ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:3, Issue:4, October 2014

Students' Causes of Errors in Translating Pragmatic Senses

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Abstract: *This study aims to shed light on the problems which students face in translating from English to Persian. Na Pham's (2005) error analysis, which considers translation errors, was conducted to find out students' main problems in translating from English into Persian. 30 English Language Translation students were selected through purposive sampling. Persian - English translation text and in-depth interviews were conducted for data collection. From the very beginning of the analysis it was found that understanding the pragmatic senses were the most students' problem in translating. Finally, the students translated the pragmatic senses in correctly because of misunderstanding of the source text main message. It is hoped that this study will provide a new perspective for the objective assessment of some translation devices and instructions for the teachers in Iran universities by considering the linguistic aspects. In addition, guidelines for teaching translation and training translators within the context of the Iranian educational system will be discussed.*

Key Terms of the Study: *translation; Errors in Translation; Error Analyses; Pragmatic, Pragmatic Translation errors*

Introduction

"The ability to translate well is not a naturally acquired skill; it is learned as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments" (Ardeshiri, Noorizah and Rosniah, 2011). Every translation becomes a development of the original text which transfers the message of the source text to the TL. However, such a process needs to be clearly recognized, not only as transference from one linguistic aspect to another but also as connection between two languages and two cultures (Abu-Mahfuz, 2008). According to Jamalimanesh (2009), translators play a decisive role in the process of transferring the sense of the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). Based on the requirement of competent translators, several researchers have studied Error Analysis (EA henceforth) in translation such as Baorang (2009) from Chinese to English; Stewart (2008); Na Pham (2005) from Vietnamese to English, Dodds (1999) from Italian to English; Coskun (1997); Seguinot (1990) which is the study of errors made by second and foreign language learners to cover the complexities of the texts and translations (Jamalimanesh, 2009; Khodabandeh, 2007; Riazi and Razmjoo, 2004). As Riazi and Razmjoo

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:3, Issue:4, October 2014

(2004) indicated, today, training skilful translators requires a change in the curriculum of teaching translation and translator training in Bachelor of Art (B.A henceforth) programs in Iran.

English is the first foreign language in Iran's educational system (Chalak and Kassaian, 2010) and English translation courses such as translation strategies, theories of translation, interpreting, translation of simple prose texts and translation of different types of texts (literary, news, political) in B.A program have been taught in recent years in Iran. English Language Translation (ELT henceforth) students must pass 4 years of study in the field of language proficiency, linguistics, and all the theories of translation and strategies of translation in various fields such as literary texts, economic texts, political texts and religious texts. But the graduated students still have many problems in translation and their translated texts still lack in meaning.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to find out ELT students' errors in translating from English to Persian. Moreover, the study explored the students' causes of errors in translation despite years of instruction.

Research Question

1- What is the most common error in ELT students in translation from English to Persian?
2- Why do students make errors in the translation process from English to Persian?

Significance of the Study

There are many studies in Iran in this area but not with focus on pragmatic errors and translation errors in details (Golestany 2009; Jamalimanesh 2009; Khodabandeh 2007; Riazi and Razmjoo 2004). As Kiraly (1995) indicated: "Error analysis should help translation teachers understand the problems (linguistic, cultural, textual, production) that occur during the process of a translator's training". The findings of this study can also shed light on research on translation studies for other language pairs or combinations. Accordingly, this study may also help translators and TEFL students who have majored in translation studies to translate well. Writers of English textbooks can also use these methods if they are interested in formulating different methods of translation in different texts. This is why the findings of this study will hopefully contribute to the body of knowledge of translation studies.The findings and the analysis of translation in this study are expected to be beneficial for other translators so that they can apply the strategies used for their works.

Literature Review
Translation

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Translations are texts, and translation is a textual process in which linguistic form and process are incorporated. These texts form building blocks of intercultural communication between people from different cultures (Qing-guang, 2009; Sakellariou, 2011). The cultural aspect of translation focuses on understanding people in particular communities which adjust their experiences and behaviour, and providing them with a certain framework for the interpretation of everyday realities (Khajeh and Imran-Ho, 2012). The word 'translation' suggests movement, transfer and changes of form. Therefore, translation is not just a change of language, but a transformation of many elements of a text in order for it to make sense for a new audience (Cain, 2001). Moreover, as Chang and Sheung Wai (2003) indicated "creation of translation itself is based on the original meaning and should be faithful to the original spirit". Antonini (2009) mentioned that the adaptation of social varieties and cultural items are one of the main challenges for translators and translation trainees. Stewart (2008) found that translation students focus on the problematic signs of the target text more than the core sense of the source text.

