

The Effect of Genre Awareness on English Translation Quality and Pedagogy: A Case of News Reports Translation as an Academic Curriculum

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Abstract

To produce an adequate translation, language students are required to learn varieties of language features including syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Considering the curriculum language learners are face with, one can claim that almost all language students in Iran are taught these features in their academic settings including linguistic courses. Yet, there are some aspects of language which are disregarded in course books and syllabi and ignored by language teachers. Thus, language learners find it a formidable task to deal with these shrugged off aspects of their curricula. Genre of language is among these invisible features which have challenged translation students in translating specific texts. News reports is one of these genres that Iranian media translators, in spite of enjoying technical competence in language, are not familiar with knowledge and rhetorical conventions of it. So, the current is conducted to investigate the familiarity of these translators with genre features of news discourse and examine the effect of raising genre awareness on developing the quality of translation. To this aim, fourteen translation students studying translation for media purpose were selected through convenient sampling who were given some news reports to translate. Using Baker's taxonomy (1992) and House's quality assessment model (1997), the quality of their translations were assessed before genre awareness raising session and after it. The findings showed that the quality of translation ameliorated meaningfully after the instruction, indicating the importance of genre knowledge in linguistic competence. These findings have implications for syllabus designers and EAP and ESP teachers and students.

Keywords: Baker's Taxonomy, ESP, Genre Awareness, House's Model, Rhetorical Conventions

1. Introduction

In the world of teaching and doing translation, particularly in translating specific texts, some problems may arise which are related to linguistic incompetence or other translation issues such as selecting choices for sources text which do not have equal value in the target language. However, there are some problems associated with factors beyond limit of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features. According to Unger (2001), rhetoric features of text or discourse and genre of discourse are problematic areas which may cause a mismatch in translation because genre information of the target translation does not fine-tune rhetorical expectations of source language in terms of relevance and discourse-level information. Venuti (2000) argued that recognition of genre related features and genre information are crucial for translators and readers of translation because every single genre raises specific and strong expectations. Thus, when translators or readers can not realize these genre-related expectations, they cannot translate or comprehend adequately.

Although some of the scholars in the field of translation see a weaker role for genre in texts comprehension and understanding source text for translation, in some famous theories of translation, such as relevance theory of translation and cognition-based models of translation, the role of genre is emphasized more substantially. In addition, familiarity with post-pragmatic features of discourse such as rhetorical conventions, at least, helps translators to adopt a more adequate strategy in translation which satisfies relevance expectations of the source text to a greater extent (Unger, 2001, p.36).

Besides, Backtin (1986) stated that for learning a language it is not enough to master linguistic competence and lexical and grammatical resources, but the way ideas are organized through these resources to realize a specific idea is of

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equal importance. More specifically, according to Safaei-Qalati (2007), Bakhtin believes that what makes genre and organizes a text is the inter-textual 'voices' echoed in it and therefore, being aware of a particular genre is the effect of being familiar with these limitless echoed voices and inter-textual relations.

Later, Swales (1990) coined the term *genre* to name this interrelatedness of linguistic competence and organization of ideas, the rhetorical frameworks that sustain the multiple forms of specialized disciplinary practices. Considering this importance, a new line of research came on the scene to find a solution to problems associated with rhetorical patterns of discourse which was called genre analysis aiming at raising students' awareness of how producers of professional genres resort to certain linguistic conventions, how they share both conceptual and contextual background knowledge with their readers that facilitates the encoding/decoding of information, and how writers project their social identities in the text either explicitly or implicitly (Pltridge, 2000; Swales, 2004).

This line of research has touched the world of language teaching especially in English for Specific Purpose (ESP) and English for Academic Purpose (EAP) courses, in the world of translation, however, finding application of genre analysis is relegated of a secondary position in most teaching and learning contexts. Flying in the face of such routines, many researchers have considered the role and importance of genre in teaching translation for a variety of reasons (Bell, 1991; Duff, 1989; Hatim & Mason, 1997). One reason is that translation is a task in which language learners are required to establish a connection between their first and their second languages which, in turn, involves establishing contrasts and similarities between the two languages and their corresponding lexico-grammatical patterns. Further, translation is a real-

life task and necessity of many professional settings in which a typology of real genres illustrates particular aspects of language usage.

