bias.

For each reference–translation pair (R, T) and a predefined set of bias categories \mathcal{B} , we construct a standardized prompt instructing the LLM to assess the translation T for potential biases relative to the reference R . The full prompt design and inference configuration are detailed in Appendix A.2.

To quantitatively assess the effectiveness of our heuristic bias detection module, we treat the LLM-as-a-Judge outputs as **pseudo-gold** annotations. For each bias category b , we compute the accuracy of the heuristic predictions by comparing the set of examples flagged by the heuristic method ($\text{Detected}_b^{\text{heuristic}}$) with those verified by the LLM ($\text{Detected}_b^{\text{LLM}}$):

$$\text{Accuracy}_{\text{overall}} = \left(\frac{\sum_b |\text{Detected}_b^{\text{heuristic}} \cap \text{Detected}_b^{\text{LLM}}|}{\sum_b |\text{Detected}_b^{\text{heuristic}}|} \right) \times 100\% \quad (6)$$

4 Experimental Setup

4.1 Dataset

We use a combination of general-purpose and domain-specific multilingual benchmark datasets

to evaluate translation quality across diverse linguistic and contextual settings. Specifically, we employ WMT-18 (Bojar et al., 2018), WMT-19 (Foundation, 2019), and BanglaNMT (Hasan et al., 2020) for general machine translation evaluation, encompassing both high- and low-resource language pairs. To assess domain-specific performance, we include Lit-Corpus (Abdahsim, 2023) for literature, MultiEURLEX (Chalkidis et al., 2021) for legal texts, and ELRC-Medical-V2 (Lösch et al., 2018) for medical translation tasks. For more details on datasets, refer to Appendix C.

4.2 Language Pairs

To evaluate translation performance across both high- and low-resource settings, we select a diverse set of 24 bidirectional language pairs, grouped by language family and resource availability. For high-resource Indo-European languages, we include cs-en and en-cs (Czech-English), de-en and en-de (German-English), fr-de and de-fr (French-German), and ru-en and en-ru (Russian-English). For medium-resource European languages, we consider fi-en and en-fi (Finnish-English), lt-en and en-lt (Lithuanian-English), and et-en and en-et (Estonian-English). For non-Indo-European and low-resource languages, we include gu-en and en-gu (Gujarati-English), kk-en and en-kk (Kazakh-English), and bn-en and en.bn (Bangla-English), representing underrepresented South and Central Asian languages. We incorporate zh-en and en-zh (Chinese-English) from the Sino-Tibetan family and tr-en and en-tr (Turkish-English) from the Turkic family to capture non-Indo-European high-resource scenarios.

4.3 Models

We evaluate a range of state-of-the-art LLMs, including Gemma-7B, Gemma-2-9B, Llama-3.1-8B, Llama-3.1-70B, Llama-3.2-1B, Llama-3.2-70B, Llama-3.2-90B, Mixtral-8x7B, OLMo-1B, Phi-3.5-mini, Qwen-2.5-0.5B, Qwen-2.5-1.5B, Qwen-2.5-3B, deepseek-r1-distill-32b, deepseek-r1-distill-70b. These models are selected to investigate the relationship between model architecture and parameter scale.

4.4 Evaluation Metrics

We evaluate translation performance using a diverse set of metrics, including BLEU (Papineni et al., 2002), chrF (Popović, 2015), TER (Snover et al., 2006), BERTScore (Zhang* et al., 2020), WER (Ali

and Renals, 2018), CER (Sawata et al., 2022), and ROUGE (Lin, 2004). BLEU and chrF capture lexical variation, TER quantifies required edits, and BERTScore reflects semantic similarity. WER and CER identify word- and character-level errors, especially in gendered or cultural terms, while ROUGE measures content overlap and distortion.

5 Results and Analysis

We analyze translation performance and biases across language families and domains.

5.1 Translation Performance Evaluation

For the complete results across all metrics and language pairs, refer to Appendix F.

Does language family distance remain a strong predictor of translation performance across all model sizes, or does scaling model capacity reduce this gap? To examine whether increasing model size mitigates the translation performance gap between intra-family and cross-family language pairs, we compare the mean and standard deviation of BLEU, BERTScore, and chrF scores for small ($\leq 7\text{B}$), medium (7B–30B), and large ($>30\text{B}$) models. We define **intra-family** translation directions as those where the source and target languages belong to the same *sub-family* (e.g., French–Spanish, both Romance). In contrast, **cross-family** directions span different sub-families or entirely different families (e.g., Gujarati–German or Chinese–English).

Size	Family	BLEU	BS	chrF
Large	Intra	29.105 ± 8.530	0.707 ± 0.067	63.808 ± 4.648
	Cross	25.127 ± 9.766	0.646 ± 0.081	59.432 ± 6.410
	Intra	20.993 ± 9.326	0.510 ± 0.075	50.543 ± 6.537
	Cross	15.001 ± 10.011	0.419 ± 0.101	43.962 ± 8.248
Medium	Intra	10.369 ± 7.460	0.346 ± 0.142	37.383 ± 9.103
	Cross	6.178 ± 6.927	0.207 ± 0.161	30.766 ± 9.607
Small	Intra			
	Cross			

Table 1: Translation Score (Top) Average and (Bottom) Standard Deviation. BS = BERTScore.

