

## THE ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER, THE THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE OF TRANSLATORS AND THEIR PRACTICAL TRANSLATION SKILLS

**Leila LotfiKashmar**

*Department of English, Quchan Branch , Islamic Azad University(IAU), Quchan, Khorasan  
Razavi, Iran*

*Email: leila.lotfi1@yahoo.com*

**Dr. Seyed Mohammad Hosseini-Maasoum**

*Department of Linguistic & Foreign Languages, Payame Noor University, Iran*

*Email: hosseinimasum@yahoo.com*

**Dr. Mohammad Reza Hashemi**

*Department of English, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran*

*hashemi@um.ac.ir*

### ABSTRACT

The present study, attempted to examine the relationship between gender and theoretical knowledge of translation and practical skills on translation in Iranian translators. For this purpose, 35 Master of Art students both males and females studying English translation were selected from Mashhad Ferdowsi University in Iran. In order to collect data two tests were applied: one made up of questions selected from the Ph.D and M.A entrance exams together with a test of actual translation from Persian to English and the reverse. Data analysis and statistical calculations through T-TEST, one way ANOVA and Pearson Correlation revealed that Gender was an important factor on theoretical scores, while it was not an important factor on practicaltranslation (English to Persian and Persian to English translation).

**KEYWORDS:** Translation, theory, theoretical knowledge, translation Studies, gender

### INTRODUCTION

Science and technology are developing rapidly and cultural, economic and political growths make some difficulties for human adjustment on information. The language barriers and assimilation of terms in different languages are some of these difficulties we can mention to. Overcoming these barriers is vital and translation can play this role. Entering globalization in modern world we can say that translation is a fundamental issue. In the process of exchange and cross communication translators are central. As Levy (1963) said translation studies have emerged as a new international and academic field. In the fifties and the seventies centuries translation studies shaped the basic part of applied and general linguistics which were seen as the only source of translation studies. Holmes (1988) was the first to offer a framework for this

regulation. He divided translation into two principle area: translation theory and applied translation studies dealing with activities such as the training of translators and the condition of translation aids for translators as well as translation policy. The need for systematic study of translation comes directly from the problems happening during the actual translation process and it is essential for those working in the field to bring their practical experience to theoretical discussion.

Many scholars attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Today, the dominating view is that theory and practice should be integrated (Leinhardt et al,1995). According to Hill (2002) several models of professional education on the continuing cycle of interaction between theory, practice and reflection as the way to create changes in students' thoughts and practices. Another effective new model of professional education is the 'realistic approach' that directs the theory towards the largest challenges of practice (Korthagen & Kessel, 1999; Korthagen, 2001). The increasing awareness of the new approaches in translation education has made us interested in the notion of relationship between theory and practice in translation. The study of translation and the training of professional translators is an important aim of scholars. The need to the process of teaching and learning is obviously felt in translator and interpreter training programs around the world.

This study will investigate on one hand, how academic theories and beliefs are reflected in the work place and in a translated texts, on the other hand, it investigates the effect of gender on translation of English to Persian and Persian to English. This study will help the students of translation to get familiar with the possible challenges like including theory into practice and the effect of theoretical knowledge on translation. The study is useful for the students majoring in English translation and those who are interested in translation studies. This study tries to help translators and students of translation to include theory and practice in their translations and show some ways to fill the gap between theory and practice. It also aims at outlining new, realistic ways for the courses of translation at Universities and exploring the current relevance of the theory to the practice of translation,

### ***Statement of the problems***

Problems encountered during the actual translation process show the necessity of systematic study of translation. It is essential for those working in the field to bring their practical experience to theoretical discussion. Separation of theory from practice is a problem for translation. Baker (1992, p.248) mentioned that as a discipline, translation studies has reached a stage in its development where it was both ready for and needed the techniques and methodology of corpus linguistics in order to make a major jump from prescriptive statements, from methodologies to theorizing , and from individual and fragmented pieces of research to powerful generalizations. In that case the distinction between the theoretical and applied branches of the discipline will be apparent and believable.

The realization that translations are never produced in a vacuum, regardless of time and culture, and the desire to explain the time and culture bound criteria which are at play, result in a shift

away from a normative and prescriptive methodology towards a descriptive methodology for a study of the subject (Hermans, 1985).