Here, genre refers to abstract, socially recognized ways of using language. It is based on the idea that members of a community usually have little difficulty in recognizing similarities in the texts they use frequently and are able to draw on their repeated experiences with such texts to read, understand and write relatively easy. From language teaching perspective, it is useful to think of a genre as consisting of a series of moves and steps that realize a certain communicative purpose (Swales, 1981, 1990). A move can be thought of as part of a text, written or spoken, which achieves a particular purpose within the text. The move contributes in some way to fulfilling the overall purpose of the genre. However, in systemic functional linguistics the term *genre* refers to language use as a staged, purposeful activity that integrates Field, Tenor and Mode choices in a predictable way and in doing so, it performs certain social goals (Halliday & Martin, 1993).

Therefore, the report, as discussed here, is a genre that enables speaker/writers to organize facts and information about things or events. Taking the aforesaid issues into account and considering the inevitable importance of genre knowledge in translation, the current research is an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Are Iranian students of news translation familiar with rhetorical conventions of their own genre?
2. Does raising awareness on genre of news affect performance of these students in translation tasks?

To answer these questions, a mixed method design is employed by researchers.

2. Literature Review

The history of genre pedagogy, as it was also touched above, has its roots in the mismatch and the inequality between students learning and performance, with respect to their participation in the language learning activities of their educational setting, including both classroom learning and individual learning, and their performance in the professional setting for which they have learned language (Rose and Martin, 2012). That is why Hyland (2007) argued that concentrating on subject-specific genres is a critical practice which integrates language learning with curriculum content in terms of developing academic language and it prepares language learners to perform well in their professional settings.

A professional setting which has gained interest in the country in recent years is media genre and translation of media discourse (Khodabande, 2007). For the same reason many faculties and educational settings are established to meet the developing needs of media writers and translators. Due to the fact that any inaccurate translation might have disastrous consequences, a critical question which instructors and students of these educational settings are faced with is how the quality and accuracy of translation of media texts are assessed. Considering the fact that in these faculties and educational settings translation is taught for a specific purpose, the current research is an attempt to investigate the effect of familiarity with media genre on quality of translation for academic purpose in the faculty of media studies in Iran. To this aim, in this section a brief review of old and current approaches in translation quality assessment along with a brief description of some empirical studies are presented.

The earliest approaches to assessing the quality of translation were mostly dealing with quality in a theoretical sense. Many of the established theoretical models, such as Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence (1964) were based on a

dichotomy or continuum between adherence to the original linguistic code and more free translations. Accordingly, Newmark (1982) also used the terms semantic and communicative translation to refer to a similar dichotomy. Coming up with a different perspective, Venuti (1995, p.53) suggested a dichotomy of the two terms foreignization and domestication, to investigate unequal power relations that influence the way translations are realized. Later, Bastin (1998) adopted a more pragmatic approach and argued in favor of adaptation rather than translation. In 2004, however, Hatim and Munday presented *Skopos theory* based on which purpose of translation was the critical factor by which the quality of translation is assessed. In spite of these shifts and innovation, none of these theories of translation included genre analysis in their models.

In an attempt to arrive at a more profound analysis of translated texts, Hickey (1998) and Baker (1992) employed theoretical linguistics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis to inform models of translation and description of translation quality; the result is obtaining more practical models of assessing translation quality such as Baker's taxonomy. Similarly, House (1981, 1997, 1998, 2001) incorporated issues of genre and more invisible rhetorical conventions of the texts which fulfill different communicative purposes and functions in his description of covert translation. The results of her findings have been put together into a translation quality assessment model.

Dabaghian and Solimany (2013) applied Baker's (1992) taxonomy to a task of translation of literary texts. This study aimed at evaluating the Persian translation of an English literary text, namely, *Animal Farm*, written by George Orwell and translated by Ali Akbar Akhondi. After a brief discussion on literary translation and its relevant issues, they evaluated the Persian

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translation of *George Orwell's Animal farm* on the basis of Baker's taxonomy of translation in which five levels of equivalence were recognized including word level, above the word level, the grammatical level, the textual level and the pragmatic level. Finally, a conclusion was drawn based on the assessment of the Persian translation of *Animal Farm* and frequencies and percentages were reported in terms of those five levels of equivalence.