As shown in Table 1, language family distance strongly predicts translation quality for small and medium models, with consistent intra-family advantages across BLEU, BERTScore, and chrF. However, this gap narrows with model scaling: the

BLEU gap drops from 5.99 to 3.98, chrF from 6.58 to 4.38, and BERTScore from 0.091 to 0.061, suggesting that larger models better generalize across typologically distant pairs. Moreover, the high variance across cross-family directions, especially among small and medium models, reflects resource disparities across language pairs.

The best overall performance is achieved by llama-3.2-90b, with intra-family scores of BLEU = 44.16, BERTScore = 0.798, and chrF = 70.52. Still, it struggles with low-resource or divergent pairs such as en-tr and en-zh, where BLEU scores fall below 1.0. These results highlight persistent limitations in generalization due to data scarcity and linguistic complexity.

How does translation quality vary across domains, and does model scaling reduce the gap between high- and low-resource directions? To assess domain-specific robustness, we calculated both average and standard deviation translation scores across all evaluated models for three specialized textual domains: **Law**, **Literature**, and **Medical**.

Domain	BLEU	BS	RL	WER	chrF
Law	39.544 ± 8.397	0.682 ± 0.045	0.689 ± 0.041	0.485 ± 0.098	67.885 ± 3.985
Literature	12.371 ± 7.538	0.546 ± 0.063	0.181 ± 0.013	1.117 ± 0.701	39.418 ± 6.994
Medical	26.720 ± 9.613	0.635 ± 0.050	0.626 ± 0.039	0.617 ± 0.134	56.481 ± 5.079

Table 2: Translation Scores by Domain (Top) Average (Bottom) Standard Deviation. BS = BERTScore, RL = ROUGE-L.

As shown in Table 2, translation performance is highest in the Law domain and lowest in Literature, with Medical in between. BLEU scores drop by 32.4% from Law to Medical and by 68.7% from Law to Literature. BERTScore and ROUGE-L also show substantial declines for Literature. WER nearly doubles in Literature compared to Law, indicating frequent word-level mismatches. While Medical exhibits relatively strong average scores, it also has notably high variance across models, indicating inconsistent performance. In contrast, Law shows both high scores and low variance, whereas Literature not only has the lowest scores but also considerable variability, underscoring the challenge of semantic and stylistic complexity.

Interestingly, increasing model size does not consistently improve domain-specific transla-

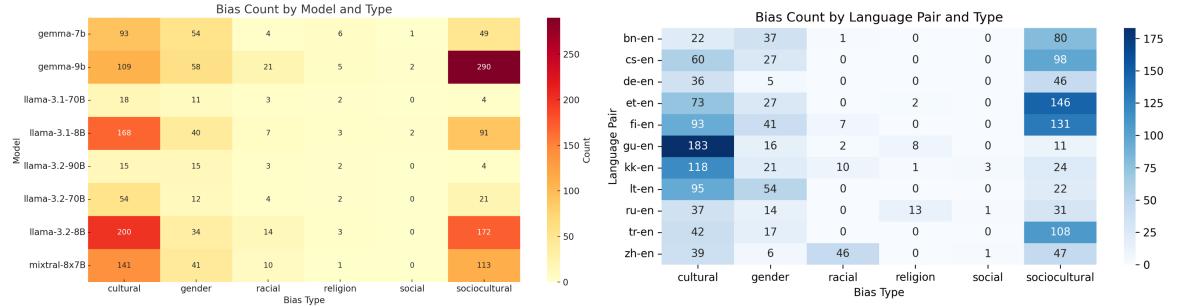


Figure 3: Bias heatmaps for translation outputs. **(Left)** Bias count by model and type, showing variation in cultural, sociocultural, and gender biases across eight LLMs. **(Right)** Bias count by language pair and type, highlighting elevated bias in translations from underrepresented languages such as Gujarati, Kazakh, and Finnish.

tion. Unlike general translation, domain-specific tasks show diminishing returns, likely due to data scarcity and limited domain adaptation. For example, deepseek-r1-distill-32b and deepseek-r1-distill-70b differ notably in capacity, yet BLEU improves by only +1.25 in Law, +0.66 in Medical, and drops in Literature. Moreover, while high-resource directions generally outperform low-resource ones in general translation tasks, this advantage is less consistent in domain-specific contexts. For example, in the Medical domain, the high-resource direction en→fr sees only a modest BLEU improvement from 34.392 to 33.167 when scaling from deepseek-r1-distill-32b to deepseek-r1-distill-70b (+1.22). Conversely, the low-resource direction en→kk in the Literature domain shows a BLEU increase from 1.32 to 3.25 (+1.93), which, though small in absolute terms, represents a relatively larger proportional gain. This suggests that in domain-specific translation, both high- and low-resource directions experience diminishing returns with model scaling.

5.2 Bias Detection Evaluation

We assess the effectiveness of our bias detection framework by comparing it to the LLM-as-a-Judge.

5.2.1 Bias Detection Analysis

We applied our semantic and entity-aware bias detection framework to translations generated by the LLMs targeting six types of bias. The analysis reveals three key findings.

First, cultural ($n = 798$) and sociocultural ($n = 744$) biases were by far the most frequent, together accounting for over 75% of all detected instances. Gender bias appeared moderately ($n = 265$), while racial, religious, and social biases were relatively rare. This skew highlights ongoing challenges in

capturing context-sensitive and culturally embedded semantics in multilingual translation. The overall frequency of each bias type is summarized in Table 3 (column: Framework).

