Educating Autonomous Translators in Distance Learning: a Neglected Area in the 'Map' of Translation Studies

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Abstract. Surprisingly, translator training in distance learning is under-researched in Translation Studies and the scholars in the field have simply ignored the fundamental differences between distance and traditional modes of translator training. This study is a preliminary attempt to draw attention to this neglected area of research. Firstly, the study made an attempt to determine a set of criteria for educating functional and autonomous translation trainees in distance learning through a contrastive and critical review of the related literature. Taking a functionalist-communicative stance, ideas were borrowed from distance learning, second language teaching and translation theories for this purpose. The most important criteria must be learner-orientedness, process-orientedness and use of authentic real-life translation tasks. Later, the criteria were employed to evaluate a self-instructional translation textbook. The evaluation showed that these criteria could serve as a roadmap for assessing and/or designing self-instructional textbooks for distance learning mode. Finally, it was suggested to add translation training in distance mode to the applied branch of the so-called map of Translation Studies to promote further research in this area.

Keywords: *distance learning, learner autonomy, translation training, functional translator, translation textbook.*

Introduction

Distance learning has been employed by different institutions in various forms through the last three decades. There are many different practices of distance learning all over the world. In the last decade, some studies of distance learning have come from Italy (Cusinato, 1996), Thailand (Vanijdee, 2001, 2003), Korea (Dickey, 2001), Hong Kong (Hyland, 2001; Leung, 1999), Australia (Möllering, 2000), Finland (Tammelin, 1997, 1998, 1999) and New Zealand (White, 1997, 2000; Garing, 2002).There are some factors which significantly helped to the rapid increase of distance learning programs worldwide such as the contemporary increasing demand for global education programs, desire of many institutions to reach new students or to retain their market share and increasing interest in lifelong learning. According to White (2003, p. 1) distance learning institutions are becoming an integral part of educational systems, nowadays.

Since 1980's the number of Iranian universities offering the so called 'Moarjemi Zaban Englisi' (English Translation) program and the number of the students entering the program have been steadily rising. Twenty years ago, only Allameh Tabatabai University in Tehran offered this program at undergraduate level (BA), but the number of Iranian academic institutions offering both undergraduate (BA) and postgraduate (MA) degrees in English Translation now amounts to 150 from among which more than ten universities offer MA degree. Different academic centers are responsible for the training of ever-increasing translation trainees through both traditional and distance learning modes. These institutions include Islamic Azad University, numerous branches of Payam-e-Noor University (PNU), and State Universities.

PNU has a big share in educating students via distance learning mode in Iran due to its numerous branches located even in the remotest areas of the country, its low tuition fees in comparison with Islamic Azad University. According to Daniel (1996), 117000 students entered PNU in 1998 and it has 7563 graduates every year. These statistics has certainly increased dramatically since then. There is a fundamental difference between PNU University and the other higher education institutions in Iran. While other universities require the translation trainees attend classes regularly and have long contact hours with teachers during the program in a traditional fashion for all of their courses, PNU as a distance learning institution mostly relies on self-instructional textbooks to meet its objectives. In PNU, for a two credit course, only four sessions of contact (each 1.5 hour) called *problem solving sessions* has been envisaged in which students are supposed to solve the problems they come across studying their supposedly comprehensive textbooks.

However, it is widely known that the students in PNU are not so enthusiastic about attending these optional problem-solving sessions because they find them quite inadequate. The main sources to which the translation trainees can turn to seek instruction, advice and develop translation and translation-related skills and competencies are the textbooks published by the Payem-e-Noor University Press. It is claimed that these self-instructional textbooks are very rich and reliable and are among the power points of this distance learning institution. It is also widely believed that they foster learner self-dependence. The structure of the university is supposedly learner and textbook-centered rather than teacher and class-centered. Consequently, the learners and the textbook developers

must undertake the learning and teaching responsibility. It is because of the above-mentioned characteristics that a lot of effort has been put into compiling textbooks for English Translation courses. Nevertheless, the quality of the textbooks for distance learning purposes is yet to be determined. There is an urgent need to develop a set of criteria to see if the textbooks are in line with the latest development in teaching, translation and distance learning theories and if they are doing what they purport they do. As to the authors' best knowledge, there has been no systematic and objective evaluation of these self-instructional textbooks.

Thus, the primary aim of this study is to propose a set of objective criteria to be met in distance translation training through a contrastive and critical review of literature. Then, an attempt will be made to evaluate a self-instructional textbook from PNU's *English Translation* program in the light of these criteria to see the potential of these criteria in determining the merits and demerits of the self-instructional books in educating independent and fully functional trainees

Distance Learning Mode

The term *distance education* and *distant learning,* which encompasses both distance learning and teaching, are sometimes used interchangeably, but we emphasize 'distant learning' here because PNU is a fundamentally learner-centered institution. There are also two similar terms that need to be explained in the outset, namely *open* and *distance learning*. King (2001) states that the primary distinguishing feature of open learning is its student-

centeredness (p. 59). In the same vein, Candlin and Byrnes (1995) have a discussion on the difference between distance and open learning. While open learning has often been related to very innovative projects in educational institutions, distance learning has a traditional knowledge distribution approach of education at its center. To put it in Shelley's words distance learning is a system within which learners study in a "flexible manner" on their own, at the speed and pace they want and without needing physical classroom contact with an instructor (2000, p. 651). As a result, the lack of contact hours between teacher and the student puts the burden of teaching on the textbook developers within distance mode.