The situation for the realization of equivalence differs from one language culture to another. A valid strategy for translation in the past is not acceptable. Varieties of linguistics continue to govern the field in the 1990s. Students spend hours taking course but when they confront with direct situations, they are unable to use their learning in practice. “There is no balanced curriculum for translation theory and practice to provide a solid grounding in a professional setting. If a particular kind of source text couldn’t be interpreted accurately by a translator, the target text does not achieve its particular function. The gap between theory and practice is the main problem. There is no acceptable curriculum program to bridge this gap. There are big gaps between the needs of translation training and the points offered by theory. From one aspect, students are disappointed at being troubled with theoretical reflections (translation theory and general linguistics) which they feel have nothing to do with the activity of translating, and from another aspect, scholars talk irreverently of translators who are unwilling to investigate the theoretical basis of their work, therefore reducing it to a simple practical skill” (Snell-Hornby, 2006).

Toury (1995, p. 69) claims that achievements of actual studies can themselves supply us with clues as to necessary and possible methodological improvements’ and that if we hold up research until the most systematic methods have been found, we might never get any research done, the basic methodological problem is still unresolved. In general, translating needs to unite theory and practice in order to be successful.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Translation is a complex activity which requires both great patience and impeccable mastery. It can be a process or a kind of product. These two aspects of translation are interdependent and interrelated. Invisibility” is the term Venuti (1995, p.1) used to describe the translation and translator’s situation. According to him a translated text, whether prose or poetry, fiction or nonfiction, is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic specialty makes it seem obvious giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer’s personality or intention or the essential meaning of the text (Venuti 1995, p. 1). According to Venuti (1998, p. 135) translation is powerful and it can represent foreign cultures. The selection of foreign texts and development of translation strategies can make domestic traditions for foreign literatures, therefore show access, exclusions and peripheries that deviate current in the foreign language.

The first efforts at theory can be traced back over 2000 years to Cicero and Horace. To the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this discussion continued when more systematic analyses were undertaken by western European theoreticians. These systematic analyses, which raised translation studies from its role of being a language learning activity, centered on theories of translation in new linguistic, literally, cultural and philosophical contexts (Munday 2001, p.162).

In the 1970s, changes took place that translation theory and translation science transformed into “Translation Studies”. This term was coined by Holmes in 1972, the use of a label that had proved productive in the field of humanities (Holmes, 1988, p.70). Some scholars, (Hermans, 1999, preface), for the first time looked at translation in a descriptive term, so translated texts were noticed as texts in their own right (Even-Zohar 1978).

According to Benjamin (2008) there are many reasons to say that developing the pragmatic aspects of a linguistic theory of translation is important. First, pragmatic had been ignored by the linguistics who tried to create a general theory in the 1950s and the 1960s. Second,

A pragmatic theory can be used more than any other theories like semantic, syntactic or phonetic, because they are considered as a micro-linguistic theory and a micro-linguistic theory of translation is impossible, while micro-linguistic practice is best left to itself or to translator trainers and teachers. A pragmatic theory of translation must be illustrated, and illustration involves the micro-linguistic aspect. The terms of theory and practice are used frequently by scholars and translators. Some translation scholars maintain that they are working together while in the sight of some others there is a difference between theory and practice. Many studies suggest that there is a gap between what is taught by university and the action of translation. An interesting discussion of the theory and practice is given by de Beaugrande (2000, p.27). He declares that the relation between theory and practice should be dialectical by the nature, where the two sides interact and guide each other as they co-evolve in strategic contact. Several models of professional education focus on the continuing cycle of interaction between theory, practice and reflection as the way to create changes in students’ attitudes and practices (Hill, 2000, p. 54). According to Vreugdenhil (2000) the theory-practice problem is a ‘theory-student’ ‘teacher-practice’ problem. To deal with it he developed a schedule, including three components:

- The objective theories or, more in general, the information available;
- The subjective theories of student teachers;
- The everyday practice as experienced in schools. According to his assumption, two inter-linked process of adaptation between the three components will bridge the gap between theory and practice. The first process consists of student teachers restructuring the theories that are instructed to them. Consequently, student teachers have to formulate for themselves meaningful knowledge they can apply in the classroom. They have to be trained to act in the class in accordance with their renewed knowledge. They can develop their subjective theories about teaching. The second process is matching their subjective theories to the particular situation. After investigating they can formulate a set of rules to act adequately. To bridge the gap between theory and practice we have to take into account what is already in the mind of the student teachers about the teaching (Vreugdenhil, 2000, p. 3).

Kiraly (2000), points out there is sufficient room for the more consistent accomplishment of social practical approaches in translator training, with large parts of the program still conquered by teacher-centered methods. He calls for a ‘much-needed’ shift in translator education (2000, p.27). According to him the goal of translator education must be to help students develop their own self-concept and to help ‘in the mutual production of individually adapted tools that will

allow every student to role within the language negotiation community leading graduation' (Kirlay, 2003, p.49).