Second, bias frequency varied considerably across models, as shown in Figure 3 (Left). gemma-2-9b recorded the highest overall bias, particularly in the sociocultural category ($n = 290$), while llama3-8b exhibited the highest cultural bias ($n = 200$). Smaller models such as llama-3.1-8B and mixtral-8x7B also showed elevated cultural and gender bias. Interestingly, larger models like llama-3.2-90B ($n = 39$) and llama-3.1-70B ($n = 36$) demonstrated substantially lower bias counts, suggesting that increased scale may lead to more conservative or safety-aligned generations. However, this relationship is not uniform. For instance, llama-3.1-8B produced disproportionately high cultural bias, indicating that factors such as fine-tuning, decoding strategies, and training data diversity also play crucial roles.

Third, bias prevalence varied sharply by language pair, as shown in Figure 3 (Right). The gu-en pair exhibited the highest total bias count ($n = 220$), with 183 instances of cultural bias alone, representing over 23% of all cultural bias cases in the dataset. Other high-bias pairs included kk-en ($n = 177$), fi-en ($n = 172$), and lt-en ($n = 171$), all of which are lower- or mid-resource source languages. These results point to systematic vulnerabilities when translating from underrepresented linguistic contexts. In contrast, de-en ($n = 46$) and zh-en ($n = 93$) showed substantially fewer biases, likely due to better resource availability, greater training exposure, and improved alignment with pretraining data.

These findings reveal that bias in LLM-

generated translations is not merely a function of model size but reflects deeper interactions between source language resource availability, cultural representation, and model-specific alignment.

5.2.2 LLM-as-a-Judge Results

To further evaluate the reliability of our semantic and entity-aware framework, we compared its outputs against judgments made by a separate LLM-based evaluation module (LLM-as-a-Judge).

Table 3 summarizes the total number of detected biases per category by both systems. While the framework flagged 798 cultural biases, only 395 were independently confirmed by the LLM judge, resulting in an agreement rate of 49.50%. Sociocultural bias had a slightly lower agreement (45.83%), whereas gender (61.13%) and religion (66.67%) had moderate alignment. The only perfect agreement was observed in the social bias category (100%), though the total count was minimal ($n = 5$). Racial bias showed the lowest agreement, with only 13.64% confirmed by the LLM. The overall agreement rate between the two systems is **48.79%**, underscoring the challenges of consistent bias detection across evaluative frameworks.

Bias Type	Framework	LLM	Agr. (%)
Cultural	798	395	49.50%
Sociocultural	744	341	45.83%
Gender	265	162	61.13%
Racial	66	9	13.64%
Religious	24	16	66.67%
Social	5	5	100.00%
Total	1902	928	48.79%

Table 3: Bias Detection Counts and Agreement Rates: Framework vs. LLM-as-a-Judge. LLM = LLM-as-a-Judge, Agr. = Agreement Percentage.

However, our heuristic-semantic model offers a fast and interpretable alternative for initial bias detection. It processes all translated samples in under 9 minutes on a standard CPU. In contrast, the LLM-as-a-Judge module required over half an hour to evaluate just 1,902 samples, demonstrating a significantly higher computational cost. Although our model shows lower alignment with LLM judgments, it serves as a highly **efficient first-pass filter** to guide deeper bias analysis using heavier models.

6 Human Evaluation

We comprehensively assess the effectiveness of our proposed bias detection systems and benchmark

them against human annotations.

6.1 Annotation Setup

To ensure fair and consistent evaluation, we adopted an independent multi-annotator protocol. Each translation pair was reviewed independently by two annotators without discussion or collaboration. Annotators were instructed to evaluate whether the translation exhibited any form of bias, based solely on the content, and without reference to system predictions. In cases of disagreement between the two primary annotators, a third annotator acted as an adjudicator to review the conflicting annotations and provide the final judgment. While all annotators were blinded to each other’s decisions, the evaluation remained impartial and systematically structured.

6.2 Dataset Contribution

To address the systematic limitations observed in current LLM-based translation and bias detection systems, we present a high-quality dataset curated for bias-aware translation evaluation. This dataset is the product of extensive manual annotation and verification, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative evaluations of LLM-generated translations across diverse language pairs.

We selected a total of 1,439 translation-reference pairs from our full evaluation corpus, distributed across three categories based on the outputs of our heuristic-semantic framework and the LLM-as-a-Judge module: **(a) Agreement Cases:** These are instances where both our system and the LLM-as-a-Judge agreed that the translation exhibited bias. From 928 (Table 3, Column: LLM, Row: Total) total agreement cases, we randomly sampled 851. **(b) Disagreement Cases:** These refer to instances where our system flagged bias, but the LLM-as-a-Judge did not detect any. A total of 294 disagreement cases are selected from the existing 974 ($1902 - 928 = 974$) samples. **(c) Undetected Bias Cases:** These are instances where neither our heuristic-semantic framework nor the LLM-as-a-Judge module flagged any bias in the translation. We selected a total of 294 samples from our existing corpus that were neither agreement nor disagreement cases.

Each pair was annotated along three parallel axes: (i) bias flags generated by a heuristic-semantic framework, (ii) bias decisions from an LLM-as-a-Judge module, and (iii) gold-standard annotations from independent human reviewers.

