Journal of Education and Practice
ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper) ISSN 2222-288X (Online)
Vol.5, No.10, 2014


# The Effect of Translation -Shifts Instruction on Translation Quality

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**Abstract**
Inspired by the notion of "Descriptive Translation Studies", the present study looked for adopting new translation teaching methods. It tried to introduce the concept of translation shifts to a number of translation students in translation workshops. The assumption was based on the idea that the study of translation shifts can lead to finding some generalizations happened in the process of translation, the study of these general rules can help the translation students create translated texts which enjoy higher quality in comparison with translated texts, performed earlier. In pursuit of this aim, some English translation students were chosen from among BA students in North-Branch, Tehran-Azad University. The homogeneity of the subjects was determined through a TOEFL examination. The students attended some translation workshops to receive some instruction and became familiar and conscious about the general rules of translation process. Through the treatment, students were required to recognize the shifts happened in the process of translation in several translation texts. Finally, the differences between translation quality of the subjects before and after treatment were examined through two translation production tests. The tests were corrected according to Farahzad's "evaluation model" (1992). The post test scores after treatment confirmed the positive effects of the teaching on translation quality..
**Keywords:** Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), Translation Shifts,

## 1. Introduction

During centuries, translation training has not been an independent discipline. Following the grammar-translation method, it was considered as a means of learning a new language. By the advent of new language teaching approaches, the use of translation was abandoned in language learning and teaching classrooms. However, translation teaching per se, became restricted to higher-level and university language courses and professional translator training. In the course of its evolutionary movement, translation was then considered as an independent discipline and not primarily connected to language teaching and learning. The newly constructed discipline focuses on the specific study of what happens in and around translating and translation. In the contemporary process, it has amounted to an educational discipline and characterizes teaching methods, testing techniques and curriculum plan.

**DTS-** A branch of translation studies that describes translation phenomena as they occur without imposing prescriptive principles on translation task- is perhaps, a new venue to improve translation teaching. Toury(1995), focusing on developing a general theory of translation, calls for the development of a properly systematic descriptive branch of the discipline to replace isolated freestanding studies that are commonplace. This is a systematic branch proceeding from clear assumptions and armed with a methodology and research techniques. He says, "Only a branch of this kind can ensure that the findings of individual studies will be intersubjectively testable and comparable, and the studies themselves replicable" (Toury, 1995:3). Descriptive Translation Studies include an explicit refusal to make a priori statements about what translation is, what it should be, or what kinds of relationship a translated text should have with its original; an insistence on examining all translated-related issues historically, in terms of the condition which operate in the receiving culture on any point in time; and an interest in extending the context of research beyond the examination of translated texts, in particular to include examining the evaluative writing on translation, for example prefaces, reviews, reflective essays and so on. In case DTS (including the concepts such as translation strategies, translation shifts and norms) can be employed in translation teaching programs, some procedures ought to be adopted. The translation scholars and theorists should devote all their efforts to plan for reformation in the area of translation teaching. DTS leads us toward bringing about great reformation, because DTS refuses to make priori statements about: "what translation is", "what translation should be", or "what kinds of relationship a translation text should have with its original". "Toury is primarily, interested in making statement about what translation behavior consists of rather than what it should consist of" (Baker, 1998: 163). Toury offers a systematic framework which is the theoretical base of his work. His statements are not random selection of observation. These statements take the forms of generalization applicable to a particular class or subclass of translation, Tory's notion of norms enables him to make general, non-random statements about translation behavior.

DTS led the scholars to two important interrelated concepts, translation shifts and translation norms. The study of these two concepts helps the scholars make generalizations and enables them to formulate a series of coherent

 

laws which is exactly what DTS looks for.