White (2003, pp. 1–10) divides the distance language learning systems into four distinct groups (Figure 1). As one can see, they range from the very traditional correspondence based programs, which are mainly learner and individual based, to courses delivered via the latest technologies (video, video conferencing, satellite, the internet, etc). Learning in distance learning mode takes place according to every individual learner's time, place, desire, convenience and needs. Learning is considered as more flexible, dynamic and learner-oriented in the distance learning systems. According to Peters (1998) if one looks at the distance education from teacher's point of view, the focus has shifted from 'spoken' to 'written' pedagogy and looking from learner's point of view, it has shifted away from 'listening' to 'reading'. Thus, self-instructional textbooks and the independent and flexible learners form an integral part of distance learning programs.
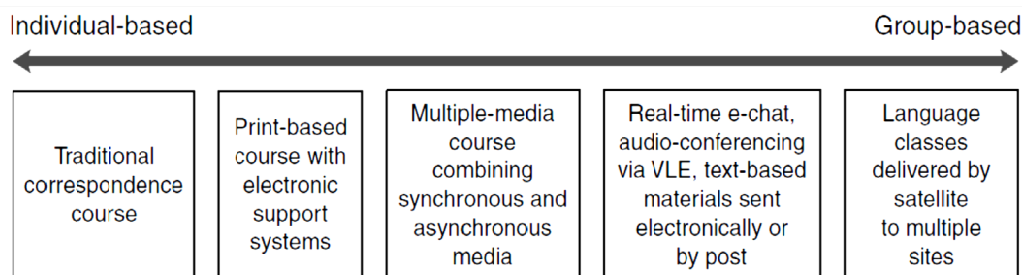

Figure 1. A spectrum of distance language learning contexts (from White, 2003)

PNU as a distance learning institution still draws heavily on the textbook-based methods of distance learning and hardly any technology is employed for distance learning purposes. It educates its students using the second oldest category, i.e. print based courses. In its programs, one can see the strong presence of heavy and thick textbooks to be read by the learners. In the absence of enough contact hours, translator trainees must develop their own set of learning habits and the ability to match their learning goals with the textbooks at their disposal. Learners are supposed to study, learn and internalize the contents provided for them in their textbooks almost independently.

Learner Autonomy in Distance Learning

As the name distance learning suggests, this mode is more about learning than teaching. Therefore, the learners are the key players in this system. However, this assumption does not mean that like open learning programs students

must decide almost on their own on what material they desire to study. Textbooks of such a program must foster and nurture the learning experience of every individual learner. Thus, developing and writing adequate textbooks is the most important priority of the program developers.

Distance learner is an individual who is physically separated from the teacher (Rumble, 1986), has a planned and guided learning experience (Holmberg, 1986) and who takes part in a sort of education which is distinct from traditional class-based teaching. This definition presupposes a sort of independence on the part of the learner as the basic tenet of distance learning. Holmberg (1986, 1989a, 1989b) supports a development of theory for distance learning based on the notions of learner independence. He argues that distance-learning institution should help the learner to become independent in learning (1989a). In his point of view, institutions should

deliberately foster the learner independence via different forms of supplements. He puts emphasis on adequate content and interactional, dialogue-like character of self-instructional course materials and the pivotal responsibility of textbook developers to create a simulated interaction with learners through textbooks to foster learner autonomy.

Likewise, Moore (1972) contends that learner autonomy is at its highest degree when they can decide on their own objectives and learning paths. Peters (1989, 1994, 1998) argues that distance learning draws on postindustrial tendencies like dislocation from the classroom, self-direction, self-realization and autonomy. He even predicts that using these potentials all the universities will turn into distance teaching and self-instructional institutions in the future. Harris (1987) also puts much emphasis on the investigation of the learner's experience and considering distance education from learner's point of view.

Apparently, learner autonomy is one of the pivotal objectives in distant learning mode. However, this autonomy does not happen in itself and needs the distance learning institutions' support via various means the most important of which is the collection of interactional self-instructional textbooks. In the following section, a critical review of Translation Studies literature will be conducted to identify the approaches and components which emphasis learner independence in translation training.

Approaches to Translation Training

Traditionally, it was thought that students can learn translation and translating by an exact simulation of the way teacher translates in a trial and error fashion. In traditional classes, teacher mostly brought a piece of literature to the class which was full of difficulties, complexities and required the learners to translate it home and the following session their translations were analyzed word by word and chunk by chunk in a whole class discussion, was commented on by the teacher as the supreme authority, all the rights and wrongs were determined and the ultimate correct version of translation was agreed upon by the teacher. The thing this process did improve was teacher authority and learner frustration and dependence. However, the scholars started to question the efficiency of such a method. Wilss (2004, p. 13) warned against using old-fashioned binaries of Translation Studies (e.g. free vs. literal, ST oriented vs. TT oriented) in translation training which could do more harm than good to this discipline. Following the footsteps of the learner-centered paradigms and in line with the proliferation of various approaches to second language learning and the recognition of Translation Studies as a discipline in itself, translator training has undergone some shifts and changes since those teacher-centered years. Here, some of the most influential approaches will be discussed briefly.

Functional Approach

Delisle back on late 1980s was certainly the key scholar to suggest some clear objectives for translator training in a more systematic way. In 1993, he proposed 23 teaching objectives to be considered in translator training programs. He also drew on various contrastive-linguistic theories to propose some pedagogical objectives (1998). He drew the attention of the researchers and the translator trainers to the necessity of applying *basic teaching objectives* to translator training programs.