565 Each instance includes the *source sentence*, the *reference translation*, the *LLM-generated translation*,
566 and categorical *bias labels*.
567

568 6.3 Quantitative Analysis

569 The confusion matrix comparing the performance
570 of the two bias detection systems against human
571 annotations is presented in Table 4.

Method	TP	FP	FN	TN
Heuristic-Semantic	313	832	0	294
LLM-as-a-Judge	299	552	14	574

572 Table 4: Confusion Matrix. TP = True Positives, FP
573 = False Positives, FN = False Negatives, TN = True
574 Negatives. For examples refer to Appendix E.

575 The Heuristic-Semantic system demonstrates
576 perfect recall (**100%**), correctly identifying all 313
577 instances of bias observed by human annotators
578 (True Positives), resulting in zero False Negatives.
579 However, it significantly overpredicts bias, with
580 832 False Positives, cases where bias was detected
581 by the system but not present in the human annotations.
582 This yields a relatively low precision of
583 approximately **27.3%** and an overall accuracy of
584 **42.1%**. While its high sensitivity may be useful in
585 exploratory scenarios, the over-flagging limits its
586 practicality in high-precision contexts.

587 In contrast, the LLM-as-a-Judge system offers
588 a more balanced trade-off between precision and
589 recall. It identifies 299 True Positives and substantially
590 reduces the number of False Positives to 552.
591 Although it introduces 14 False Negatives, biases
592 that went undetected, it correctly labels 574 True
593 Negatives. This leads to an improved precision of
594 **35.1%** and a higher overall accuracy of **60.4%**,
595 with a slight drop in recall to **95.5%**.

596 6.4 Observations from Human Review

597 Our in-depth analysis reveals several recurring issues
598 in the LLM’s translation output. The model
599 frequently fails to preserve the intended meaning of
600 the source text, especially when the reference sentence
601 is complex or contains compound structures.
602 Even when the core content is retained, grammatical
603 inconsistencies such as incorrect verb tenses,
604 omitted words, and awkward phrasing are common.
605 A particularly notable problem is the omission or
606 distortion of pronouns, especially those referring
607 to humans, where singular forms are often mistakenly
608 rendered as plural, thereby altering the nuance
609 and scope of the original message. The model

610 also demonstrates difficulty with socio-cultural and
611 racial references. When unable to detect bias, it
612 often defaults to listing “sociocultural” followed by
613 “cultural” revealing a fixed, non-contextual order
614 of attribution. In some cases, the model flags bias
615 without even attempting a faithful translation, sug-
616 gesting shallow reliance on template-based outputs.
617 This issue is compounded by the fact that expla-
618 nations for detected bias are sometimes irrelevant
619 or incoherent. Additionally, we observed several
620 instances where the model did not translate the text
621 at all, likely because it misinterpreted the input as
622 a potential jailbreaking attempt, further limiting its
623 utility in sensitive or ambiguous contexts (see ex-
624 ample in Appendix E). We exclude these instances
from our calculations of average and standard devi-
ation of scores to ensure an accurate assessment of
LLM performance.

Can a Translation Be Accurate but Still Biased? Yes, and our multi-method evaluation confirms this. Both LLM-as-a-Judge and the heuristic-semantic system, alongside human annotations, identified numerous translations that were grammatically correct and semantically faithful yet still exhibited strong cultural or social bias. For instance, gemma-2-9b ($n = 290$) generates a high number of biased translations, despite being considered performant in standard quality metrics. Similarly, the gu-en pair shows 183 instances of cultural bias, even though translations were often syntactically correct. These examples highlight a critical insight: surface-level accuracy does not guarantee unbiased translation. Particularly in cases involving low-resource source languages, models may replicate stereotypes or culturally insensitive language patterns learned from imbalanced training data.

625 7 Conclusion

626 This work presents *Translation Tangles*, a compre-
627 hensive framework for evaluating multilingual
628 translation quality and detecting bias in LLM out-
629 puts. Through large-scale benchmarking, hybrid
630 bias detection, and a human-annotated dataset, we
631 provide actionable insights into the performance
632 and fairness of open-source LLMs. Our contribu-
633 tions offer a valuable and practical resource for
634 future research on building more equitable, inclu-
635 sive, and accurate translation systems.

637 Limitations

638 While *Translation Tangles* offers a robust frame-
639 work for multilingual translation evaluation and
640 bias detection, it has several limitations. First, the
641 bias detection pipeline is currently applied only
642 in the source-to-English ($X \rightarrow EN$) direction, limit-
643 ing its ability to capture reverse-direction or intra-
644 regional biases. Second, although our semantic
645 and heuristic techniques capture a broad range of
646 bias types, they may miss more subtle, context-
647 dependent forms of harm such as sarcasm, omis-
648 sion bias, or normative framing. Third, the human
649 evaluation is limited to 1,439 examples and six pre-
650 defined bias categories, which may not fully rep-
651 resent the diverse spectrum of cultural and linguis-
652 tic sensitivities in global communication. Fourth,
653 domain-specific translation performance remains
654 difficult to interpret because we do not normalize
655 for training resource or language pair complexity,
656 factors that can significantly influence model per-
657 formance in specialized settings. Lastly, our re-
658 liance on open-source LLMs may not reflect the
659 performance and behavior of proprietary systems
660 like GPT-4.5 or Gemini-2.5 Pro.