Errors

Errors appear when the learner's knowledge of the rules of the target language is incomplete. Errors are considered to be systematic, governed by rule and also regarded as rule-governed when they follow the rules of the learner's interlanguage (Keshavarz, 2011).

According to Abbasi and Karimnia (2011) it is essential that teachers be able to adjust their teaching plan to make their teaching work more effectively by identifying learners' errors. Moreover, recognizing errors can provide valuable information for teachers about how much the learner has learned and what kind of problems s/he has in the study of language. As Conde (2011) notes, "error detection has been the traditional basis for translation evaluation".

Errors in Translation

According to Pym (2010), translation errors may be attributed to numerous causes (lack of comprehension, inappropriateness to readership, misuse of time) and located on numerous levels (language, pragmatics, culture). Moreover, errors in translation influence the quality of the final product and the degree of miscomprehension from the reader. This paper focuses on pragmatic errors, one of the branches of translation errors.

Error Analysis

Error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors learners make. It consists of a comparison between the errors made in the Target Language (TL) and that TL itself (Corder, 1974). According to Richards et al. (1992: 96), "error analysis may be carried out in order to: a)

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find out how well someone knows the language, b) find out how a person learns a language, and c) obtain information on common difficulties in language learning". Moreover, error analysis explores analytically the actual errors which are produced by foreign language learners and tries to describe the causes of errors. Moreover, Error Analysis helps to identify the weaknesses, with a variety of techniques, for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the language learners' errors (Khodabandeh, 2007).

Error Analysis in Translation

Error analysis in translation is the study of errors made by second/foreign language learners which empirically examines the actual errors in the target language produced by second/foreign language learners and seeks to explain their causes (Moghimizadeh, 2008). According to Seguinot (1990), errors represent the quality of a translation and also are windows into the translating process itself.

Pragmatic Errors

Pragmatics is the study of the purposes for which sentences are used, of the real-world conditions under which a sentence may be accordingly used and changed (Stalinker, 1973). In other words, 'pragmatic refers to the study of sign systems with respect to user relations' (Khan and Bughio: 2012). Whereas this study tries to find out ELT students' pragmatic errors in translation, here is the relevance of pragmatics to translation. For Emery (2004:149) the process is "the rendering of an SL text's pragmatic meaning into a TL text in line with TL expectancy norms". Therefore, the translator's task is to negotiate the pragmatic meaning of the ST and then re-negotiate this meaning into a TL code. The reader's task then involves both the interpretation of a text/author's meaning and the analysis of the factors that govern the translator's choice (Khodabandeh, 2007). Nord (1997) indicated the most serious error in translation is pragmatic.

Framework of the Study

Further investigation revealed that error analysis models on translation in previous studies focused on language competence, grammatical rules, spelling and phrases which are the subcategories of linguistics superficially and rarely on text meaning (Golestany 2009; Jamalimanesh 2009; Khodabandeh 2007; Riazi and Razmjoo 2004). Moreover, previous researches on error analysis in translation focused more on sentence-level errors, rather than text-level errors. Given this background, this study explores another dimension of error analysis in translation based on Na Pham's (2005) Error Analysis Model which involves translation errors with pragmatic implication. Translation errors based on Na Pham's framework include: pragmatic errors, inaccurate renditions of individual lexical items in the source texts, distortion or change at a level of the meaning of the source text, literal translation, free translation, wrong

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lexical choice and wrong focus of attention. From the first analysis of the translated English-Persian text, it was concluded that the most important problem for participants is pragmatic errors, so, this paper only focused on transferring pragmatic senses.

