

# A comparative Study on the Impact of Instructing Translation Models on Iranian Law Student's Translation Performance

Ida Ranjbar Golkhandan

Department of English, Quchan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Quchan, Iran.

## Abstract

The present study tries to explore whether an experimental application of teaching translation models can positively affect the translation quality of law students. To this end, a mixed method study was conducted on two randomly selected classes including 56 participants at Islamic Azad University, Mashhad branch, Mahshhad, Iran. Also, in order to determine the level of proficiency of the participants in both groups, the same Nelson proficiency test was first administered to all of them. Students in both groups were asked to translate some law texts from English into Persian and the outputs of the two groups were compared to assess the impact of teaching translation models. Results showed that those students who taught translation models performed better in translating English law texts in comparison to those learners who were not familiar with translation models. In other words, the study revealed that translation strategies had a positive effect on law students' translation performance. Due to these findings, the results hopefully, can be useful to suggest establishing translator-training courses for special purposes.

**Keywords:** Kim's Meaning-Oriented Assessment Criteria; Translation Models; Translation Quality

## INTRODUCTION

According to <sup>[1]</sup> the translation method develops three qualities essential to any language learning including accuracy, clarity, and flexibility. Translation is a newly born study that its main aim is to reproducing the various kinds of the texts. In other words, it is considered as the process of negotiating and understanding the source text, rendering and transferring a certain linguistic device to the target text with regard to the style, writer, reader, form and culture. Nowadays, translation exchanges information between languages in all over the world and has been used for communication between members of different cultures. More specifically, in the area of law it is tried to understand how law students convey the meaning from source language to the target one.

Translation studies have been controversial from various viewpoints, such as the debate on what constitutes a good translation <sup>[2]</sup>. Besides, Venuti (1998, p. 240) considers translation strategies as those which "involve the basic tasks of choosing the foreign text to be translated and developing a method to translate it <sup>[3]</sup>." Similarly, Cohen (1984, p. 4) argues that, "the element of consciousness is what distinguishes strategies from these processes that are not strategic."<sup>[4]</sup> It is also worth mentioning that non-English students are forced to translate their proposals from Persian

to English and study translated books and sometimes they are required to read English articles and texts; so it is necessary for them to understand the strategies of translation in order to improve their translation quality. In order to complete a translation task appropriately, students should produce the same or at least similar effect on readers like those are created by the source text on its readers. The present study, therefore, tended to investigate different strategies applied by Iranian B.A. law students. To this end, eclectic parts of the models of translation strategies suggested by Baker (1998) <sup>[5]</sup>, Newmark (1988) <sup>[6]</sup>, and Vinay & Darbelnet (2000) <sup>[7]</sup> were employed to investigate the procedures applied by law students during the translation process from English into Persian.

**Address for correspondence:** Ms. Ida Ranjbar Golkhandan,  
Department of English, Quchan Branch, Islamic Azad University,  
Quchan, Iran.  
Email: [Ida.ranjbar68@gmail.com](mailto:Ida.ranjbar68@gmail.com)

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work noncommercially, as long as the author is credited and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

**How to cite this article:** Ranjbar Golkhandan, I. A comparative Study on the Impact of Instructing Translation Models on Iranian Law Student's Translation Performance. Arch Pharma Pract 2020;11(S1):69-72.

It is also important to mention that there are many texts which are required to be translated carefully and appropriately such as formal legal documents, birth certificate, expense account, bankers bills, etc., and the translators should be chosen among those who are technical and knowledgeable enough in these areas. In other words, some factors such as having technical knowledge about different fields of study would play an important role in translating different texts. In these cases, while the translator should have enough knowledge about law issues, they should also have knowledge about translation rules and strategies.

On the other hand, non-English learners such as law students are not familiar with using translation strategies and they do not know how they can transfer cultural values. Also, they are not familiar with translation rules and strategies; therefore, if they are taught these strategies, they can definitely improve their translation quality. The aim of the study is, therefore, to help students whose major is not English, and teach them the required translation strategies to reduce difficulties that they encounter when try to translate books, articles and other relevant texts. Based on the purpose of the study, therefore, the following research questions are brought into focus:

1. Is there any significant difference between translation performance of those law students who had translation instruction and those who did not have with regard to the instructed translation models?
2. Is there any significant difference among translations with respect to the application of translation strategies?
3. How do law students react to using translations models?