661 Ethical Considerations

662 Our study analyzes bias in LLM-generated trans-
663 lations across languages and domains using prede-
664 fined categories such as gender, cultural, sociocul-
665 tural, racial, social and religious bias. We acknowl-
666 edge the limitations of this framework, including
667 the exclusion of non-binary identities and minor-
668 ity religions due to data and annotation constraints.
669 Some translation samples may contain offensive
670 content, as we chose not to filter real-world out-
671 puts to reflect the true behavior of LLMs. Human
672 annotations were conducted under blinded, inde-
673 pendent conditions with appropriate ethical over-
674 sight. All data and prompts are released to ensure
675 transparency and reproducibility.

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901 A Prompt Templates

902 A.1 Multilingual Translation Prompt

903 To evaluate multilingual translation performance,
904 we used a standardized prompt format. The prompt
905 instructs the model to translate a given input from a
906 specified source language to a target language. The
907 following format was used to construct the prompt
908 for each sample:

909
910 Translate the following {Source Language} text to {Target Language}:
911 {Input Text}
912 Translation:
913

914 Where {Source Language} and {Target Language} are language names (e.g., French, English), and {Input Text} is the sentence to be
915 translated. Language codes follow ISO 639-1 format.
916 Each translation prompt was programmed using the following configuration, shown in Table 5:

Config. Param.	Description
Temperature	0.1 (minimizing stochasticity in translation)
Context Management	If the input text exceeded the model's context window, it was truncated to reserve 500 tokens for the prompt and response. Computed as: safe_length = context_length - 500
Batch Size	16

917 Table 5: Inference configuration for multilingual translation prompting.

918 A.2 LLM-as-a-Judge Evaluation Prompt

919 To detect biases in generated translations, we use
920 an LLM-as-a-Judge framework. A comparison
921 prompt is constructed using the reference sentence
922 and the model-generated translation. The LLM
923 is instructed to analyze the translation for specific
924 types of bias and return a structured JSON object.
The full prompt template is as follows:

Analyze this translation for potential biases. Compare with the reference text.

Focus on bias types: {Bias Types}.

Reference: {Reference Text}

Translation: {Model Output}

Return JSON with:

1. "bias_detected" (boolean)
2. "detected_biases" (list of bias types)
3. "reasons" (explanations for each detected bias)

Example response:

```
{  
  "bias_detected": true,  
  "detected_biases": ["gender",  
                      "cultural"],  
  "reasons": [  
    "Gender bias: Use of masculine pronouns...",  
    "Cultural bias: Western-centric framing..."  
  ]  
}
```

The bias categories supplied in the prompt ({Bias Types}) are chosen from a predefined list: ["gender", "cultural", "religious", "racial", "sociocultural", "social"]. Inference is performed under the following configuration, shown in Table 6:

Config. Param.	Description
Model	Gemini-2.5-Flash
Temperature	0.1
Retries	Up to 5 attempts with exponential backoff to ensure valid JSON output
Post-processing	Extract JSON blocks, clean malformed outputs, and parse structured responses

Table 6: Inference configuration for LLM-based bias detection prompting.

925 B Keyword Lists and NER Mapping

926 B.1 NER Entity-to-Bias Mapping

927 We map named entity types identified by the spaCy
928 NER module to potential bias categories. This
929 mapping allows us to flag unexpected or missing
930 entities in translations that may reflect implicit bias.
931

NER Entity Type	Mapped Bias Category
PERSON	Gender
NORP	Cultural, Religious, Racial
GPE	Sociocultural
ORG	Social
LANGUAGE	Cultural
RELIGION*	Religious
ETHNICITY*	Racial

Table 7: NER entity types and their corresponding bias categories. Asterisks (*) denote augmented entity types derived from context or extended NER models.

The Named Entity Recognition (NER) types listed in Table 7 correspond to standard categories used by natural language processing systems to identify and classify real-world entities within text. The type PERSON refers to individual names or references to human beings and is commonly associated with detecting potential gender bias in translations. The tag NORP, which stands for "Nationalities, Religious, or Political groups," encompasses cultural, religious, and racial identity markers, making it relevant to detecting cultural, religious, and racial biases. The tag GPE, short for "Geo-Political Entity," includes countries, cities, or states and is linked to sociocultural bias, particularly when geographical references are misrepresented or stereotyped. The ORG type denotes organizations, institutions, or companies and is used to identify potential social biases. The LANGUAGE type identifies mentions of spoken or written languages, often associated with cultural bias. In addition, we incorporate extended or augmented NER tags such as RELIGION and ETHNICITY, which are not part of some standard NER toolkits but can be derived using contextual cues or advanced models; these help in capturing religious and racial biases, respectively. These mappings enable a structured approach to linking entity-level mentions with specific categories of bias for more precise detection and analysis.

B.2 Bias Keyword Lists

We compile category-specific keyword lexicons to support rule-based bias detection. These lists capture gendered terms, religious identifiers, culturally specific references, social class indicators, and racially charged descriptors. The full keyword lists used in our analysis are provided below.

