

## Translation Strategies Used by Students of Translation and TEFL: A Study of English-Persian Renderings of Argumentative Texts

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to find what distinctive strategies are used in translating argumentative texts by Translation and TEFL (Teaching English as a foreign language) students. For this purpose, on the basis of a language proficiency test, 60 BA participants were chosen, 30 for each group. Each of these students was offered three argumentative texts. They were asked to translate one of them as a must, and among the other two texts, choose one of them arbitrarily. After translating, a form was handed to each student that included Newmark's strategies and their explanations and definitions that they might use for translations. The students were asked to mark the strategies they had applied in their translations. It was found out that the three groups differed in the number of the strategies they used. In fact, Translation students used more strategies.

[Alaleh Yazdani, Saeed Nouri Hoseinabadi. **Translation Strategies Used by Students of Translation and TEFL: A Study of English-Persian Renderings of Argumentative Texts.** *Life Sci J* 2013;10(2s):360-366] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 63

**Key word:** strategy, translation, translator, translation strategies

### Introduction

All text processing is, to a large extent, a matter of problem solving. This processing in translation involves some essential stages as follows: The first stage is that of *analysis*, the goal of which is to fully understand the source text and acquire all the information required prior to translation proper. The second stage, often termed the *transfer* stage, involves the production of a draft translation. This draft translation is then improved in the third and final stage, which is that of *revision*. At the stage of analysis, the translators' first task is to read through the text to get a general idea of the content, style, author, intended receptor, and general circumstances in which the text has been produced. Such a preliminary and fairly rapid reading enables him or her to "situate" the text and thus understand it better. This requires processing at the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic levels. The first step in analysis should be careful study of these key words in order to find suitable equivalent in the receptor language. The second stage is the transfer stage which is the process of going from semantic structure analysis to the initial draft of the translation. In this stage the translator produces a receptor language equivalent. In the last stage, the translator will need to check for accuracy of meaning. In doing so s/he should look for wrong grammatical forms, wrong order and collocational clashes. Hence, interest about what actually translators do during the involved processes and the kind of strategies which are employed by them has increased. There have been lots of efforts regarding the kind of strategies which second language learners use for

translation. As Oxford and Crookal (1989) define, learning strategies are steps taken by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage and retrieval of information. They have categorized these strategies into three basic types: they are metacognitive, cognitive and social affective strategies. Each group is further subcategorized. Since the studies regarding the categorization or exploration of translation strategies have not so far appeared in a systematic way, this study focused on finding more about these strategies, their classification and scrutinizing the nature of translation tasks. Thus, the goal of the present study is to compare strategies used in the translation of texts in three discipline of English, i.e., Translation, Teaching and Literature.

### Theoretical basics of the study

The word translation derives from the Latin *translatio* (which itself comes from *trans-* and *fero*, the supine form of which is *latum*, together meaning "to carry across" or "to bring across"). The modern Romance languages use words for translation derived from that source or from the alternative Latin *traduco* ("to lead across") (Kasperek, 1983, p. 83). Discussions of the theory and practice of translation reach back into antiquity and show remarkable continuities. The term translation itself has several meanings: it can refer to the general subject field, the product (the text that has been translated) or the process (the act of producing the translation, otherwise known as translating). The process of translation between two different written languages involves the translator changing an original written text (the

source text or ST) in the original verbal language (the source language or SL) into a written text (the target text or TT) in a different verbal language (the target language or TL). This type corresponds to 'interlingual translation' and is one of the three categories of translation described by the Czech structuralist Roman Jakobson in his seminal paper (On linguistic aspects of translation' (Jakobson 1959/2000, p. 114). In general, translators have sought to preserve the context itself by reproducing the original order of sememes, and hence word order, when necessary, reinterpreting the actual grammatical structure, for example, by shifting from active to passive voice, or vice versa. A competent translator shows the following attributes:

- a very good knowledge of the language, written and spoken, from which he is translating (the source language);
- an excellent command of the language into which he is translating (the target language);
- familiarity with the subject matter of the text being translated;
- a profound understanding of the etymological and idiomatic correlates between the two languages; and
- a finely tuned sense of when to paraphrase ("translate literally") and when to paraphrase, so as to assure true rather than spurious equivalents between the source- and target-language texts (Kasperek, 1986). A competent translator is not only bilingual but bicultural. A language is not merely a collection of words and of rules of grammar and syntax for generating sentences, but also a vast interconnecting system of connotations and cultural references whose mastery, writes linguist Mario Pei, "comes close to being a lifetime job" (Pei, 1949). The complexity of the translator's task cannot be overstated; one author suggests that becoming an accomplished translator, after having already acquired a good basic knowledge of both languages and cultures may require a minimum of ten years' experience. Viewed in this light, it is a serious misconception to assume that a person who has fair fluency in two languages will, by virtue of that fact alone, be consistently competent to translate between them. The translator's role in relation to a text has been compared to that of an artist, e.g., a musician or actor, who interprets a work of art. Translation, like other arts, inescapably involves choice, and choice implies interpretation. A translator may render only parts of the original text, provided he indicates that this is what he is doing. But a translator should not assume the role of censor and surreptitiously delete or bowdlerize passages merely to please a political or moral interest (Francesca, 2001). The question has however always risen as to what translators do during translation, and what kind

of instruments they use to access the goals of the source text? Many researchers have therefore studied strategies as an instrument in translation in various aspects. The word "strategy" is derived from the Greek word "stratēgos"; stratus (meaning army) and "ago" (meaning leading/moving). Strategy is an action that managers take to attain one or more of the organization's goals. Strategy can also be defined as "A general direction set for the company and its various components to achieve a desired state in the future. Strategy results from the detailed strategic planning process". A strategy is all about integrating organizational activities and utilizing and allocating the scarce resources within the organizational environment so as to meet the present objectives. While planning a strategy it is essential to consider that decisions are not taken in a vacuum and that any act taken by a firm is likely to be met by a reaction from those affected, competitors, customers, employees or suppliers. Strategy can also be defined as knowledge of the goals, the uncertainty of events and the need to take into consideration the likely or actual behavior of others. Strategy is the blueprint of decisions in an organization that shows its objectives and goals, reduces the key policies, and plans for achieving these goals (Tamas, 2012). Venuti (1998) distinguishes two general translation strategies. He says: "strategies of translation involve the basic tasks of choosing the foreign text to be translated and developing a method to translate it". He uses the terms *domesticating* and *foreignizing* to refer to translation strategies. Translators either try to conform to the values and norms dominating the target language or try to change and revise what is dominant. In his empirical studies, Lörscher (1991) recognized twenty two elements constituting translation strategies (or procedural steps) including nine original ones and thirteen potential ones, e.g., realizing a translational problem, preliminary solution to a translational problem, and the mental organization of source language text segments. During the translation process, these elements are combined by translators into *basic structures*, *expanded structures* or *complex structures* of translation strategies. He found that professional and non-professional translators differ in the distribution and frequency of the strategies employed, but do not differ qualitatively, i.e., their mental processes do not reveal significant differences. He concluded that it is impossible to ascertain '[w]hen faced with problem X, [translators] employ strategy Y', but we can find out '[w]hen several [translators] are faced with a problem X, many or most of them employ similar or the same types of strategy'. Chesterman (1997), distinguishes between comprehension strategies (for understanding and analyzing the source text) and production strategies