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### • Kim's Meaning- Oriented Assessment

One of the key issues in translation studies is how to evaluate and measure translation text. In other words, translation assessment is a big challenge for translation instructors because they need to assess their students' translations; on the other hand, lack of systematic criteria that can be used universally to assess translations would be a major problem. To analyze the data, the researchers employed objective rubrics suggested by Kim's meaning-oriented assessment of translation (2009) that represents its scoring rubrics out of 45<sup>[8]</sup>. It contains more than 400 words since the minimum number of words for a translation to be assessed should be 400 based on the guidelines proposed by Kim (2009)<sup>[8]</sup>.

In the meaning-oriented assessment criteria, translation errors are categorized into major and minor errors. Major errors are those that influence one or more aspect of meaning, while minor errors are simple mistakes that have little impact on the delivery of source text meaning. Major errors are analyzed on the basis of different aspects of meaning which are experiential, logical, interpersonal, and textual, as mentioned earlier, and whether the error has an impact on the accurate delivery of the meaning of the source text (Accuracy) or on the natural delivery of the meaning in the target text.

### • The General Definition and Different Classifications of Translation Models

There are many theories and translation strategies based on different perspectives including word-for-word translation vs. sense-for-sense translation that are text-level or segment-level, source-oriented translation vs. target-oriented translation, direct translation vs. oblique translation by Vinay & Darbelnet (2000)<sup>[7]</sup>, adequacy vs. acceptability, formal equivalence vs. dynamic equivalence by Eugene Nida (1964)<sup>[9]</sup>, semantic translation vs. communicative translation by Newmark (1988)<sup>[6]</sup>, overt translation vs. covert translation by House (1997)<sup>[10]</sup>, foreignization vs. domestication suggested by Venuti (1998), and documentary vs. instrumental translation suggested by Nord.

### • Translation Models

It is necessary to understand the concept of strategy argued by many translation theorists. Some of these concepts asserted by Newmark, the founders of the institute of linguist. He indicates that "translation is a craft that attempts to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message or statement in another language" (1981, p. 7)<sup>[11]</sup>.

Newmark replaces Nida's terms of formal and dynamic equivalence with semantic and communicative translation respectively. The major difference between the two types of translation proposed by Newmark is that semantic translation focuses on meaning whereas communicative translation concentrates on effect. According to Newmark (1981), literal translation is the best approach in both semantic and communicative translation. As Venuti (2001) states, translators can select seven procedures, the first three covered by direct/ literal translation and the remaining four by oblique translation. These procedures include borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation.

Loescher (1991, p. 8) defines translation strategy as "a potentially conscious procedure for solving a problem faced in translating a text, or any segment of it"<sup>[12]</sup>. Furthermore, Bell (1998) asserted two kinds of translation strategies, one is local that is related to what happens during the process of translation and text section, and the other one is global, which deals with the whole text<sup>[13]</sup>.

### • Previous Studies

Several studies were conducted in this field among which is a study done by Karimnia (2008) did another study and worked on translators' learning style in Shiraz<sup>[14]</sup>. The results indicated that translation qualifications of the translators can be improved and on the other hand it is better for translation instructors to study different learning styles and find out which style is more effective in translating other text types than others.

## METHODOLOGY

### • Participants

Participants at the first phase of the study included 100 law students in Islamic Azad University, Mashhad branch, Mashhad, Iran. They had the mean age of 23 and there were 14 males and 42 females. In order to determine the level of proficiency of the participants in both groups, the same Nelson proficiency test was first administered to all of them. In order to select homogeneous participants, based on the normal probability curve, those students whose scores were between -1 and +1 standard deviation were regarded as the main participants. Finally, 56 students were selected as the main participants for the present research.

### • Instruments

#### ✓ English Nelson test

The English Nelson test was used to homogenize the students' English proficiency who participated in the study. This test comprised 50 multiple-choice vocabularies, grammar, and reading comprehension items. The reliability of this version of Nelson test is  $r = 0.82$  stated by Hashemian, Roohani & Fadaei (2012) [15].

#### ✓ Law texts

For the purpose of this study, five paragraphs of law texts in general topics of criminal law were selected by the researchers and administered to both groups at the same time.

### • Procedure

The first step in the present study was to determine the level of proficiency of the participants by Nelson proficiency test

in order to find the homogeneous participants among law students. A pre-test was given to the students to understand the level of student's translation and after seven weeks a post-test was administered on the same students to understand the predicted changes. During the seven weeks, the experimental group (EG) learned English based on the translation models suggested by Baker (1992) [16], Newmark (1998) and Vinay & Darbelnet's (2000) and the control group (CG) was taught based on the traditional approach. Next, they were asked to translate the five law paragraphs from English into Persian and after collecting the translated texts, they were evaluated and scored by the researchers. Finally, the interview was administered in order to understand the students' feedbacks and their reactions.