Meanwhile, the German translation scholar Christine Nord (1988/1991) considered translation as a communicatively purposeful activity. Thus, she emphasized the authenticity and the simulation of the meaningful, real-life and real-purpose practice of the professionals in the classroom context rather than Delisle's linguistic and contrastive practices to be applied in translation training programs. Working within the framework of functionalist approaches to translation (skopos (Vermeer, 1989/2004), text-type (Reiss, 1981/2004) and translational action (Holz-Mänttäri, 1984) theories), Nord proposed an approach to translator training within which translation trainees should be put in real life translation situations and tasks in which they must answer the following comprehensive questions before embarking on the actual translation project:

> *Who* is to transmit *to whom what for by what medium where when why* a text *with what function? On what subject matter* is he to say *what (what not) in which order using which non-verbal elements in which words in what kind of sentences in which tone to what effect?* (Nord 1988/1991, p. 144, authors' emphasis).

Such real-life assignments are also useful from a motivational perspective and prepare learners for real-life translation tasks (Nord, 1994, p. 66). This motivating factor can gain more importance in distance learning mode within which the teacher as a motivating agent is almost always non-existent. Nord's functional model takes into consideration both extra-textual (to whom, what for, where, when question in the quotation above) and intra-textual factors and the result is a certain effect on certain readership. She actually steers the wheel towards a more learner-centered translator training at the time of the publication of her work. Her first and foremost concern is to educate a functional translator not a translator who can change ST to TT according to the instructions of the ST. Nord (1997, p. 17) makes a distinction between *translation* and *translational action* and considers translation just as a part of the translational action which includes acting as a mediator between the cultures, dealing with real-life clients, changing the function of the texts if necessary, doing research etc. According to Kelly (2010), Nord's approach "is a move towards a student-centered paradigm", which lays "more emphasis on learning than teaching and towards professional realism".

Jean Vienne (1994) proposes a functional situational approach to translator training in which teacher (or a distance learning textbook playing the part of a teacher) has the role of an initiator in translation as a dynamic process. However, unlike Nord, Vienne does not believe in the possibility of exact simulation of professional practice in the classroom context. Vienne's emphasis is on the social and discursive context. This methodology offers learners a framework within which they can take appropriate decisions. This approach can lead trainees to face the difficulties themselves after the initiation stage.

This methodology could be simulated in distance learning textbook towards the same end.

Emphasis on translation as a purposeful and communicative act can be quite facilitating in translator training since it builds an awareness of the decisions involved in the translation process among student translators, decisions professional translators often take automatically and unconsciously. In Nord's functional approach (1991, pp. 141–142), learners should face with a realistic and detailed translation brief to guide them in their translation strategies. In functionalist framework, translation is not seen as a mere linguistic act; it is a deliberate communicative act in nature and should be thought in this way. Rather than trying to please the teacher or following the instructions of the authors of the textbooks in vacuum, the trainees are supposed to translate with a specific readership and skopos in mind (see Weatherby, 1998, p. 22; Wilss, 1996, p. 197). In Reiss & Vermeer's perspective, in order to educate independent students who are able to deal with novel situations, learners should be made aware of the fact that the purpose (skopos, function, aim) of the translation justifies the means and strategies of translation (1984, pp. 95–101) and the source texts may be sacrificed if it is required by the function of the target text.

Nord (2005, p. 210) calls for training functional translators. When drawing on the specifications put forth in the Conference on Translation Quality held in Leipzig in 1999, Nord emphasizes that a functional translator possesses:

1. *Professional knowledge* and be aware of the fact that the function of ST and TT may differ.
2. *Metacompetence* and know that selection of verbal and non-verbal signs is directed by extra-textual considerations as well.
3. *Inter-cultural competence* by which a translator is able to solve inter-cultural problems and recognize the points of divergence between cultures. Translator knows that when ST and TT both employ similar structures, the distribution and frequency of these structures may vary according to cultural and textual norms and conventions of the languages.
4. *Writing ability* that helps a translator produce a text with a specific function even when ST is not well written.
5. *Media* competence through which a translator knows how to employ traditional and modern translations tools like the internet, translation memory tools, glossaries etc.
6. *Research competence* through which a translator can compensate for lack of knowledge in novel situations and specific subjects.
7. *Stress resistance* that means a translator can work fast and cost-effectively with a low degree of stress.
8. *Self-assertion*, which means translators are quite aware of the value of their translations.

These are among the required competencies for an autonomous professional translator. These competencies must be emphasized upon and encouraged if one longs for educating independent and flexible distance learners.

Process Approach

The traditional approach was prescriptive and product-oriented, while Delisle's linguistic and Nord's functional approaches both stressed the importance of the process of translation in translator training. They prepared the ground for scholars such as Gile to further champion process approach in their works. According to Gile (1995), the process approach should familiarize the translation trainees with sound translational "principles, methods, and procedures" (p. 10). Gile states that the process approach is faster and lays a greater emphasis on teaching translation strategies and enjoys and allows more linguistic flexibility than the traditional product-oriented approach. He argues that process approach is more appropriate for beginning steps of translator training whereas the product approach should be saved for much later stages. One can interpret Gile's stance as teaching the students how to fish through teaching strategies and introducing flexibility, not to deliver the fish on the plate to the translation trainee. Process-orientedness is a significant step towards building and fostering learner autonomy which is of utmost importance in distance learning mode. In distance learning mode the trainees are in dire need of learning to translate independently, because the always-right old teacher is not around to help them whenever they are in trouble.