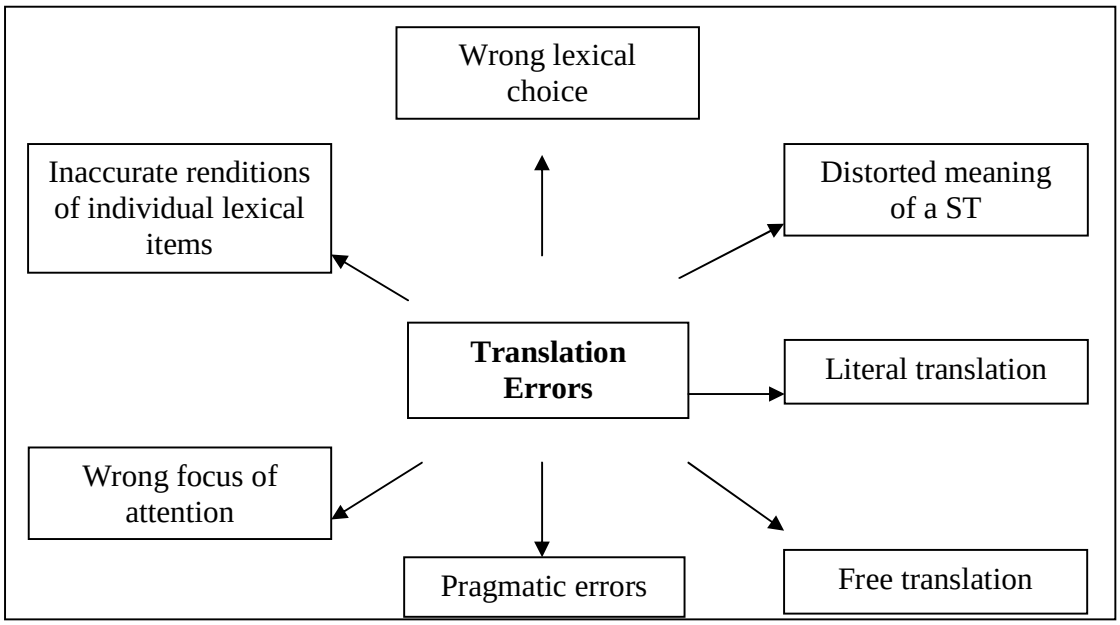

Figure 1. Framework of the study

Methodology

Participants

The subjects of this study were 30 senior English Language Translation students who had completed 3 years of academic instruction and attended all courses of translation studies from the Department of English Language Translation of Shiraz Islamic Azad University of Iran, with similar educational backgrounds. Purposeful sampling was conducted for selecting the subjects to find out the errors that each subject makes. Moreover, the study needs some individuals who are well-informed in the phenomenon in order to be able to develop a detailed understanding of the problem.

Instruments

Translation texts

Subjects were asked to translate one text from English to Persian which were chosen by the professors of translation courses in Iran. The text was extracted from "*Abundance of Light*" by

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Dr. Dastjerdi (2009) who is a university professor and also a famous professional translator in Iran. The text had been translated by this expert of translation who has more than 20 years of experience in translation in Iran.

In-depth Interview with Lecturers

In-depth interviews were conducted with lecturers who have more than 15 years of experience in English language translation in order to gain more insight into the students' errors from the points of view of their teachers. Justification for selecting only experienced lecturers is the lecturers' field who teach translation and translation studies in Iran have never received any sort of training in teaching translation. Moreover, lecturers' filed who teaching translation in Iran is linguistic, literature and teaching English as a foreign language and not translation studies. In-depth interviews imply seeking deep information and understanding (Creswell 2003). In other words, the researcher interviewed translation lecturers to find out more details about the possible causes of errors and the main problems in students' translation from their lecturers' perspective. Interviews were conducted by focusing on what the students' weak points are in translation

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher arranged a meeting with lecturers and explained the topic and aim of the research to them. Interviews with lecturers were conducted in the lecturers' offices and were recorded.

A translation test was performed in a class. In order for students to pay attention to task the researcher asked the lecturers to consider the test as part of their final score. Subjects were free to use any dictionaries they liked. Participants were given 120 minutes to translate the texts in order to ensure that students completed the task and that they did not make errors under the pressure of time.

Data Analysis Procedure

Analysis of Translation Text

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The learners' translated texts were collected and analysed, according to Na Pham's (2005) translation error analysis, all the students' Persian translations were compared with the original English text and its skilfully translated text. Errors were underlined and classified in terms of their possible sources. This error analysis yields the types of errors.

Analysis of In-depth Interview with Lecturers

According to Creswell (2008), for analysing the interview process, first of all, the data were recorded and transcribed. Then, the investigator read the transcriptions of the interviews carefully for coding the data. A list of all codes was made to look for redundant codes and make the list of codes shorter. The themes were identified by examining the codes that the participants had discussed more frequently.

Results and findings

In analysing the ELT students' translations, it was found that most of the students have problems in transferring the pragmatic functions of a given sentence. If they are unable to do so, they either add a sentence to clarify the point or omit that part altogether. The following examples present more details about.