**Translation shifts**

The term shift refers to changes which occur in the process of translation. Since translation is a type of language use, the notion of shift also belongs to the domain of language performance. Shifts in fact, are the result of systematic differences between Source Language (SL) and Target Language (TL). Therefore shifts can be distinguished through the study of systematic differences between Source Language (SL) and Target Language (TL). As it is known, since the 1950s, there has been a variety of linguistic approaches to the analysis of translation that have proposed different taxonomies to categorize the translation process. Some of the best - known taxonomies include the following models:

Vinay & Darbelnet's taxonomy which is a classical model (1958/95); Catford's (1965) linguistic approach, which includes the introduction of the term "shift" of translation; Van Leuven-zwart's (1989 1990) very detailed model, designed for the analysis of the key concept of small "micro level" translation shifts and the gauging of their effect on the more general "macro level"; and finally Czech writing on translation shifts.

The main focus of the present research has been Vinay & Darbelnet categorization, therefore, giving a brief account of that seems necessary.

Although Vinay & Darbelnet have not applied the term shift, their model of comparative stylistic analysis of French and English is one of the best models which can be considered as a type of shift categories. They have studied texts in these two languages and identified translation strategies and procedures. The two general translation strategies identified by Vinay & Darbelnet (2000:84-93) are direct translation and oblique translation. "Literal" can be used as a synonym for direct translation. The two strategies comprise seven procedures, of which direct translation covers three:

**Borrowing:** Borrowing is the simplest of all translation models. In order to introduce the flavor of the source language culture into the translation, the translator uses foreign terms. Some of these foreign terms are so widely used in the target language that they no longer are considered as the foreign terms.

**Calque:** This can be regarded as a "special kind of borrowing, in which the source language expression or structure is transferred in a literal translation" (Munday; 2000:56) They distinguished two kinds of calque: lexical calque: In this kind the syntactic structure of the target language is observed while a new mode of expression is introduced. structural calque: It introduces a new construction into the target language. "Vinay & Darbelnet note that both borrowing and calque often become fully integrated into the TL, although sometimes with some semantic change, which can turn them into false friends" (Munday; 2000:56) Literal translation: Vinay & Darbelnet define literal translation as follows:

Literal or word for word translation is the direct transfer of a source language text into a grammatically and idiomatically appropriate target language text in which the translator's task is limited to observing the adherence to the linguistic rules of the Target language (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1953:33). Literal translation is the most common type of translation between two languages which belong to the same family and share the same culture. In some cases the translator may judge a literal translator as being unacceptable because it: a- gives a different meaning; b-has no meaning c- Is impossible for structural reason; d- Does not have a corresponding expression within the metalinguistic experience of the TL; e- corresponds to something at a different level of language.

In those cases when literal translation is not acceptable, Vinay & Darbelnet introduced the strategy of oblique translation. Their strategy covers four following procedures.

**Transposition:** "This is a change of one part of speech for another without changing the sense" (Munday, 2000:57). There are two types of transposition: a) obligatory, b) optional, Viany and Darbelnet say that transposition is probably the most common structural change undertaken by translators. In the process of translation different changes of part of speech can occur such as; Verb ---- noun, Adverb ---- verb, Adjective --- noun,

**Modulation:** Modulation consists of the changes of the semantics and point of view of the source language. Vinay &Darbelnet define modulation as follow: Modulation is a variation of the form of the text because of a change in the point of view. This change can be justified when; although a literal or even transposed, translation results in a grammatically correct utterance; it is considered unsuitable, unidiomatic or awkward in the target language (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958:36). As transposition, modulations can be divided into obligatory and optional. Vinay & Darbelnet say " modulation is the touchstone of a good translator whereas transposition simply shows a very good command of the target language " (Munday, 2000:58). Modulation is subdivided as follows: -Abstract for concrete, -Cause effect, -Part whole, -Part another part, -Reversal of terms, -Negation of opposite, -Active to passive (and vice versa) , Space for time, -Rethinking of intervals and limits (in space and time), -Change of symbols (including fixed and new metaphors).