In another front, Kiraly (1995) applied the psycholinguistic tools such as think aloud protocol (TAP) within the process approach and proposed a model of translation training which draws mainly on the trainees' awareness of their important role or what he terms translator's "self-concept". He argues that trainees must improve their understanding of inter-textual, inter-lingual and cultural relationships, and error analysis (pp. 101–102). Similarly, Schäffner (2004, pp. 124–127) calls for developing translation competence by developing a notion of competence in a process of "critical reflection", "reflective learning" or "reflective practice" within the functionalist theoretical framework. Schäffner (1998, p. 127) constructs her proposed functional model of translation training around different text-types and difficulties encountered and the applicable strategies to tackle them. Fraser (1996, pp. 121–134) believes that being aware of the process and the existence of a translation brief which specifies the translation skopos can be joined together to motivate students to pinpoint decision-making parameters and develop an awareness of the translation process as a specific kind of communication in real life.

According to Bernardini (2004, pp. 20–29), translators need to be *aware*, *resourceful* and *reflective*. By awareness, she means the ability to find ways to transport messages across semiotic borders. In order to be labeled resourceful trainees must develop the abilities to use finite resources to solve infinite problems and reach for and utilize new resources if they are ever needed. In fact, learners must develop autonomy in the locating and utilizing various resources, in case they encounter a translational problem. A reflective translator must think and develop the ability to practice, store and use translation strategies and processes for translating and constantly self-evaluate during the learning process. She further proposes

that translator training programs should focus on fostering the learner's ability to deal with new situations rather than giving them the competencies and skills. This again harks back to the idea of educating autonomous rather than dependent trainees. To put it into Mackenzie's (1998, p. 16) words professional translators know how "to ask the right questions and (...) know how and where to look for the answers".

Another aspect that is related to translator training is Widdowson's basic distinction between *training* and *education* (1984, pp. 201–212). Training prepares trainees to solve predefined and fixed problems in a *cumulative* process while education refers to developing cognitive processes and capacities of learners to enable them deal with various difficulty and tasks through a *generative* process. Education as a dynamic process prepares students to solve novel problems and gain new knowledge if the new situations demand so. Bernardinni (2004, p. 24–25) argues that translation training in an undergraduate level should focus on educating. She deems education as "necessary" and training as an "accessory" part of every translation training program. Along the same line, Mossop (2001) contends that translation schools should strive to educate trainees with abilities and competencies to deal with whatever problems they come across to a long time form now. Fawcett (1987) points out that translator training must offer skills and competencies to trainees that enable them to deal with any text in the future (p. 37). In distance learning mode, the learner's need to go independent is even more than traditional modes. In such situations is not enough to train learners through textbooks, it is more desirable to educate them with translation strategies and make them independent decision makers who can tackle translational problems real life situations.

Task-based Approach

Task based learning approach (TBA) as an off spring of community language teaching (CLT) has recently earned popularity among process-based Translation Studies researchers. TBA stems from the development of cognitive theories that study cognitive processes distinguish *declarative* and *procedural* knowledge (Widdowson, 1984). The focus of TBA is on the process rather than the product of translation and a lot of attention is drawn to the learner and lesson procedures. According to Cerezal (1995, p. 183), TBA is "how a learner applies his or her communicative competence to undertake a selection of tasks". González Davies defines task-based learning as the integration of function, process and product (2004, p. 73). She applies this approach to translator training in a series of "concrete and brief exercises" towards a same end in order "to activate both procedural (know-how) and declarative (know-what) knowledge" (2004, pp. 22–23). In the same vein, Nord (1988/1991) proposes that simple and declarative tasks should precede procedural and difficult projects in translation training. Conversely, Beeby (2004) argues that a combination of declarative and procedural knowledge can support each other and points out that it is the declarative knowledge which develops and turns into the procedural one. Beeby points out that it is possible to develop procedural knowledge without having to pass

through the declarative stage, but elements should be made explicit to speed up the acquisition of procedural knowledge (p. 46). It seems that translation scholars agree on the need to have two basic kinds of knowledge one of which is factual and the other is operative (see Bell, 1991; Round, 1998; and Schäffner & Adab, 2000). Apparently, fostering these two types of knowledge through high quality material is among the tenets of every textbook on translation, especially in distance learning mode.

Translation and Translation-related Activities

There is host of support for the inclusion of L1 capabilities within translation training programs along with translation activities in the translation training programs. Translation related activities are activities such as written composition into L1 and into L2, summary writing, reading comprehension and text analysis. Nida (2001) suggests that translation training should also include intra-lingual text translation along with inter-lingual translation activities. This exercise is "rewriting bad texts into more understandable in target texts" (pp. 8–9). Mossop (2001) asks for the inclusion of an *editing component* in translation courses. For Maier and Massardier-Kenney (1993, p. 156), "rewriting information to fit a different audience is a skill most translators must now possess". Looking from a functionalist point of view, it is sometimes necessary for the students to rewrite or summarize a part of text to fulfill an intended function or the desire of a client for a specific purpose. Reiss (2000) states that the intended function of TT is the directing factor for a translation task and a translation is sometimes "intended to fulfill a specific function that is not addressed in the original" (pp. 92–93). According to Snell-Hornby (1992, p. 20) it is not unusual for the translators to come across some defective texts which are in need of summarization, explanation and adaptation or some change according to the need of a specific client or a reader. Thus, a part of development of independent trainees in distance learning must be the development of translation related capabilities of the trainees along with their translational ones.