(1) **Source text:** The engine is falling to pieces.
Student's translation in English: The engine is falling to pieces.
Proposed translation: خانه از پاي بست ويران است

Example (1) shows the students' incapability in comprehending the source text (English language). The word 'engine' in the source text means 'world' and the message of the source text is 'the world is destroyed with mechanic life'. This sentence means' خانه از پاي بست ويران است' in Persian. Most of the students translated this sentence incorrectly. It shows that the students did not read the entire sentences to understand the main message of the text and used to translate

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sentence by sentence without any attention to the whole of the message of the text to get the pragmatic sense of the message.

(2) **Source text:** Between midnight and dawn, when sleep will not come.
Student's translation in English: Between the twilight weather and midnight when I wake up…
Proposed Translation: نيمه‌هاي شب كه خواب به چشمانم راه نمي‌يابد

In example (2) most of the students translated the phrase 'when sleep will not come' to 'when I wake up'. However, if students read all the text they would understand that the author by 'when sleep will not come' means that he/she cannot sleep from very beginning of the night. But most of the students thought that the author means 'she/he wakes up because of nightmare in the twilight'. Moreover, students have linguistic error in this sentence. The phrase 'when sleep will not come' is future tense, but most of the students transfer it by simple present tense. This error presents students' incapability in appropriate choice of tense. In this example the tense of the verb in' the sleep will not come' plays an important role. Whereas, the target language readers can understand that the author's wake up in dawn because of the night mare or he/she cannot sleep from the beginning of the night to the dawn because he/she thought about the future of the world. Therefore, example (2) indicates students' incapability in grammar which has an important role in understanding pragmatic sense. Moreover, students lack in reading comprehension spite of these years of instruction. Specifically in pragmatic sense of the English language texts.

(3) **Source text:** with not a gleam of genius anywhere.
Student's translation in English: without any bright genius.
Proposed translation: بي آن‌كه در سرتاسر اين جهان ذره‌اي نبوغ يا فكري نو يا شخصيتي ممتاز پيدا شود

Accordingly, in example (3) the word 'genius' is a noun but most of the students transfer it as 'bright' which is adjective. The problem which arises here is 'bright' means 'shining or glowing in appearance'. However, 'genius' means 'ability or gift of high intellect'. Whereas the message

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of the source text means 'the genius people who have abilities in their mind' and not 'people who are shining or glowing in appearance'. This example also indicates students' incapability in grammatical points and this error causes students' inability in transferring pragmatic senses. In Persian language when someone has many abilities people called him/her that she/he always 'bright' in gathering.

(4) Source text: We are asked to choose between various shades of negative.
Student's translation in English: They were asked from us to select among coloured negatives.
Proposed translation: مجبوريم از ميان آدمهايي انتخاب كنيم كه همگي سروته يك كرباسند

Example (4) indicates the student's carelessness in transferring the main message of the author. The meaning of the propositional phrase 'among coloured negatives' is quite different from the meaning of the propositional phrase 'between various shades of the negative'. In this example student tried to care about the grammar and sentence structure but the meaning of the sentence is changed. The author focuses on the 'different negative personalities who have the same thought, opinion and way of life' in this text. The phrase 'various shades of negative' has the pragmatic sense which the student couldn't understand. This example (4) shows students' incapability in recognizing the pragmatic sense of the sentence. So the student understood the meaning of the sentence wrongly and transferred the wrong meaning. Translation error happened when the pragmatic sense of the sentence is omitted and the meaning of the sentence is distorted.

However, these terms are not pragmatically appropriate, because they cannot have the same effect on the readers, given that they are not always Persian or English and may not know what 'other countries' refer to. The translations of these students show that they have a good command of English, but they still could not disassociate themselves from the English or Persian people in general in the text they translated. This error seems to have its roots in cultural rather than linguistic difference.

The lecturers in interviewing mentioned the following cause of students' errors in translation pragmatic senses:

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a. The lecturers indicated that 'students' incapability in reading comprehension.
b. One lecturer stated that 'students' inability in understanding and translating pragmatic sense both in English and Persian.
c. The lecturers also mentioned 'students failed in translating compound sentences.
d. The students don't have enough practice.
e. The students still have many grammatical errors in their translation and this causes the main idea the of the source text.
f. Students' carelessness about the author's main message in translation process.
g. When the students cannot translate the source text or cannot comprehend the source text, they choose word for word or free translation strategy for their translating which sometimes changes the meaning and the focus of the source text.
h. The main cause of students' errors in their translation process is that they don't read all of the text firstly. And at the beginning of the translation they try to translate sentence by sentence without care about the other sentence meaning.
i. The most important cause is the lecturer's field. Because most of the lecturers' fields in Iran universities are Teaching English as a Second Language, Literature or Linguistic and the experts in translation studies is rare.
j. Students' incapability in transferring cultural elements.