**Equivalence:** Vinay & Darbelnet say that one situation can be rendered by two texts using completely different stylistic and structural means and this method is exactly the use of equivalence. Equivalence is particularly useful in translating idioms and proverbs.

**Adaptation:** The term is used in those cases when a situation existing in the source language text, does not exist in the target culture. So this procedure involves changing of the cultural reference. By this definition of adaptation, it can be concluded that adaptation is a special kind of equivalence, a situational equivalence. Vinay & Darbelnet give a list of five steps for the translator to follow in moving from ST to TT; these are: a- Identify the units of translation, b- Examine the SL text, evaluating the descriptive, affective and intellectual content of the units, c- Reconstruct the metalinguistic context of the message, d- Evaluate the stylistic effects, e- Produce and revise the TT. The first four steps also followed by Viany and Darbelnet in their analysis of published translations.

Along with the introduction of some new notions in the field of translation studies, a very strong need is felt in the area of translation teaching and translator training programs. The academic curriculum seems not to have fulfilled the demands of the trainees in this field effectively. There are lots of deficiencies from which academic programs are still suffering. Lack of efficient methods of translation teaching and training has resulted in ineffectual educational systems. It can be claimed that most translation graduates, at least in Iran, have been afflicted with insufficiency of the educational system. The insufficient education prevents the graduates to be engaged in the task of translation (Mirza Abrahim Tehrani, 2003). As far as the researcher is concerned, in a search for building more adequate and practical translation-teaching system, some questions arise: How can translation theorists and practitioners improve translation-teaching programs? With the benefit of newly introduced concepts, is it possible to educate translation trainees more effectively? Can "descriptive translation studies", including concepts such as translation shifts and norms be employed at the service of translation teaching?

## 2. Research Design

With the aim of improving translation teaching syllabus, the present study utilized the concept of translation Shifts. The objectives of the research were to find out whether the instruction of translation shifts can affect the quality of translation. So the research question was as follows:

Does raising consciousness of translation shifts help the amateur translator produce translated texts which enjoy higher quality?

In the attempt, to look for an answer to the research question, a comparative method of research (matched t-test) was used.

The test battery used in this study consisted of two different tests:

1- A test of TOEFI (Longman 2001) was used to determine the homogeneity of the group regarding their English proficiency. Those who made 50 and above (out of 100), were considered as eligible to take the other stages of the study.

2- Two translation production test (TPTs), consisting of pre- test and post test, were also administered. The texts were chosen from a book published by Payame Noor University entitled Developing Reading Proficiency. The level of text difficulty (text readability) was determined according to the readability level estimation, introduced by Flesch. The readability level of text 1 was calculated about 54.6 and the readability level of text 2 was calculated about 45.1. Therefore the two texts were considered as ordinary ones.

The subjects in this study were English translation students chosen from among the students in Tehran-Azad University, North Branch. They were taking the course: Advanced Translation 2, along the line of their BA educational syllabus. The number of students required to participate in the study was about 30. But at first, to prevent the losses during the study, about56 students were given the related tests. The number of the testees was reduced gradually as the study went on. At last 30 students' production tests were examined and scored. Although the gender and the age of the subjects have not been considered as variables, it is worth mentioning that this number consisted of 23 female and 7 male students and the average age of the subjects was 23. Once the homogeneous group was arranged, the first translation production test (pre- test) was administered. At the next stage, two sessions were devoted to the teaching of translation shifts which was considered as the treatment of the study. Following that the second translation production test (post test) was administered at the last session of the term. The effect of the special training (in this case, the teaching of translation shifts) were determined by making a comparison between the scores obtained from translation production test 1 (pre- test) and translation production text 2 (post test). The shift-categories, introduced and instructed to the subjects, were limited to shift categories presented by Catford and those presented by Vinay & Darbelnet. At first stage of the instruction the concept of shifts was introduced and at the next stage the application of these shifts was presented to the students by the means of some examples.