Since in PNU translation and language are taught side by side, teaching language is of utmost importance. Knowing language and understanding the source texts is one of the most important prerequisites of every translation program. Kiraly (1995, p. 110) notes that "a flaw in most translation programs is the lack of emphasis on reading and using parallel texts in L2". Cronin (2005) also calls for the inclusion of reading in translator training programs. Colina (2002, p. 12) calls for the inclusion of new language teaching reading material in translation programs because they are designed in order to facilitate comprehension processes and can, therefore, change learner's comprehension far beyond the mere linguistic understanding. Nord puts emphasis on the acquisition of certain level of L1/L2 proficiency for the acquisition of transfer or translation competence (1988/1991, p. 140). Likewise, Jakobsen (1994, p. 146) is convinced that

> *placing translation within the whole spectrum of text production, and consistently exposing students to authentic parallel texts, will help them develop greater critical*

awareness of acceptability norms and textual models in the target language.

Meanwhile, this will prevent them from producing pseudo-texts, e.g. TTs with SL interference or TTs that ignore text-type conventions of target language and culture.

Emphasis on the Incorporation of Theory in Practice

Another much talked about aspect of translation and translator training is the role theory must play in practice. Teachers, theorists and practicing translators do not agree with each other on this role. However, there is a strong support in Translation Studies for to include a dosage of theory in translator training courses. Fawcett et al. (2010) state that every translator has a theory. They go on to suggest that familiarity with translation theory is definitely a helping factor in translation task:

> *What we do suggest, however, is that an acquaintanceship with theory, and in particular with a wide range of theories, and not some single master-theory, could become a powerful tool in the hands of translators, giving them insight into the manifold ways in which their practice might be constructed (2010, p. 2).*

González Davies sees a mutual understanding between theorists and practitioners as a necessary prerequisite to reach "an optimal standard" in translator training and proposes the integration of translation and teaching theory for translator training and advises trainers to gain knowledge on new approaches and reflective teaching and action research (2005, pp. 72–79). Neubert goes on to say that "theory without practice is empty" whereas "practice without theory is blind". According to Bartrina (2005, p. 177) theory is not an end in itself, but it is a means to an end. It can provide translators an enthusiasm to learn, practice and think about translation. Regarding the amount and the dosage of theory in a translation course, Nord believes in a" pig-tail" method in which the teacher or in our case a self-instructional textbook offers a little bit of theory and applies it in a practice and when the need for more theory arises, little more theory is added to the practice (2005, p. 213).

Criteria for Educating Independent Trainees in Distance Mode

Reviewing the current approaches to distance learning and translation training and taking a functional communicative stance, one can roughly categorize their main criteria that can be beneficial in educating distance learners. These criteria can be employed as a roadmap to develop and/or evaluate any distance learning translation textbook, whose primary aim must be to prepare functional and independent learners and teach them the right processes and strategies of translation. The criteria are:

1. Learner-orientedness: putting the responsibility of the learning on the learners.
2. Integration of declarative and procedural translation activities.
3. Integration of function, process and product.
4. Teaching various translation principles, methods and strategies.

5. Incorporation of task-based translation and translation-related activities.
6. Educating aware, resourceful, reflective learners.
7. Presentation of content in order of difficulty.
8. Inclusion and simulation of real-life and authentic translation tasks.
9. Drawing attention to and fostering inter-cultural competence.
10. Integration of theory and practice.
11. Emphasis on the application of traditional and modern resources and tools to gain information and solve novel problems in translation.

These criteria are the most emphasized upon components of rational approaches to translation training and are quite in line with the theories of distance learning. Any textbook adhering to and fulfilling these criteria can hopefully be beneficial in educating of the autonomously functional learners in distance learning mode.

Evaluation of a Distance Learning Textbook

Translating Economics Texts by Manoochehr Jafari Gohar (1995) is a self-instructional textbook for the closing term of the undergraduate *English Translation* program in PNU. The textbook that covers the translation theory in this program is *meaning-based translation* by Larsen (1984) which does not cover the modern translation theories and one can assume that translation trainees take *Translating Economics Texts* with the minimum familiarity with translation theories.

In the short preface to the book Jafari Gohar claims that the texts included in the book have been taken from the most reliable sources on economics. He further adds that the corresponding translations for these texts are all taken from the real-life translations available in the market. Thus, the book partially meets one of the criteria set. He agrees that acquiring translational skills and advancing in the "craft of translation" undoubtedly depend on the familiarity with both theory and practice of translation. However, he does not incorporate any theory in this textbook. He points out that:

> *In such a course, that is, courses in which the practical aspects are emphasized over theoretical aspects, the success of trainees depends on the accurate and exact completion of exercises* (authors' translation and emphasis).

It is clear that the author does not believe in the integration of theory with practice and considers this book a practice book alone. Thus, the book does not meet one of the much emphasized upon criteria.

He goes on to provide a short general self-study guideline in three pages to help trainees study the book and do its exercises independently. According to this guideline the book is organized into three main parts:

1. Equivalence finding for various parts of speech;
2. Editing the existing authentic translations;
3. Step by step translation.

In part one, 70 pages, the smallest unit of translation is considered to be 'word' and the author tries to familiarize the students with the correct methods and procedures of

equivalence-finding in economics texts. The main objective is to acquaint the trainees with specific properties of economics texts. Since English is taught as a foreign language and the degree of exposure to the language is relatively low in Iran, students are supposed to learn language and translation together in this program.