(for the production of the target text). From a linguistic perspective, he divides production strategies into mainly syntactic/grammatical, mainly semantic and mainly pragmatic strategies, with each category containing ten techniques. Syntactic strategies involve purely syntactic changes, manipulate form, and include such techniques as calque, transposition, and sentence structure change. Semantic strategies mainly pertain to changes concerning lexical semantics. They manipulate meaning and contain techniques such as synonymy, emphasis change, and paraphrase. Pragmatic strategies have to do with the selection of information in the target text, and often involve syntactic and/or semantic changes as well. Pragmatic strategies include cultural filtering, explicitness change, information change, etc. Some of these techniques are obligatory during translation in a given language pair, while most are optional. Bell (1998) differentiates between global (those dealing with whole texts) and local (those dealing with text segments) strategies and believes which the translator faces in the source text. He defines translation problem as: "some part of the process of transfer, whether deriving from the reception of the source text or the production of the target text, which makes analysis or synthesis non-automatic." He maintains that generally all text processing are to a large extent a matter of problem-solving and translators may find problems in different stages of translation and in different levels of a text. Darwish (2008) identifies four distinct translation procedures employed in translating: recursive strategy (i.e., a circular and revisional process), waterfall strategy (i.e., a sequential unit-by-unit process), stop-and-go strategy (i.e., a block-by-block process), and mixed strategies (i.e., a combination of the previous three strategies). Jaaskelainen (2005) divides strategies into two general types based on process and product of translation. Some strategies relate to text and some strategies relate to what happens in the process. She agrees with Venuti (1998) about his categorization of strategies and believes that product-related strategies of translation involve the basic tasks of choosing the foreign text to be translated and developing a method to translate it. Both of these tasks are determined by various factors: cultural, economic, and political. She maintains that a translation project may conform to values currently dominating the target language culture; alternatively, a translation project may resist and aim to revise the dominant (domesticating and foreignizing). On the other hand, she says that process-related strategies "are a set of (loosely formulated) rules or principle which a translator uses to reach the goals determined by the translating situation."

### **Translation Processes and Approaches**

The process of translating is an important thing for a translator because it can influence the translation result and the readers' understanding. According to Newmark (1988), the process of translating begins with choosing a method of approach. Then, he states that there are four levels of translating process, which are:

- 1) The SL text level, the level of language, where we begin and which we continually (but not continuously) go back to;
- 2) The referential level, the level of objects and events, real or imaginary, which we progressively have to visualize and build up, and which is an essential part, first of the comprehension, then of the reproduction process;
- 3) The cohesive level, which is more general, and grammatical, which traces the train of thought, the feeling tone (positive or negative) and the various presuppositions of the SL text. This level encompasses both comprehension and reproduction: it presents an overall picture, to which we may have to adjust the language level;
- 4) The level of naturalness, of common language appropriate to the writer or the speaker in a certain situation. This level of naturalness is concerned only with reproduction.

Furthermore, Larson (1984) mentions the steps of translation project as follows:

- 1) Establishing the project.

The translators have to understand the text, the target, the team, and the tools.

- 2) Exegesis.

It is the process of discovering the meaning of the source language text which is to be translated, and also includes the preparation and analysis of the text.

- 3) Transfer and initial draft.

Besides, based on Newmark (1988), there are two approaches to translating:

- 1) Start translating sentence by sentence, for say the first paragraph or chapter, to get the feel and the feeling tone of the text, and then deliberately sit back, review the position, and read the rest of the SL text;
- 2) Read the whole text two or three times, and find the intention, register, tone, mark the difficult words and passages and start translating only when you have taken your bearings.

The followings are the different translation procedures that Newmark

(1988) proposes:

Literal translation. It is particularly applicable to languages that do not have definite and/or indefinite articles.

Transference (loan word, transcription): it includes transliteration, which relates to the conversion of different alphabets, such as Arabic or Chinese into English.

Naturalization: it adjusts the SL word first to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal morphology (word-forms) of the TL.

Cultural equivalent: it translates a SL cultural word by a TL cultural word.

Functional equivalent: it requires the use of a culture-free word; neutralizes or generalizes the SL word; and sometimes adds a particular.

Descriptive equivalent: it explains SL word in several words.

Synonymy: it is used for a SL word if there is no clear one-to-one equivalent.

Through-translation: it is the literal translation of common collocations, names of organizations and components of compounds. It can also be called: calque or loan translation.

Shifts or transpositions: it involves a change in the grammar from SL to TL, for instance, (i) the change from singular to plural, (ii) the change required when a specific SL structure does not exist in the TL, (iii) change of an SL verb to a TL word, change of an SL noun group to a TL noun and so forth.

Modulation: it involves a change in the perspective and category of thought. Free modulations are used by translators 'when the TL rejects literal translation'.

Recognized translation: it uses the official or the generally accepted translation of any institutional term.

Translation label: it is a temporary translation of a new institutional term, which should be made in inverted commas, which can later be discreetly withdrawn.

Compensation: it occurs when loss of meaning in one part of a sentence is compensated in another part.