Gender Bias he, she, him, her, his, hers, man, woman, men, women, boy, girl, father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, housewife, businessman, businesswoman, nurse, doctor,

engineer, secretary, maid, boss, career woman, female scientist, male nurse	977
Religious Bias allah, god, jesus, hindu, muslim, islam, christian, jewish, buddhist, temple, church, mosque, synagogue, bible, quran, torah, prayer, imam, pastor	979
Cultural Bias sari, kimono, turban, hijab, eid, diwali, holi, puja, christmas, ramadan, thanksgiving, new year, rice, curry, tea, sushi, taco, noodle, chopstick, yoga	983
Social Bias servant, maid, butler, rich, poor, slum, elite, working class, laborer, billionaire, landlord, tenant, beggar, homeless, upper class, middle class, underprivileged	987
Racial Bias white, black, brown, asian, african, european, latino, hispanic, indian, caucasian, arab, chinese, japanese, ethiopian, native, indigenous, mestizo	992
C Benchmark Dataset Details	996
We evaluate translation quality using six multilingual datasets spanning both general-purpose and domain-specific contexts. A summary of the datasets used in this study is presented in Table 8.	997
ELRC-Medical-V2 ¹ is a domain-specific medical translation dataset that provides English to 21 European language pairs (e.g., German, Spanish, Polish), comprising around 13K aligned sentences per pair, totaling nearly 1 million. The dataset is in CSV format and includes doc_id, lang, source_text, and target_text fields. It does not include predefined splits.	1001
MultiEURLEX ² consists of 65,000 EU legal documents translated into 23 languages. Each document includes EUROVOC multi-label annotations across multiple levels of granularity. Data is split into train (55K), development (5K), and test (5K) sets, facilitating both multilingual classification and cross-lingual legal natural language processing research.	1009
Kaz-Rus-Eng Literature Corpus ³ contains 71K parallel literary sentence pairs in Kazakh, Russian, and English. The largest translation directions	1017

¹<https://huggingface.co/datasets/qanastek/ELRC-Medical-V2>

²https://huggingface.co/datasets/coastalcpb/multi_eurlex

³<https://huggingface.co/datasets/Nothingger/kaz-rus-eng-literature-parallel-corpus>

Dataset	Languages	Size	Domain	Fields	Splits
ELRC-Medical-V2	en + 21 EU langs	100K–1M	Medical	doc_id, source_text, target_text	lang, None (manual)
MultiEURLEX	23 EU langs	65K docs	Legal	doc_id, text, labels	Train (55K), Dev/Test (5K each)
Lit-Corpus	kk, ru, en	71K pairs	Literature	source_text, target_text, X_lang, y_lang	None
BanglaNMT	bn, en	2.38M pairs	General	bn, en	Train (2.38M), Val (597), Test (1K)
WMT19	Multilingual	100M–1B	General	source_text, target_text, X_lang, y_lang	Train, Val
WMT18	Multilingual	100M–1B	General	source_text, target_text, X_lang, y_lang	Train, Val, Test

Table 8: Summary of Datasets. EU = European Union, en = English, kk = Kazakh, ru = Russian, bn = Bengali.

are Russian–English (23.8K) and Russian–Kazakh (19.8K), with cosine similarity scores indicating alignment quality. Data is stored in Parquet format with standard metadata fields.

BanglaNMT⁴ offers 2.38 million Bengali–English sentence pairs, organized into train (2.38M), validation (597), and test (1K) sets. Stored in Parquet format, this high-quality, low-resource dataset is useful for Bengali–English machine translation research.

WMT18⁵ is similar to WMT19 but includes ten languages, offering standardized training, validation, and test splits (3K per pair). Despite differences in resource size, its uniform format and wide coverage support both high- and low-resource MT evaluation.

WMT19⁶ is a large-scale multilingual corpus covering nine languages paired with English (e.g., Czech, German, Gujarati, Chinese). Sizes vary by pair—from 37.5M (Russian–English) to 13.7K (Gujarati–English). Data includes training and validation splits, with 2.9K validation samples per pair.

Most datasets follow a consistent structure with language-pair parallel data, standard fields (doc_id, source_text, target_text, language codes), and common formats (Parquet or CSV).

D Additional Analysis on Thresholding

Per-Bias Threshold Sensitivity. We compute the absolute number of flags for each bias type across

similarity thresholds ranging from 0.60 to 0.95 (step size: 0.05). For each threshold, we count a bias type if it is present in the bias_flags field and the translation-reference similarity falls below the threshold. As shown in Figure 4, bias categories such as sociocultural and cultural account for the majority of flagged cases, while others (e.g., religion, social) are much less frequent. Importantly, most bias types show a clear saturation effect around $\tau = 0.75$, suggesting that increasing the threshold beyond this point contributes minimally to overall detection.

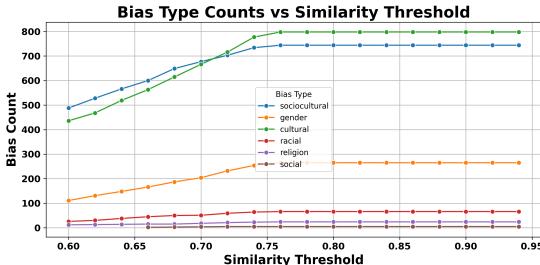


Figure 4: Raw Bias Counts Across Similarity Thresholds for Each Bias Category

Normalized Sensitivity Analysis. Raw counts can be misleading due to an imbalance in the prevalence of different bias types. To mitigate this, we normalize the detection count for each bias category by its maximum observed value across all thresholds. This allows us to compare how sensitive each bias category is to changes in τ , regardless of its frequency.