Describing the second part of the book, Jafari Gohar states that he and his colleagues' experience as translator trainers indicates that trainees need to learn the correct and appropriate Persian structures. They also need to learn different spellings, forms, constructions and the standard orthographical conventions of the Persian language. Here, what the author is trying to do is to acquaint the students with dominant textual norms and conventions of the Persian language. Thus, he includes an editing component in the book that runs up to 40 pages long. This part mainly contains some translations to be edited orthographically based on Persian textual conventions. Part one and two mostly include translation related activities rather than translational ones. Again, the book meets another main criterion of a translation textbook that is the incorporation of translation-related and translational exercises.

The third main part of the book is entitled "step by step translation" and runs for 180 pages long. This part is comprised of ten lessons that deal with the most popular topics in economics as a discipline. The author believes that students must learn methods and principles of translation in a step by step fashion or through a process. Jafari Gohar claims that it is considered a step by step methodology, because it employs a scholarly and principled procedure in order to assist students to develop and acquire sound criteria in translating economics texts, much like the processes which may take place in contact with a teacher in the classroom. Each lesson in this part includes the following exercises to be done by the distance learners.

Exercise A: This section includes an original English text dealing with common topic in Economics. This text is about one to four page long. The length of the texts increases steadily through the lessons. Where the text in lesson one is a page long, the text in lesson ten is four pages long. However, one cannot see a direct relationship between the length of the text and the difficulty. The author encourages the students to read the text a few times and make sure they have almost understood it before moving to the following exercises.

Exercise B: Following the initial reading activity, the author offers some multiple-choice reading comprehension tests so that the students can make sure that they have understood the text. The questions range from finding the references of some specific pronouns to general understanding questions, quite like language teaching books. The author believes that these questions help students understand the textual relationships of the text. Here are two examples taken from this exercise (p. 116):

Choose the best answer to the following questions.

3. In line 4, "its" refers to _____
a) economics
b) human welfare

c) scarce resource
d) choice

8. What is the similarity between a local bakery and a car factory?
a) they have to employ workers
b) they have to make careful choices
c) they need to use input efficiently
d) they need to employ other inputs

Exercise C: In this exercise, the author asks translation trainees to find appropriate Persian equivalents for the English key terms and phrases taken from the text according to the context. Trainees are encouraged to refer to bilingual resources and the glossaries introduced at the end of the book for help. No answers have been provided for this exercise to emphasize the idea of the relativity of the notion of equivalence. It seems that the author does not want to offer prescriptive equivalences to the learners. He is trying to build some learner independence and awareness and self-reflection here. Students are encouraged to spend much more time on this exercise. Here are some examples (p. 185):

Find a suitable Persian equivalence for each item according to the context.

Line 5:   merger   --------------------------
Line 8:   takeover bid   --------------------------
Line 11: private interest --------------------------
Line 18: vertical merger --------------------------

Exercise D: In this exercise, students are asked to prepare their first draft of the translation of the text they have read and analyzed. Jafari Gohar believes that learners will come across many difficulties during the preparation of the first draft. Thus, attempts have been made to predict these difficulties and offer some guidelines to tackle them. The guidelines mostly draw on the two previous parts of the book that deals with equivalence-finding and textual norms and conventions of Persian. Students are advised to refer to these guidelines as they are preparing the first draft of their translation. Here are some instances of these guidelines (pp. 210–270):

Line 4:   Start writing your first draft and at the same time use these guidelines.
Line 8:   The word "*behavior*" has not been used with its usual meaning. Explicitate its meaning.
Line 22: Explicitate the pronoun " its". Of course, you have to expand the text for this purpose.
Line 34: In the translation of this complex sentence, it is better to put the independent clause before the dependent clause.
Line 86: Turn English passive voice into Persian active voice.
Line 2:   Do not translate *"but"* in this sentence.
Line 78: *IOU* is an acronym for "*I owe you".*
Line 30: "as well" means "too".
Line 46: "*although convenient*" is the short form of "*although it is convenient*".
Line 50: In order to see the meaning of the phrase "better off" refer to the entry of "well off" in an Oxford or Longman dictionary.
Line 62: The original has put emphasis on "*advocacy role*" by italicizing it; you can do the same by underlining the phrase.

Line 13: Pay attention to the definition of "*persuasion*" and find a suitable equivalence for it.
Persuasion: a strongly held belief or opinion.

Line 6: Do not translate "*there was*" literally.

Line 27: It is better to translate this long complex English sentence into two or even three shorter sentences.

Line 26: The word "*going*" is acting as an adjective for the phrase "real wage rate". Consult a dictionary before translating it.

Line 9: It is better to put "is *evident*" at the end of the sentence to increase the naturalness and fluency of the sentence.

It can be seen from the examples above that the author is trying to encourage the students to adhere to Persian textual norms rather than following the instructions of the ST (e.g. replacing active with passive voice, replacing italicization with underlining etc) and at the same time teach some translation strategies (e.g. explicitation, expansion, paraphrase etc). The author tries to draw the attention of the learners to numerous translation and equivalence finding processes and methods (consulting monolingual dictionaries and the existence of multiple meaning for a single English word). The author is trying to raise the awareness of the learners to start thinking about their translation process. Attempt is made to offer some translation strategies and principles. Learner may apply these strategies to tackle the new problems they come across through this text or any other text he may come across later. This exercise can have some independence building advantages. The author is not delivering all the solutions to all the problems and difficulties of the text, but rather introducing some solutions to some common translational problems. These solutions may be applicable in novel situations and mastery over them can help build some learner independence. However, one can see that a considerable share of the guidelines is quite prescriptive in nature which is undesirable for independence building purposes.