Hafizi (2011) has also conducted a translation quality assessment research on two English translations of Sadeh Hedayat's "The Blind Owl" by Bashiri and Costello based on Julian House's (2001) model. In their study, five raters evaluated these translations based on House's model and their own experiences as translators. The results of their assessments showed that Bashiri's work was valuable, but Costello's translation was more appropriate because it keeps the track of the original work quite faithfully.

2.1. Theoretical Background of the Current Study

The current research has adopted Baker's (1992) taxonomy and House's (1997) model for translation analysis. How these models are adopted for evaluating the rhetoric of translation is accounted for in the following section:

Deveny (2013) argued that the primary aim of translation is to ensure effective communication between the parties involved and this transfer of information is successful when it is performed with appropriate linguistic, lexical, and stylistic tools without causing essential distortion to information content. Also, Enos (2001) stated that to achieve communication goals, rhetoric and translation take into account the same factors including extra-textual factors such as author/reader, intention, medium, time, place and intra-

textual factors such as subject, content, register, genre, style, multimodality, and etc.

In line with the same viewpoint, Herrick (2005) argued that characteristics of any rhetorical discourse must be approached by translators because they have to try to fulfill the requirements of their rhetorical situation to ensure the success of their translation. The adopted models for translation analysis of the present research embrace genre and rhetorical features of translated tasks, as well as other linguistic features of texts, as depicted in the following section.

2.1.1 House's Model

House developed her model of translation assessment in 1977 and revised it in 1997. She also feathered the nests of her model in her later writings (1998, 2001). The schematic representation of her model is as follows:

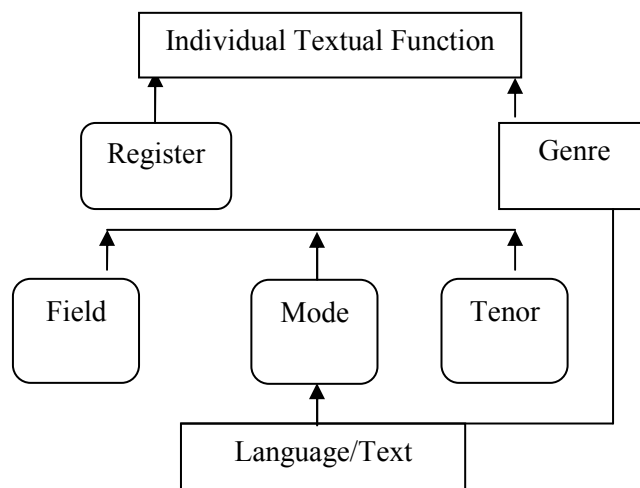


Figure 1. House's Model of Translation Assessment

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According to this model, field refers to the nature of the social action that is taking place: field of activity, topic, content or subject matter while tenor refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, the addresser and the addressees, and the relationship between them (participant relationship including author's provenance and stance, social role relationship and social attitude). Also, mode refers to both the channel and the degree to which potential or real participation is allowed for between the interlocutors. And more importantly, House (1997) defines genre as a socially established category characterized in terms of occurrence of use, source and a communicative purpose or any combination of these. House uses the notions 'ideational function' (using language to describe things in the external world and to present and evaluate arguments and explanations) and 'interpersonal function' (using the language as an expression of a speaker's attitudes and his influence on the attitudes and behavior of the hearer). In the current study we attempt to find whether these ideational functions and rhetorical functions are transferred in translation or not.

2.1.2. Baker's Taxonomy

Baker (1992) has presented a taxonomy for assessing the quality of translation in which four levels of equivalence in translation are defined: a) Equivalence that can appear at word level and above word level, when translating from one language into another. She acknowledges that, in a bottom-up approach to translation, equivalence at word level is the first element to be taken into consideration by the translator, b) grammatical equivalence, when referring to the diversity of grammatical categories across languages. She notes that grammatical rules may vary across languages and this may pose some problems in terms of finding a direct correspondence in the target language, c) textual

equivalence, when referring to the equivalence between a source language discourse and a target language discourse in terms of information and cohesion. Texture is a very important feature in translation since it provides useful guidelines for the comprehension and analysis of the source text which can help the translator in his or her attempt to produce a cohesive and coherent text for the audience of target context and d) pragmatic equivalence, when referring to implicatures and strategies of avoidance during the translation process. Implicature is not about what is explicitly said but what is implied. Therefore, the translator needs to work out implied meanings in translation in order to get the source text message across. In the current research, mismatch at the word level was investigated through addition, omission and employment of lexical items with equal or unequal semantic value. Also, above world level, any mismatch in collocational meaning of groups of words was investigated. At grammatical level, however, mismatches in word order and other grammatical problems were considered. Besides, at textual level mismatches in cohesive devices including references, substitutions and ellipsis were investigated and finally, at pragmatic level mismatch in issues of coherence and the way speech act forces were conveyed was investigated by the researches.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

In this research, the participants were selected from Iranian senior students studying news translation in the Faculty of Media Studies in Tehran. This faculty is affiliated to Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA). Therefore, fourteen students were selected through a convenient sampling process.