Componential analysis: it is the separation of a lexical unit into its sense components, often one-to-two, -three or -four translations. Reduction and Expansion. They reduce and add some parts of sentence.

Paraphrase: this is an extension or explanation of the meaning of the text.

Couplet, triplets, and quadruplets: it combines two, three or four of the above-mentioned procedures respectively for handling a single problem.

Notes, additions, glosses: they are additional information in a translation.

According to the explanation above, the difference of translation methods and translation procedures is while translation methods relate to whole texts, and translation procedures are used for sentences and the smaller units of language.

These models of the process of translation and approaches to translating will suggest specific recommendations and help the translator in order to grow and improve her or his ability as a working professional.

### Research Question

Based on what was stated above, this study sought to answer the following question:

What distinctive strategies are used in translating argumentative texts by Translation and TEFL students?

### Method

In order to collect data for the main objective of the study, (i.e., determining the strategies employed during the translation task from English into Persian by Translation, TEFL and Literature students), a sample of thirty BA students, with equal numbers from each group was selected. The participants had completed six semesters of their BA studies and were selected on the basis of one criterion, (i.e., their level of proficiency on the Oxford Test.). Three English Argumentative texts were selected from different texts to be translated by the participants in this study. The level of the difficulty of the texts was taken into consideration since the participants were BA students and the texts must have been challenging enough, (i.e., having long sentences, difficult expressions, and unknown words), in order to make them use more strategies during translation. Actually, short and simple sentences, without any difficult expressions would have been so easy and straightforward to be translated. Two instruments were used in this study: Oxford Test of English Language Proficiency and a list of strategies of translation. The proficiency test contained 60 items and was divided in to 6 parts. The total score was a composite of the sub-scores.

The second instrument was a form which was handed to each student that included Newmark's strategies and their explanations and definitions of strategies that could possibly be used for translation (Table 1).

In order to fulfill the objectives of the study, the Oxford test was first given to each group (Translation and TEFL Students). Testing was done in 30 minutes. At least thirty students attended each class. They were in the sixth semester of their BA studies.

Two weeks later, after checking the results and selecting ten students from each class who earned the highest score in the exam and were at the same level of proficiency, they were offered 3 argumentative texts. They were also asked to translate two from these three texts. The first text was most difficult one, because of having complicated expression, unknown words and also long sentences. But the other two texts were at the same level of difficulty and also were easier than the first one. Students were wanted to translate the first text and one of the following optionally. After translating, in order to avoid negative effect of tiredness, a short break was given to them for refreshment. Then, a form was handed to each student (Table 1), which included Newmark's strategies and their explanations they might use in translating two texts. These strategies were described

verbally for students to avoid any ambiguity. They were asked to choose the strategies that had applied in their translations.

### Results

As the data show, the total number strategies used by BA Translation and TEFL students are presented in Table 2:

As Table 2 shows in translation from English into Persian, different strategies were used by the participants. These include communicative translation, faithful translation, literal translation, semantic translation, idiomatic translation, free translation, word-for-word translation, and adaptation, that communicative translation being the most frequent (21%) and faithful translation falling in the second

rank (16%). idiomatic translation, free translation, word-for-word translation, semantic translation, literal translation, and adaptation were less frequently used, (15%), (13%), (13%), (10%), (8%), and (4%) respectively.

As Table 3 shows in translation from English into Persian, different strategies were used by translation Students, that communicative translation being the most frequent (19%) and faithful translation falling in the second rank (17%). idiomatic translation, free translation, word-for-word translation, semantic translation, literal translation, and adaptation were less frequently used, (15%), (13%), (13%), (11%), (10%), and (2%) respectively.

Table (1): A list of strategies given to the students

1	<i>Communicative translation</i> : it attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership.
2	<i>Faithful translation</i> : it attempts to produce the precise contextual meaning of the original within the constraints of the TL grammatical structures.
3	<i>Literal translation</i> : in which the SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents, but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context.
4	<i>Semantic translation</i> : which differs from 'faithful translation' only in as far as it must take more account of the aesthetic value of the SL text.
5	<i>Idiomatic translation</i> : it reproduces the 'message' of the original but tends to distort nuances of meaning by preferring colloquialisms and idioms where these do not exist in the original.
6	<i>Free translation</i> : it produces the TL text without the style, form, or content of the original.
7	<i>Word-for-word translation</i> : in which the SL word order is preserved and the words translated singly by their most common meanings, out of context.
8	<i>Adaptation</i> : which is the freest form of translation, and is used mainly for plays (comedies) and poetry; the themes, characters, plots are usually preserved, the SL culture is converted to the TL culture and the text is rewritten.