Exercise E: In this section of each lesson, Jafari Gohar has provided the learners with some multiple-choice translation tests (not the reading comprehension tests of second section of each lesson) after the learners have finished writing the first draft of their translation. The number of distracters in each question varies from one to four depending on the context. The author encourages the learners to change and edit their translations if they come up with some new ideas doing these exercise. Here are two examples (pp. 143–144):

Choose the best translation for the following phrases and sentences.

Line 6: It improved the climate for investment and so helped to maintain aggregate demand

a) آن شرایط سرمایه گذاری را بهبود می داد و در نتیجه به نگهداری تقاضای کل کمک می کرد

b) عقیده بر این بود که این افزایش شرایط سرمایه گذاری را بهبود می بخشد و بدبن ترتیب به حفظ میزان تقاضای کل کمک می کند

Line 38: high wages settlement

a) پرداخت مزدهای زیاد

b) تعیین مزدهای بالا

c) تقاضای مزدهای خوب

Exercise F: In this section, learners must revise and edit their first draft according to Persian norms and conventions. This is where the final version of the translation is prepared. The author's emphasis is on the correct understanding of the ST meaning and correct rendering of the extracted meaning the author is implicitly following the target language and culture oriented view of functional theories of translation.

Exercise G: In this section, there is an original text along with its Persian translation taken from the real-life market. The learners should compare and contrast them according to what they have learned from the previous parts of the book and then they should prepare a critical report on the advantages and disadvantages of the translation. This exercise may help the students start reflecting on their own translation processes and avoid the mistakes of the translators of these texts. In fact, they are self-evaluating themselves at this stage that can be quite facilitative for independence promotion. According to Gile (1995), problem reporting leads students to reflect on their own translation strategies and methods. Incorporation of such parallel texts can also help students identify the problems and pitfalls of other translators and avoid them in their own tasks. This is a kind of discovery learning practice, which can pave the way for further independence. Students can also get a feeling of the prevalent norms and repeated strategies, patterns and conventions of other translators. Adopting the regular behavior of the other translators through comparing the parallel texts is the roadmap shown and supported by the descriptive Translation Studies scholars. One of the advantages of consulting parallel texts for the translation trainees is the production of more idiomatic target texts (see Weatherby, 1998; Lang, 1994).

Following this section there are some questions and suggestions that should be considered by the learners. The answers to these questions are not provided in the book and the learner must answer them critically and independently. The learner's answers to these questions may lead to the revision of the previous translation criticism report. Here are some of these reflection provoking questions and suggestions:

Line 31: The translator has deleted the phrase *"twenty-year"*. Why?

Line 43: The translator has not rendered the phrase "*which turns*" in the translation. Correct the translation.

Line 7: In the sentence "*what one means…*" the translator has not translated the two following phrases. Do they cause any problems in the message?
To put it rather loosely
So that

What do you think about the following equivalences?

Line 1: we have seen   توجه کردیم
Line 15: sucking in   افزودن

These questions and suggestions to which no answer is provided makes learner start developing critical thinking in translation evaluation and later on use the competence they develop through this procedure in their own independent translation projects.

Exercise H: In this closing section, the learners are provided with an original English text on economics and are asked to translate it independently using the combination of resources introduced in the bibliography of the book and the glossary provided by the author himself.

Conclusion

According to the current theories of distance learning, the first priority of every distant learning program must be the development of learner independence and autonomy through consistent support via appropriate course content and recent development in technology. Due to the special structure of PNU and lack of teacher contact and shortage of modern technologies in this institution to provide support, the necessity of learner independence doubles. The task of independence development is on the shoulders of text developers and the textbooks to meet the desirable objectives. This study drew on distance learning theories and modern approaches to translation training to determine some criteria to build learner autonomy in distance translation training programs. An attempt was made to evaluate a PNU textbook in the light of the eleven criteria identified through the review of literature.

Translating Economics Texts is generally a learner-centered textbook following the learner-centered paradigm in EFL. It tries to make learners think about their translation process and undertake self-evaluation. From the very beginning of the book the sets some definite objectives to be accomplished and distances himself from the traditional approach to translator training. He tries to activate reflective learning and critical thinking of trainees through both translation and translation-related activities. The first two parts of the book mainly focus on translation-related activities like intra-lingual editing exercises (an editing component) and inter-lingual equivalence finding exercises. The combination of intra-lingual/inter-lingual and declarative/procedural competencies have been recently emphasized by some leading translator scholars and is quite facilitating in translation training (see Nida, 2001; Mossop, 2001; Reiss, 2000).

The third part of the book builds mostly on the previously acquired declarative knowledge and skills (out of context translation strategies and product-based equivalence finding exercises) and pave the way for the trainees to put these methods and strategies into practice through the implicit integration of declarative and procedural knowledge in a wider, more real-life context. The amount of help the author provides includes helping the students to understand the text through multiple-choice reading comprehension questions, offering some guidelines to translate the texts, asking some questions to be answered in order to think about their own translation process and finally asking the learners to translate a new text independently. The author introduces lots of translation strategies and methods that can be used for real-life translation purposes. However, a safe dosage of explicitness regarding the strategies offered may speed up the acquisition of procedural knowledge.