3.2. Instrument

In this study, the researchers adopted two main instruments from the literature to assess the quality of translations done by the participant. The first instrument was Baker's (1992) taxonomy of translation assessment which presents a detailed list of conditions upon which the concept of equivalence can be defined in translations. This taxonomy explores the notion of equivalence at five different levels (word level, above word level, grammatical level, textual level and pragmatic level). Considering the fact that our study is a mixed design one, where both qualitative and quantitative aspects of translations are considered, this taxonomy was adopted from the literature to obtain quantitative scores from the performance of participants in translation tasks. However, the second instrument, House's (1997) translation quality assessment model was adopted for the qualitative assessment of the translations. In addition, two parallel texts of news reports were selected from different issues of New York Times and used as testing instruments in pre-test and post-test.

3.3. Procedure

Since the current study enjoyed a mixed method design, in different rounds of the study the researchers obtained both quantitative and qualitative data. In order to collect qualitative data, participants were given one translation task to all fourteen students, involving a news report selected from New York Times in the pretest. Applying Baker's (1992) taxonomy, the translations of these students were rated by a panel of experts and quantitative scores along with frequency and type of mistakes were reported. At the same time, these translations were assessed on the basis of House's (1997) model and qualitative data were reported. The model sees the written discourse as a whole

phenomenon and operates at different levels of analysis. As it is shown in Figure 1, at the level of register, the model encompasses three dimensions of field, mode and tenor and at the level of genre it involves diagnosing different moves and steps which realize a certain communicative purpose or function. Based on this model, field, mode and tenor of the source texts were identified and then moves and steps realizing the discourse's genre were identified. Then the same procedure was used for target text and any mismatches between the results were reported in following tables.

Then, the participants received six hours of intervention aiming at raising awareness on genre of news reports. To this aim, linguistic issues related to rhetorical patterns which realize different communicative functions in media were taught and some samples of news reports in source language were selected from different online newspapers and analyzed in the class. Some approaches to genre analysis including that of Swales (1991) were touched during the intervention. After a one-week interval, students were given a parallel translation task selected from the same newspaper with a similar difficulty and readability score. In other words, to ensure similarity, we selected a text in the same field, mode and tenor with almost equal readability score. Applying both of the adopted instruments, quantitative and qualitative data were gathered on the post-test. Quantitative data obtained from the pre-test and post-test were entered into SPSS, version 21, to investigate the effect of genre awareness on translation quality. Also, the qualitative data were reported descriptively to contrastively compare the results before and after the treatment. In sum, the result of applying both House's model and Baker's taxonomy were mismatches and errors including lexical, syntactic, textual and rhetorical ones. Calculations and descriptions of mismatches are provided in

respected tables. Also, description of any mismatch in rhetorical patterns is given in related tables.

4. Results and Discussion

The first question of the research investigated whether Iranian students of news translation are familiar with rhetorical conventions of their own genre. In order to answer this question, as it is also mentioned above, Baker's (1992) taxonomy and House's (1997) models were employed to obtain qualitative and quantitative data before receiving an explicit instruction or awareness rising discussions on genre knowledge. The results obtained are presented in following tables.

Table 1. *Quantitative Results Obtained from Applying Baker's (1992) taxonomy (before intervention)*

Mistakes	Word level	Beyond word level	Grammatical	Textual	Pragmatic
Frequency	38	29	26	18	19
Percentage	29	22	20	14	15

Also, the following scores were obtained in pre intervention session. Translation tasks were rated by help and supervision of a professor in Faculty of Media Studies, the place from which participants were selected.

Table 2. *Students' Scores in the Translation Task before Intervention (out of 20)*

Students	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14
Scores	14	16	15	13	15	15	16	18	13	15	14	16	18	16

In addition, the researchers employed the House's (1997) model for qualitative assessment of participants' performance on the same translation task before the intervention. The following results were obtained.