The translated texts (pre-test and post test) were scored by two different raters. The raters went through the texts twice and registered the final scores. The raters were MA English translation students. The scoring model was based on the scoring model introduced by Farahzad (1992). In this model the unit of translation is preferably considered a simple sentence, it means that each verb in a sentence is considered as the core and criterion of the unit and two points were allocated to each accurate and appropriate translation of a unit (verb) in each sentence.

 

Therefore, considering each verb, the passages were scanned into measures. These variables include sentences, naturalness, register, cohesion, and translation quality in general.

## 3. Results and Discussions

In this comparative study, we dealt with the relationship between several variables, so a correlation coefficient method of research (T-test) was used (the variables are : sentences, cohesion, naturalness, register and translation quality in general). The effect of instruction on the quality of translation was examined by monitoring each variable separately, before and after the treatment. What the findings demonstrate are as follows.

### 3.1.1 Discussion of "sentences" variable

The first variable, studied in this research was "sentences". Sentences of two tests (pre-test and post test) were analyzed in the scope of parametric statistics. Conesidering table 3.1 it can be said that there is trivial difference between mode, median and mean. Furthermore the skewness and kurtosis coefficients are less than 1. So, it can be concluded that the above distribution enjoys the assumption of normality and the mean can be used as the most suitable index of descriptive statistics in the scope of parametric statistics. With regard to table 3.1, it can be said that there is also trivial difference between mode, median and mean
and the skewness and kurtosis coefficients are less than 1. So, it can be concluded that the above distribution enjoys the assumption of normality and the mean can be used as the most suitable index of descriptive statistics in the scope of parametric statistics. The mean of "sentences" variable in pre-test was about 64.21 and the mean of "sentences" variable in post test was about 65.07.

The analysis continued to obtain the "t" of these two orrelated groups. In this part the "t", the degree of freedom, and the level of significance were calculated.

Considering what table 3-3 displays and with regard to the value of "t" (-0.87), it can be said: there is no significant difference at the level a=0.05 between variable (sentences) in pre-test and post test. So, it can be stated that in the scope of variable (sentences), the cases of the study present the same translation and the qualities of sentences translation in pre-test and post test match each other. Therefore, it can be concluded that the instruction has not been effective in this respect, and the quality of translation performance from the viewpoint of sentences has not changed.

### 3.1.2 Discussion of "naturalness" variable

"Naturalness" is the second variable which the study went through. At first, with the help of obtained scores in this case, the mode, median, and the mean of the scores in pre-test were calculated. The result of the calculation has been presented in table 3.1. As it is shown in table 3.1, it can be stated that there is no significant difference between mean, median and mode. Furthermore, the kurtosis and skewness coefficients are less than 1, so, it can be concluded that the above distribution enjoys the assumption of normality and the mean can be used as the most suitable index of descriptive statistics in the scope of parametric statistics. Following Table 3.2, it displays the values of mode, median, and mean of "naturalness" variable in post test. It shows that these values are suitable for statistical analysis.

Having obtained the necessary values, the study went through the statistical measures. The "t", the degree of freedom, and the level of significance of "naturalness" variable were calculated. The values are observed in table 3.4.

Considering table 3.4 and with regard to the value of "t" (-3.32), it can be said that there is significant difference at the level a=0.01 between the quality of translation performance from the viewpoint of (Naturalness) in pre-test and post test. Also, referring to the means of each group, it is observed that the cases of the study show more "naturalness" in post test in comparison with pre-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that the instruction has been effective in This respect and the quality of translation has been improved.

### 3.1.3 Discussion of "cohesion" variable “

The next variable which the researcher is going to discuss about is "cohesion". The mode, median, and mean of "cohesion" variable were calculated. The statistical calculations of "cohesion" variable in pre-test are on display in table 3.1. Based on the figures obtained in pre test and post test of cohesion variable, it can be concluded that the above distribution enjoys the assumption of normality and the mean can be used as the most suitable index of descriptive statistics in the scope of parametric statistics. The calculation of the "t", degree of fredom, and the level of significance of two correlated groups ("cohesion" variable) have been also estimated. Table 3.5 provides the reader with these information.