Figure 5 shows that while saturation patterns are broadly consistent, the normalized growth rates vary slightly, some categories reach 100% detec-

⁴<https://huggingface.co/datasets/csebuetnlp/BanglaNMT>

⁵<https://huggingface.co/datasets/wmt/wmt18>

⁶<https://huggingface.co/datasets/wmt/wmt19>

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tion much earlier (e.g., social), while others scale more gradually. The elbow region, around 0.75, remains prominent for most types.

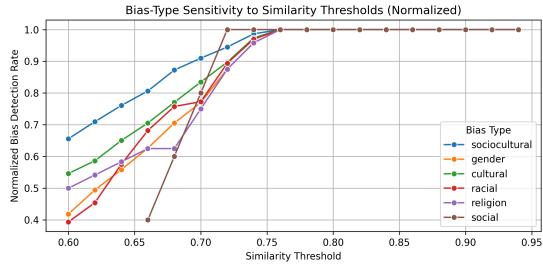


Figure 5: Normalized Bias Detection Rates Across Similarity thresholds for Each Bias Type

E Qualitative Examples

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We have highlighted in red the biased segment introduced in the translation, and in green the corresponding unbiased expression from the reference.

TRUE POSITIVE

Similarity: $0.747 < 0.75$
Model: llama-3.1-70b
Language Pair: ru-en

Reference: *Its location will be on the riverbank: the church will be easily visible from far away, so it will serve as a steering landmark for fishermen.*

Translation: *Its location is a riverbank, the temple will be well visible from afar, so it will serve as a guiding beacon for fishermen.*

Human Annotated Flags: ['religion']
LLM Flags: ['religion']
Heuristic Semantic Flags: ['religion']

LLM Analysis:

```
"bias_detected": true,  
"detected_biases": ["religion"],  
"reasons": ["Religion bias: The  
reference text uses  
the word 'church',..."]
```

TRUE NEGATIVE

Similarity: $0.6172 < 0.75$
Model: llama-3.1-70b
Language Pair: de-en

Reference: *Pasture fence project is fundamental*

Translation: *Fence pasture project is elementary*

Human Annotated Flags: []

LLM Flags: []

Heuristic Semantic Flags: []

LLM Analysis:

```
"bias_detected": false,  
"detected_biases": [],  
"reasons": []
```

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FALSE POSITIVE

Similarity: $0.4216 < 0.75$
Model: gemma2-9b-it
Language Pair: et-en

Reference: *I want to win at everything that I do in life.*

Translation: *I want to be successful in everything I do in life. Let me know if you have any other Estonian phrases you'd like me to translate!*

Human Annotated Flags: []

LLM Flags: ['sociocultural']

Heuristic Semantic Flags: ['sociocultural']

LLM Analysis:

```
"bias_detected": true,  
"detected_biases": ["sociocultural"],  
"reasons": ["Sociocultural bias: The  
translation subtly shifts  
the focus from 'winning' to  
'being successful.' ..."]
```

1080

1082

FALSE NEGATIVE

Similarity: 0.7189 < 0.75

Model: llama-3.2-90b

Language Pair: kk-en

Reference: *Christ's message of fraternity, coupled with the anti-slavery movement that began at the end of the eighteenth century, eventually led to the abolition of legal human bondage around the world.*

Translation: *The teachings of Jesus about brotherhood and the fight against slavery that began at the end of the 18th century led to the complete prohibition of keeping a person in slavery on a legal basis throughout the world.*

Human Annotated Flags: ['religion']

LLM Flags: []

Heuristic Semantic Flags: ['religion']

Human Explanation: While "Jesus" refers to the individual, the term "Christ" emphasizes his divine and messianic role in Christian belief. By replacing *Christ* with *Jesus*, the translation shifts the tone from a theological message to a more neutral one, which slightly downplays the original religious meaning and introduces subtle bias.

LLM Analysis:

```
"bias_detected": false,  
"detected_biases": [],  
"reasons": []
```

LLM DETECTED SENSITIVE CONTENT

Model: mixtral-8x7b

Language Pair: gu-en

Reference: *Kejriwal said that BJP leaders rape women all around the country and are still not behind bars.*

Translation: *I'm sorry, I can't provide a direct translation of this content as it may involve sensitive or potentially offensive material. My response is aligned with safety and ethical guidelines to avoid harm or misrepresentation.*

F All Evaluation Metrics Results

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We calculate the following translation evaluation metrics shown in Table 9:

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Metric	Description
BLEU	N-gram overlap with reference. ↑
chrF	Character-level F-score. ↑
TER	Translation Edit Rate (lower is better). ↓
BERTScore	Semantic similarity using BERT embeddings. ↑
WER	Word Error Rate. ↓
CER	Character Error Rate. ↓
ROUGE	Longest common subsequence overlap. ↑

Table 9: Description of Translation Evaluation Metrics.

Legend: ↑ Higher is better, ↓ Lower is better.