Table 3. Qualitative Results Obtained from Applying House's (1997) Model (before intervention)

Field		Tenor		Mode		Genre	
Source	Target	Source	Target	Source	Target	Source	Target
Political News Report	Political News Report	+ Symmetrical social role + Editorial comment + Editorial comment + Symmetrical social role Writer-reader	- Editorial comment - Editorial Comment + Symmetrical social role Writer-reader	Complex written discourse	Written discourse Simple	+ Analysis (-Discussion) + Directive + Main topic + Title	-Analysis (+ Discussion) + Directive + Main topic + Title

As it can be seen in the tables 1, 2 and 3, there were some quantitative and qualitative mismatches between source text and target text translated by participants before the intervention. In the case of genre, for instance, source discourse involves the rhetorical moves of *Title* (the move which establishes a theme around which topic is centered), *Main Topic* (the central topic or issue discussed in the news reports), *Main Thesis* (one that summarizes the position of the newspaper on the main topic and realizes the function of the discourse), *Analysis* and *Directive* (restatement of the main thesis, or a summary of the elaboration on the main topic in the form of prediction or recommendation) while in the target translation the fundamental move of *Main Thesis* which carries the communicative purpose of the discourse is absent. Such a mismatch might bring about a different comprehension of the discourse. Yet, the second question of the research investigated whether raising awareness on genre of news affect performance of participants in translation tasks?

To this aim, the intervention was conducted and the following results were obtained in the post-intervention condition.

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Table 4. Quantitative Results obtained from Applying Baker's (1992) Taxonomy (After intervention)

Mistakes	Word level	Beyond word level	Grammatical	Textual	Pragmatic
Frequency	27	19	22	8	10
Percentage	31	22	26	9	12

As it can be seen in the table above (Table 4), the percent of textual and pragmatic mistakes which are related to rhetorical patterns of the texts are decreased. Further analysis has showed that this decrease is significant (Table 6). The textual mistakes before intervention comprised fourteen percent and pragmatic ones fifteen percent of the whole mistakes, these figures, however, are decreased to nine percent and twelve percent respectively. Seemingly, we can roughly claim that the intervention has assisted the participants in all areas of Baker's (1992) taxonomy, more apparently in cases of textual and pragmatic mistakes. As illustrated in Table 5, the participants' scores have improved in the post-intervention condition.

Table 5. Students' Scores in Translation Task after Intervention (out of 20)

Students	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14
Scores	16	17	14	16	17	15	15	17	16	18	17	17	18	19

In order to compare the means of the participants' performances in Pre-test and Post-test conditions, the relevant data (Tables 3 and 5) were entered into SPSS (version 21) to see if the change has been significant. The following results were obtained.

Table 6. Paired-sample *t*-test

	Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	S.D	SED	Lower	Upper			
Pair1	-1.154	1.625	.451	-2.136	-.172	-2.560	12	.025

In sum, a paired *t*-test was run to compare the means of students' scores in the pre-test and post-test conditions. As it is illustrated in Table 6, there has been a significant difference between the scores obtained from the pre-test and post-test; $t(12) = -2.560$, $p = 0.025$ (P. Value $< .05$). These results suggest that raising awareness on genre knowledge does have an effect on the development of students' accuracy in translation. For further investigation, the House's model was also applied to the post-test translations of the participants. The results of the analysis showed that raising awareness on genre knowledge has influenced the way students organize ideas in their translations. The results are shown in the following table.

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Table 7. Qualitative Results Obtained from Applying House's (1997) Model (After intervention)

Field		Tenor		Mode		Genre	
Source	Target	Source	Target	Source	Target	Source	Target
Political News Report	Political News Report	Writer-reader + Editorial comment + Symmetrical social role	Writer-reader - Editorial comment + Symmetrical social role	Complex written discourse	Simple Written discourse	+ Title + Main topic + Main thesis + Analysis (-Discussion) + Directive	+ Title + Main topic + Main Thesis - Analysis (+ Discussion) + Directive

As it can be seen in Table 7, in case of *Tenor*, participants still failed to distinguish the editorial comments of the native English writers as a particular rhetorical move that realizes a specific purpose and therefore, they translated it as a part of the soft news given to them for translation. The same is true about the 'mode' section; in spite of raising awareness on genre knowledge, the participants still failed to recognize the complex relationship involved between the writer and the reader in the organization of the text. According to Jabbari and Farokhipour (2014) this is due to the fact that Iranian translators dominantly think of the informative functions of the news reports; i.e. they are more concerned with writing to give information and nothing else, while most of the current news writers employ argumentative functions of news writing to indirectly put forward particular social or political stances, their institutional practice, and their foreign policy, for instance.