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage of Strategies Used in Translation

NO.	Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	Communicative translation	19	21%
2	Faithful translation	14	16%
3	Literal translation	7	8%
4	Semantic translation	9	10%
5	Idiomatic translation	13	15%
6	Free translation	12	13%
7	Word-for-word translation	12	13%
8	Adaptation	3	4%
Total frequency and percentage of strategies		89	

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of Strategies Used by Translation Students in Translations

NO.	Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	Communicative translation	10	19%
2	Faithful translation	9	17%
3	Literal translation	5	10%
4	Semantic translation	6	11%
5	Idiomatic translation	8	15%
6	Free translation	7	13%
7	Word-for-word translation	7	13%
8	Adaptation	1	2%
Total frequency and percentage of strategies		53	

**Used by TEFL Students in Translations**

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage of Strategies

NO.	Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	Communicative translation	9	25%
2	Faithful translation	5	14%
3	Literal translation	2	5.5%
4	Semantic translation	3	8%
5	Idiomatic translation	5	14%
6	Free translation	5	14%
7	Word-for-word translation	5	14%
8	Adaptation	2	5.5%
Total frequency and percentage of strategies		36	

Table 5: Frequency and Percentage of Strategies Used in Translations

NO.	Strategies	Translation		TEFL		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Communicative translation	10	11.2%	9	10.1%	19	21%
2	Faithful translation	9	10.1%	5	5.6%	14	16%
3	Literal translation	5	5.6%	2	2.3%	7	8%
4	Semantic translation	6	6.7%	3	3.4%	9	10%
5	Idiomatic translation	8	9%	5	5.6%	13	15%
6	Free translation	7	7.8%	5	5.6%	12	13%
7	Word-for-word translation	7	7.8%	5	5.6%	12	13%
8	Adaptation	1	1.3%	2	2.3%	3	4%
Total frequency and percentage of strategies		53	59.5	36	40.5	89	100

As Table 4 shows in translation from English into Persian, different strategies were used by TEFL Students, which communicative translation being the most frequent (25%) and faithful translation, idiomatic translation, free translation, and word-for-word translation falling in the second rank (14%). Semantic translation, literal translation, and adaptation were less frequently used, (8%), (5.5%), and (5.5%) respectively. In order to show the results, strategies used by students of three trends are presented comparatively in Table 5. As Table 6 shows, 8 strategies were identified to be used by Translation and TEFL students during different translations. The most used strategy was the category of *communicative translation* (21%) and the least used strategy was *adaptation* (4%). The overall number of strategies used by these two groups was 131.

**Conclusion**

The present study has concentrated on investigation of strategies used by Translation and TEFL students in translating Argumentative texts. Through a general review of this thesis, it can be concluded that students who have learned academic translation also used more strategies in their translation and they were more careful in choosing the

strategies which explained in previous sections. This issue is also expressed in other studies presented before. In this study, the findings showed that 8 used strategies were Word for word translation, Literal translation, faithful translation, Semantic translation, Adaptation, Free translation, Idiomatic translation and Communicative translation. Strategies were on the basis of Newmark's methods. As a whole, based on the findings discussed above, all of 30 students used translation strategies in different number. As it was said, after determining the number and type of strategies used, Translation students used the highest number of strategies in their translations. According to the concepts expressed above, all of 30 students used translation strategies in different number. As it was said, after determining the number and type of strategies used, Translation students used the highest number of strategies in their translations. A translator has to able to choose which translation methods to be used in translating a text. It can be said that the best translation method to be used by translators is communicative translation, because tries to convey the meaning communicatively to the readers without omitting the original form. The better a translator chooses the translation method, the better he/she will convey the meaning to the readers. Finally, it can be

concluded that learning strategies is essential for translators and those who translate empirically.

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1/26/2013