Considering table 3.5 and with regard to the value of "t" (-3.35), it can be said that there is significant difference at the level a=0.01 between the quality of translation performance from the viewpoint of "Cohesion" in pre-test and post test. Also, referring to the means of each group, it is observed that the cases of the study show more "cohesion" in post test in comparison with pre-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that the instruction has been effective in this respect and the quality of translation has been improved.

 

### 3.1.4 Discussion of "register" variable

In table 3.1 and table 3.2, the information about "register" variable in pre-test and post test has been presented. The mode, median, and mean of the scores in two tests have been obtained and the result of these findings are as follows:

Table 3.1 shows that there is trivial difference between mean, median and mode. Furthermore, the kurtosis and skewness coefficients are less than 1, so, it can be concluded that the above distribution enjoys the assumption of normality and the mean can be used as the most suitable index of descriptive statistics in the scope of parametric statistics.

With regard to table 3.2, it can be said that there is trivial difference between mean, median and mode. Furthermore, the kurtosis and skewness coefficients are less than 1, so, it can be concluded that the above distribution enjoys the assumption of normality and the mean can be used as the most suitable index of descriptive statistics in the scope of parametric statistics.

With regard to the information about mean of the"register" variable in pre-test and post test, they were compared and the values of "t", degree of freedom, and level of significance were calculated. The values are displayed in the table 3.6.

Considering table 3.6 and with regard to the value of "t" (-4.27), it can be said that there is significant difference at the level a=0.01 between the quality of translation performance from the viewpoint of "Register" in pre-test and post test. Also, referring to the means of each group, it is observed that the cases of the study show more quality (considering register) in post test in comparison with pre-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that the instruction has been effective in this respect and the quality of translation has been improved.

### 3.1.5 Discussion of " translation quality " variable

The last and the most important variable in the study is "translation quality" variable. Following the previous procedures, "translation quality" variable was studied as well.

In table 3.1. mode, median, and mean of "translation quality" variable in pre-test has been displayed.

It expresses that the difference between mean, median and mode is not significant. Furthermore, the kurtosis and skewness coefficients are less than 1, so, it can be concluded that the above distribution enjoys the assumption of normality and the mean can be used as the most suitable index of descriptive statistics in the scope of parametric statistics.

The values of mode, median, and mean of "translation quality" variable in post test have been presented in table 3.2. With regard to table 3.2, it can be said that there is trivial difference between mean, median and mode. urthermore, the kurtosis and skewness coefficients are less than 1, so, it can be concluded that the above distribution enjoys the assumption of normality and the mean can be used as the most suitable index of descriptive statistics in the scope of parametric statistics.

The necessary statistical measures were carried out in relation to "translation quality" variable. The values of two correlated groups, degree of freedom, and level of significance have been displayed in Table 3.7 and with regard to the value of "t" (-3.32), it can be said that there is significant difference at the level a=0.01 between the "quality of translation". Also, referring to the means of each group, it is observed that the cases of the study show more quality in post test in comparison with pre-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that the instruction has been effective and the quality of translation has been improved.

## 3.2 Tables

Table 3.1: The study of variables in pre-test

| | Central tendency indices | | | Scatter indices | | | Distribution indices | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mode | Median | Mean | Range | Variance | Std. Deviation | Kurtosis coeffieient | Skewness coefficient | Std. Error |
| sentences | 65 | 65 | 64.21 | 23 | 31.28 | 5.59 | 0.36 | -0.59 | 1.02 |
| naturalness | 4 | 4 | 3.37 | 7 | 1.92 | 1.38 | 0.95 | -0.39 | 0.25 |
| cohesion | 3 | 3 | 3.40 | 7 | 1.90 | 1.37 | 0.96 | 0.30 | |
| register | 3 | 3 | 3.13 | 5 | 1.22 | 1.10 | 0.31 | -0.60 | 0.20 |
| Translation quality | 72 | 72.25 | 75.45 | 31.50 | 54.91 | 7.41 | -0.09 | 0.03 | 1.35 |