In the genre section, however, it seems that the intervention has positively influenced the participants as they have been able to single out the ‘main thesis’ which is a critical move in genre structure of the news reports. According to Pak (1998), using this move, the writers realize the argumentative function of news reports and failing to address such a move in translation damages the communicative purpose of the news reports and casts doubts on the accuracy of the translation. Yet, the participants could not identify the analysis move of the source texts and failed to translate it.

According to House (1981) the category of genre is beneficial for analysis and evaluation process because it characterizes deeper textual structures, patterns and conceptualization while register level features such as field, tenor, and mode are only useful for accessing the relationship between text and context’s individual features on the linguistic surface.

Similarly, Devitt (2004) believes that genre awareness, which is a meta-cognitive understanding of a genre, helps language learners to make a connection between the type of writing assigned and the writing genre with which they are faced. Accordingly, genre awareness is a threshold concept, meaning it helps the way through which students understand a discipline and leave their customary ways of seeing things behind (Meyer, et al. 2010). The findings of the present research showed that Iranian news translators, failed to cross this threshold, have customarily seen themselves closely akin to classic methods of news development such as inverted pyramid method, a phenomenon which brings about partial understanding and liminality in translation. According to Perkins (2006), liminality is a suspended state of partial understanding that gives rise to lack of authenticity and sense of loss in translated text. Devitt (2004) states that genre awareness tackles almost all of these problems but at the same time emphasizes that genre awareness is not

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only learning how to write in a special genre but also involves gaining insight into how a given genre fulfills a rhetorical purpose and how various components of a texts (the writer, the reader and the text itself) is informed by a purpose. Findings of this research are in line with these theoretical underpinnings. Although according to Bakers' taxonomy some formal features of news reports were violated in Persian translations, they do not affect the message conveyed to a great extent, However, according to House's model applied to the translations, lack of genre awareness brings about "troublesomeness" into the translations, a factors that impairs quality of translation. Beside, research findings showed that Iranian news translators failed to recognize the argumentative function of target texts and translated it into an informative function. This is where Miller (1984) and Russell (1995) believe that genre is not comprehended, function is not conveyed and translation quality is dramatically impaired.

Furthermore, findings of this research are in line with functional and communication theories of translation that came on the scene since 1970s. According to skopos theorists, translation is shaped by its proposed function in the target culture (Wittman, 2013), meaning that translation is required to conform to the context in which the target reader is situated. However, in order for this to happen, Vermeer (2000) believe that texts have different functions and typologies including informative, expressive and operative and considering these typologies and communicative functions, facilitates translator's choice of relevant text conventions. Heedless to these key elements of texts before the instruction, participants of the present study failed to select the appropriate rhetorical conventions in the directions of their translation from source to target and mistranslated the function therefore.

In sum, blurred boundary between information structures and genre of specific discourses has made translation a formidable task. Therefore, raising awareness on genre is an inspiring and illuminative effort in favor of translation quality.

5. Conclusion

The current research was an attempt to find answer to following questions:

1. Are Iranian students of news translation familiar with rhetorical conventions of their own genre?
2. Does raising awareness on genre of news affect performance of these students in translation tasks?

In order to answer these questions two theoretical frameworks were adopted and applied to translation tasks of the participants of the study. The results of the analyses showed that raising awareness on genre features of discourse help news translator to ameliorate quality of their translation not only in genre related features but also in other aspects of text that was related to diagnosis of rhetoric conventions of the text. In other words, understanding and recognizing genre features of discourse helped news translator to increase their quality of translation from word level, to grammatical and pragmatic level and covert aspects of discourse such rhetorical conventions. In spite of that, the intervention could not help participants to single-out some moves and steps of news report genre because they tended to think within the limits of some conventional practices of news writing methods such as inverted pyramid. These findings have practical implications for translation students and teachers who are involved in learning teaching translation for specific purpose, above all for new translation as an academic curriculum.

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