The aim of the translation evaluation and criticism exercises in the book is the development of reflective and critical translator trainees who gain more and more self-confidence as they find the chance to evaluate another translator's work based on what they have learned through the exercises of each lesson. As to the introduction of the contents in order of difficulty, no proof was found. One cannot claim that the increasing length of the texts to be translated has a direct relationship with the higher difficulty of the translation tasks. More often than not shorter texts are more difficult to understand and translate. The textbook is quite function-oriented and the trainees are implicitly advised through the guidelines not to follow the instructions and the lead of the ST when there is divergence between the textual norms and conventions of the ST and TT. However, because the book is self-instructional, explicitness in this regard can be quite beneficial.

As to the education of resourceful trainees, the trainees are encouraged to make use of the finite resources introduced in the book and the existence of the almost infinite on-line and electronic translational resources have been completely ignored by the author. Thus, the research and media competence (Nord, 2005) which are quite essential for every autonomous translator are not being fostered by this textbook adequately. The inclusion of real-life texts and translations is one of the prominent advantages of the textbook. A point that is worth mentioning is teaching ESP along with translation in this textbook that is quite desirable because English Translation program in PNU is supposed to teach both translation and a second language.

As a main drawback, some guidelines and instructions introduced in the book hark back to linguistic based and equivalence-finding theories of translation that are mainly normative or prescriptive in nature. Moreover, while all the texts are authentic, the tasks and the translation projects are not. The instructions for the exercises does not implicitly or explicitly specify that the translation always has a definite communicative function (which may or may not be different from the original) and it always serves a definite purpose. Hence, trainees may go on translating from text to text without knowing the most important objective of their missions, i.e. serving a certain skopos. As to the importance of cultural differences and fostering cross-cultural competence, the textbook has nothing to say.

Following the exercises and the instructions of a self-instructional textbook such as one under study in this paper, learners gain the competencies to read, understand, find appropriate linguistic equivalences and finally decode the text into L2 via the due process independently, but they may not acquire the functional and communicative competencies (professional knowledge in Nord's words) essential for professional translators. Thus, it is suggested to include real-life translation tasks, briefs and projects along with authentic texts in the distance learning contexts in order to compensate for the absence of the teacher who could constantly provide the students with translation briefs and communicative purpose for their translation task.

The textbook under study is still under the influence of product-based and prescriptive approaches to translation. The translation strategies are introduced implicitly which

may not be facilitating in speeding up the acquisition of procedural knowledge. One needs to spell them out for self-instructional purposes. In order to improve the independence-building objective of such a textbook, more emphasis must be placed on defining communicative and functional translation tasks to be carried out by the students. The authors must be quite explicit in raising the awareness of the students as to the existence of specific purpose for every real-life and authentic translation project. It is suggested to define a function and a translation brief for each exercise. As students do not have access to teachers, it is a good idea to encourage them to pair check and group check the results of their translation exercises and have more interaction. However, in order to build learner autonomy, the exercises must be done individually before brainstorming the results with a student partner. The focus must shift from teacher-student interaction to student-student interaction if possible.

Theory has no place in this textbook, because the author has taken the familiarity of the students with the theories of translation for granted. However, it is not safe to make such an assumption in a distance learning context in which students have no contact with teacher in case any problem arises. Some dosage of theory seems necessary for every translation textbook. I suggest using theories of translation along with practice and lay bare the process of translation for the students, before asking them to start doing the translation exercises.

The scope of this article did not allow an examination of a large number of distance learning translation textbooks. Nevertheless, due to the familiarity of the author with the existing self-instructional textbooks in PNU, the other textbooks are more or less following the same path. If distance learning textbooks do not fulfill the criteria determined in this study and do not catch up with the current theories of distance learning and translation training, we cannot expect the development of the distance learners into autonomous, reflective and fully functional professionals. Surprisingly, during the course of this study the authors found out that translation training in distance learning systems is an almost neglected area in Translation Studies literature. Thus, due to the ever increasing expansion of distance learning institutions all over the world, I suggest adding distance translation training to Holmes' so-called map of the Translation Studies as a subcategory of translator training (see Holmes, 1971; Toury, 1995).

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Gholamreza Medadian, Saeed Ketabi

Vertėjų rengimas nuotolinio mokymo metodu: užmiršta sritis vertimo studijų „žemėlapyje“

Santrauka

Vertėjų rengimas nuotoliniu būdu yra nepakankamai tyrinėtas, nes šios srities mokslininkai tiesiog ignoravo esminius skirtumus tarp nuotolinio ir tradicinio vertėjų rengimo metodų. Šis tyrimas yra vienas iš pirmųjų bandymų atkreipti dėmesį į šią menkai tyrinėtą mokslo sritį. Pirma, tyrimu buvo bandoma nustatyti funkcinių ir autonomiškų vertimo studentų rengimo kriterijus panaudojant kontrastinę ir kritinę susijusios literatūros apžvalgą. Remiantis funkcine ir komunikacine nuostata, idėjų buvo semtasi iš nuotolinio mokymosi, antrosios kalbos mokymo ir vertimo teorijų. Svarbiausi kriterijai turi būti orientacija į besimokantįjį, orientacija į patį mokymo procesą ir autentiškų, realių vertimo užduočių panaudojimą. Vėliau šie kriterijai buvo naudoti savarankiško vertimo vadovėliui įvertinti. Atliktas jo vertinimas parodė, kad tie kriterijai gali pasitarnauti kaip kelio žemėlapis įvertinti ir (ar) parengti savarankiško mokymo vadovėlius skirtus nuotoliniam mokymuisi. Galiausiai buvo pasiūlyta integruoti vertimo mokymą nuotolinio mokymo metodu į vertimo studijų „žemėlapį“, taip siekiant suaktyvinti tolesnius mokslinius tyrimus.

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