Table 3.2: The study of variables in post test

| | Central tendency indices | | | Scatter indices | | | Distribution indices | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mode | Median | Mean | Range | Variance | Std. Deviation | Kurtosis coeffieient | Skewness coefficient | Std. Error |
| sentences | 65.31 | 65.31 | 65.07 | 25.94 | 35.83 | 5.98 | -0.20 | -0.32 | 1.09 |
| naturalness | 4 | 4 | 3.73 | 7 | 1.92 | 1.38 | 0.95 | -0.39 | 0.25 |
| cohesion | 4 | 4.80 | 4.42 | 4 | 1.26 | 1.12 | -0.13 | -0.19 | 0.20 |
| register | 4.80 | 4.80 | 4.43 | 4.20 | 1.51 | 1.23 | -0.96 | -0.03 | 0.22 |
| Translation quality | 80.31 | 80.31 | 78.51 | 38.92 | 99.75 | 9.98 | -0.03 | -0.64 | 1.82 |

Table 3.3: The comparative study of "Sentences' Means" in pre-test and post test

| Levels | Means | Std. Deviation | T | Degree of freedom | Level of significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-test | 64.21 | 5.59 | -0.87 | 29 | --- |
| Post test | 65.07 | 5.98 | | | |

Table 3.4: The comparative study of "Naturalness's" Means in pre-test and post test

| Levels | Means | Std. Deviation | T | Degree of freedom | Level of significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-test | 3.73 | 1.38 | -3.32 | 29 | 0.01 |
| Post test | 4.70 | 1.13 | | | |

Table 3.5: The comparative study of "Cohesion's" Means in pre-test and post test

| Levels | Means | Std. Deviation | T | Degree of freedom | Level of significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-test | 3.40 | 1.37 | -3.35 | 29 | 0.01 |
| Post test | 4.42 | 1.12 | | | |

Table 3.5: The comparative study of "Register's" Means in pre-test and post test

| Levels | Means | Std. Deviation | T | Degree of freedom | Level of significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-test | 3.13 | 1.10 | -4.27 | 29 | 0.01 |
| Post test | 4.43 | 1.23 | | | |

Table 3.6: The comparative study of "Translation Quality" Means in pre-test and post test

| Levels | Means | Std. Deviation | T | Degree of freedom | Level of significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-test | 75.45 | 7.41 | -2.15 | 29 | 0.05 |
| Post test | 78.51 | 9.98 | | | |

### 3.3 conclusions

Regarding the research question: Does raising consciousness of translation shifts help the amateur translator Produce translated texts which enjoy higher quality?The results of the research show that the introduction and instruction of shifts to the translation trainees have been effective and to some extent translation quality has been improved. The findings demonstrate that the null hypothesis of the research is rejected by 99% of certainty.

## 4 Pedagogical implications of the study

The results of this study are expected to be used in different areas related to translation. As the Researcher believes the most important use of this study seems to be in the domains of translation teaching and learning programs. It can help the people involved in compilation of educational syllabus and curriculum. They can take advantage of the study of the existing translated texts from "DTS" point of view. By application of "DTS", translation strategies can be etected and compiled. Therefore translation training might accelerate. By the study of translation shifts, translation norms can be distinguished and the study also helps the translator to produce more adequate and acceptable texts. Not only does this study present practical implications, but also it is beneficial in the domain of translation theories. It can be applied to catch a better understanding of translation process. In addition to the above mentioned profits of this project, it offers Farahzad's evaluation model as a proper model for translation classroom evaluations and exams.

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