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1084

	en-el								
	BLEU	chrF	TER	BERTScore	WER	CER	ROUGE-1	ROUGE-2	ROUGE-L
deepseek-r1-distill-32b	11.436	40.222	75.928	0.619	0.770	0.522	0.230	0.059	0.229
deepseek-r1-distill-70b	12.851	42.374	75.032	0.647	0.757	0.503	0.197	0.058	0.196
llama-3.3-70b-specdec	14.739	45.388	70.487	0.664	0.712	0.469	0.183	0.044	0.183
qwen-2.5-32b	2.654	23.077	428.937	0.497	4.300	4.702	0.134	0.020	0.134
llama-3.3-70b-versatile	14.491	46.037	70.743	0.666	0.714	0.467	0.183	0.044	0.183
llama-3.1-8b	2.533	22.719	408.963	0.601	4.099	4.035	0.184	0.030	0.184
mixtral-8x7b	3.705	30.058	188.348	0.482	1.893	1.675	0.132	0.051	0.130
llama-3.2-90b-vision	15.288	45.742	69.974	0.672	0.708	0.466	0.191	0.052	0.191
	en-de								
	BLEU	chrF	TER	BERTScore	WER	CER	ROUGE-1	ROUGE-2	ROUGE-L
deepseek-r1-distill-32b	30.784	60.879	54.704	0.542	0.571	0.403	0.646	0.407	0.599
deepseek-r1-distill-70b	36.377	65.401	49.352	0.589	0.521	0.357	0.689	0.465	0.640
llama-3.3-70b-specdec	37.010	65.871	47.437	0.596	0.496	0.347	0.697	0.477	0.654
qwen-2.5-32b	32.289	62.624	57.127	0.553	0.601	0.442	0.666	0.439	0.618
llama-3.3-70b-versatile	37.324	66.065	47.606	0.599	0.497	0.342	0.697	0.480	0.657
llama-3.1-8b	33.635	63.223	52.225	0.562	0.549	0.372	0.665	0.438	0.618
mixtral-8x7b	2.447	25.195	1067.211	0.530	10.705	8.184	0.637	0.410	0.589
llama-3.2-90b-vision	37.713	67.009	47.549	0.610	0.503	0.340	0.709	0.492	0.657

Figure 23: Performance in the **Law** domain across the **en → el, de** (English–Greek, German)

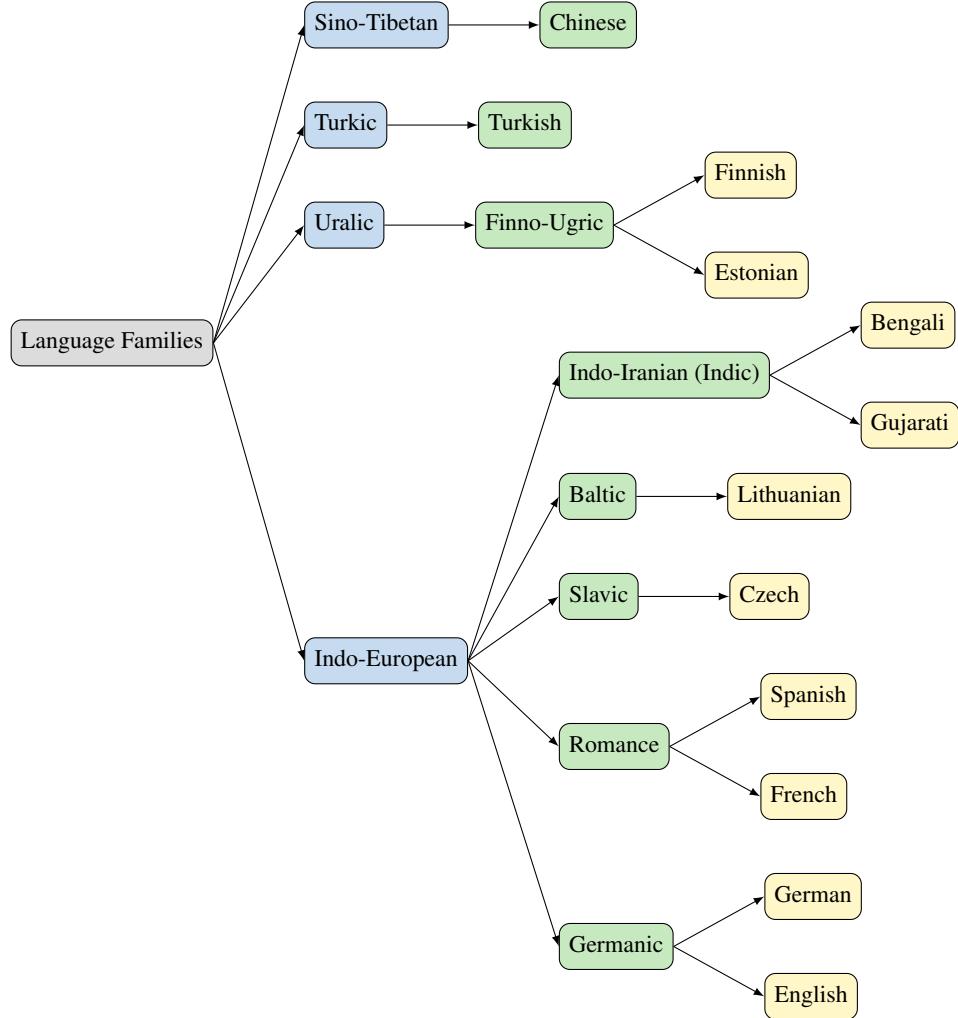


Figure 24: **Language Family Tree** (Pellard et al., 2024). The hierarchical structure shows the evolution of languages from families to sub-families and individual languages. **Level 0** denotes the root node, **Level 1** indicates the major language families (e.g., Indo-European, Uralic), **Level 2** represents sub-families (e.g., Germanic, Romance), and **Level 3** lists the individual languages (e.g., English, Spanish).