Discussion

The study found that the main problem of the ELT students in translation is their pragmatic errors. Lecturers stated that most of the students still have problems in translating pragmatic sentences because most of them have cultural roots. Hence, when students faced with sentences which have an idiomatic meaning with cultural aspects, they omit the whole sentence. This is because of the students' unfamiliarity with the source language culture. Another problem which students encounter is that they cannot recognize the idiomatic sentences and they don't think about the core sense of the source text. Consequently, they translate it word for word. This problem is because of the students' lack of knowledge in recognizing and translating idiomatic sentences. According to Newmark (1988) pragmatic errors are relatively extra-contextual. Moreover, according to Khanmohammad and Rahimi (2012), one of the students' problems in

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translating is their inability to recognize pragmatic sense, as a result of which they prefer to delete some parts of the sentence when they cannot understand the meaning.

Conclusion

The analysis of the texts translated by ELT students' yielded the following conclusion:

The results of the research indicated that the ELT students had pragmatic errors in translation from English to Persian. Pragmatic implications led students to the misinterpretation of ideas transferred in translation. Students omitted and added some parts of the text in order to transfer the sense of the source text. Hence, the students paraphrased the sentences to convey the meaning. Huhtala (1995) cited in Ruokonen (2010) indicated the cause of omissions and additions in the translation: a) to make the text more faithful for the readers by interpreting it, b) to simplify its linguistic structure, or c) to ease the translation process with change. However, sometimes, these translation shifts cannot achieve the expected outcome. Consequently, translation pragmatic errors occurred when the students decided to save the meaning and the genre of the source text by paraphrasing, omission and addition some parts of the texts which distorted the author's main message.

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Appendix A
Interview with Lecturers

Time of Interview:
Date:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
Questions:
1. What are the students' weak points in translation?
2. Why do the students have errors in translation despite 4 years of instruction?

Appendix B: Translation Test

In the Name of God
Translation test
Time: 2 hours
Please translate the following English text into Persian.

We are asked to choose between various shades of the negative. The engine is falling to pieces while the joint owners of the car argue whether the footbrake or the handbrake should be applied. Notice how the cold, colourless men, without ideas and with no other passion but a craving for success, get on this society, capturing one plum after another and taking the juice and taste out of them. Sometimes you might think the machines we worship make all the chief appointments, promoting the human beings who seem closest to them. Between midnight and dawn, when sleep will not come and all the old wounds begin to ache, I often have a nightmare vision of a future world in which there are billions of people, all numbered and registered, with not a gleam of genius anywhere, not an original mind, a rich personality, on the whole packed globe. The twin ideas of our time, organization and quantity, will have won for ever.

Appendix B
Translation of Documents

مجبوريم از ميان آدمهايي انتخاب كنيم كه همگي سروته يك كرباسند. خانه از پاي بست ويران است ، خواجه در بند نقش ايوان است. ببينيد در اين جامعه افرادي بي‌درد و بي‌هنر كه هيچ فكر بديعي ندارند و جز حرص موفقيت هيچ شوري در سر نمي‌پرورانند، چگونه بر هر فرصتي چنگ مي‌زنند و آن را به كام خود مي‌كنند. گاه آدم به اين فكر مي‌افتد كه ماشين هايي كه آنها راميپرستيم انتصابات مهم را انجام مي‌دهند وافرادي كه نزديك‌تر به خود مي‌يابند ترفيع مقام مي‌دهند. نيمه‌هاي شب كه خواب به چشمانم راه نمي‌يابد وهمه‌ي زخم‌هاي كهنه دهان باز مي‌كنند، جهان هولناك آينده را پيش روي خود مي‌بينيم، جهاني با ميليارد‌ها انسان كه هر يك شماره ثبتي دارد، بي آنكه در سرتاسر اين جهان ذره‌اي نبوغ يا فكري نو يا شخصيتي ممتاز پيدا شود. در آن زمان آرمان‌هاي دوگانه زمان ما ، كميت وتشكيلات ، به پيروزي ابدي دست مي‌يابند.

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