### • Data Analysis

To analyze the data, ANCOVA was used to determine whether this difference between the pre-test and the post-tests was statistically significant. The scores were calculated to find the differences between the two mean scores by Chi-square, and the theme-based categorization was used to understand the students' reactions to using translation strategies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### • Quantitative Phase of the Study

In order to make our sampling fairly homogenous in terms of their level of proficiency, the researchers just included those students whose scores were above and below the mean (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Students' Scores on NELSON Test**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
test of homogeneity	60	19	37	26.98	4.265	.610	.309	-.062	.608
Valid N (listwise)	60								

Furthermore, as displayed in Table 2, the means of the students in their post-test of translations increased for both groups, but it seems that the second group performed better.

**Table 2. ANCOVA Test for Translation Scores**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df
Corrected Model	600.488 <sup>a</sup>	2
Intercept	66.142	1
Pre	137.613	1
Group	423.486	1
Error	203.495	53
Total	29199.000	56
Corrected Total	803.982	55

a. R Squared = .747 (Adjusted R Squared = .737)

Moreover, in order to see if the difference between the two groups was statistically significant, the ANCOVA test was used, and the results revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group. Therefore, there was a significant difference in the students' scores in the control group and the experimental group. Also, Chi-square tests were run since the data were nominal for each set of translation strategies. Moreover, the proportion of cases for each translation strategies translated by experimental group was significantly different from that of control group, so the experimental group outperformed the control group and based on the results obtained from Chi-square tests, the difference between the sets of translations with respect to

translation strategies was significant for all of the translations strategies except for shift, equivalence, omission, and descriptive equivalence

**Table 3: ANCOVA Test for Translation Scores**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	600.488 <sup>a</sup>	2	300.244	78.198	.000	.747
Intercept	66.142	1	66.142	17.227	.000	.245
Pre	137.613	1	137.613	35.841	.000	.403
Group	423.486	1	423.486	110.297	.000	.675
Error	203.495	53	3.840			
Total	29199.000	56				
Corrected Total	803.982	55				

a. R Squared = .747 (Adjusted R Squared = .737)

### Qualitative Phase of the Study

In this part of the study, the results emerged from the semi-structured interviews with the students showed that the use of translation strategies increased their speed, and because it was a new experience, it improved their translation quality, and can be considered as a useful way to translate from English into Persian, and also it is an interesting activity for them.

### CONCLUSIONS

The main finding of the ANCOVA analysis indicated a positive answer to the first and second questions of the study, and it was found that teaching translation strategies had a positive effect on law students' translation performance. The experimental group's translation performance was more differentiated than the control group in the post-test. Moreover, the results of Chi\_ square test showed that teaching translation strategies had a positive effect on law students' translation performance. The experimental group's translation performance was more differentiated than control group in the post-test. In conclusion, the results revealed that translation strategies improved the experimental group's translation regarded their translation strategies. Finally, the results obtained from the semi-structured interviews revealed that the students were happy with using such translation strategies and they can increase their translation speed.

### REFERENCES

- Duff, A. Translation. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Matrat, C. Investigating the translation process: Thinking-aloud versus joint activity. Delaware: University of Delaware, 1992.
- Venuti L. Strategies of translation. Encyclopedia of translation studies. 1998:240-4.
- Cohen AD. On taking language tests: What the students report. Language testing. 1984 Jun;1(1):70-81.
- Baker, M. The Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies. London/New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Newmark P. A textbook of translation. New York: Prentice hall; 1988.
- Vinay, J. P., Darbelnet, J. A Methodology for Translation. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2000.
- Kim, M. Meaning-oriented translation assessment. In C. V. Angelelli and H. E. Jacobson, Testing and assessment in translation and interpreting studies, (pp. 123-157). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2009.
- Nida EA. Toward a science of translating: with special reference to principles and procedures involved in Bible translating. Brill Archive; 1964.
- House, J. Translation Quality Assessment: A Model Revisited. London: Butler & Tanner Ltd, 1997.
- Newmark, P. Approaches to translation. Oxford and New York: Routledge, 1981.
- Loescher, W. Translation performance, translation process and translation strategies. Tuebingen: Guten Narr, 1991.
- Bell, R. T. Psychological/cognitive approaches. In M. Baker (Ed), Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies. London & New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Karimnia, A. Translators' Learning Style. Shiraz: University of Shiraz Publication, 2008.
- Hashemian, M., Roohi, A., Fadaei, B. On the cognitive style of field ((in) dependence as a predicator of L2 learners' performance in recognition and text-based tests of metaphor. Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 2012; 3, 876-887.
- Baker, M. In other words: A course book on translation. London: Routledge, 1992.