Kirlay believes that learning should take place as a mutual social procedure in all translation relations, not just in special work assignments. In that environment, the trainer's role is like a facilitator and should support students to find solutions. In translation teaching focus has been on the translation theory and translation practice. It means that Students became familiar with theories and then operated within a special theoretical approach for example functionalist approach. Translators produced a target text according to the source text and the culture and tradition in a country. Kiraly (2000) distinguishes between translation competence and translator competence. According to him translation competence signify all the specific skills need to produce a right target text, while translator competence means 'knowing how to work within the various overlapping communities of translators and subject matter expert for completing work mutually, to proper knowledge, norms and conventions; and to affect to the growing conversation that represents those communities' (Kiryaly, 2000, p.13).

In Hong Kong and Taiwan, especially in Hong Kong, the teaching of translation as a university major began at an earlier time. The first translation program in Hong Kong started in Chinese university of Hong Kong (CUHK) in 1972. Li Defeng in Hong Long carried out interesting and critical examination of the curriculum design and teaching methodology of specialized translation courses (including courses on commercial translation, government document translation, science and technology translation, mass media translation, and legal translation). He made valuable suggestion on how to improve the course content and teaching methodologies along with educational curricular theories and thoughts on translation teaching (Li Defeng, 2000;2002;2003;2005). According to Sylvia Bernardini (2004, p.19-22), people do not fully understand the important distinction between translator training and translator education. A vast expansion in specialized translating and interpreting programs has soared at both undergraduate and graduate level. These programs, which attract thousands of students, are mainly oriented towards training future professional commercial translators and interpreters in UK.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are posed for the purpose of this study:

1. Is there any relationship between gender and theoretical knowledge?
2. Is there any relationship between gender and practical skill on translation?

## METHODOLOGY

### *Participants*

Participants selected for this study were chosen from M.A students of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad. A total of 35 students including: 7 males and 28 females. The students who participated in this study were enrolled in the third semester so they had already passed two courses on translation. All the participants were Iranian and factors such as age and sex were assumed to be randomly distributed. Both males and females were given the same questions.

Nearly 30 minutes was given for theoretical test. The questioner at the end included some questions showed participant's interest in translation, their experience on translating and the years they have been translating. Participants were in different ages from 23 to 40.

### ***Instruments***

The results of this study have been drawn from two tests, theoretical and practical. The theoretical test, a collocation composed of 30 multiple-choice items adopted from M.A and PhD entrance exam, held in the years 2011, 2012, public and Azad University course in Iran. This test was chosen from M.A and PhD entrance exams, because they are made by the most qualified test makers and scholars of the country and altogether the test could be considered as valid. Selected questions were those only concerning translation theories and not linguistic or general proficiency. Students answered 30 questions related to theories of translation. The time given was 30 minutes for 30 questions. With this sample test just their knowledge on translation theories was examined.

A variety of texts on the scope of human science were selected to check the participants' translation proficiency. Selected texts were about 40 lines including two parts, English to Persian and Persian to English translation. This practical exam was their term paper, so they answered carefully. Some parts of these texts were unseen and some others were seen because their proficiency on vocabulary was not important for this test and just the students' proficiency in practical translation was the main point. They were free to use dictionary. Translation test was administered to all subjects at the end of the term. Their practical exam was written and scored by their professor considering the meaning and grammatical rules and instructions.

### ***Procedure***

In this study the performance of students in university course on theoretical and practical aspects was compared to assess the correlation between their theoretical knowledge and their practical skill in gender groups. Prior to the practical experiment on translation, the subjects were given a theoretical test as it was mentioned, a multiple choice test with 30 questions related to translation theories to evaluate students proficiency on theories, then at translation second stage at the end of the term they passed a practical exam to compare their dexterity on practice and theory.

A Practical test including Persian to English and English to Persian was employed to check their proficiency on both kind of translation. It consisted of 40 lines of a human science text to check just their ability on techniques of translation, not their vocabulary. The practical test was assigned by their professor considering grammatical points and meaning. Before the treatment of the participants (students), their professor and the researcher held a meeting and the researcher gave an overview of whatever needed to be done in the study helping them understand its core principle. The data were collected through these two tests. The purpose of this study was to help translators and students in translating field, using theory and practice at the same time specially theories which are more practical and functional. Munday (2001, p. 79) mentions that Skopos theory focuses on the purpose of the translation which establish the translation methods and strategies that are to be employed to produce a functionally adequate result. Therefore, in this theory we should know why a source text should be translated and why the function of the target text will be important for the translators. Munday writes that an important advantage of skopos

theory is that it makes possible for a translator to translate the same text in different ways according to the purpose of the target text (ibid, p. 80). Functional approaches in translation studies can help translators to view the text as a kind of communicative unit and awareness of functional theories of translation make better the quality of students' translation.

## RESULTS

To verify the scores of theoretical test and practical translation from English to Persian, a one-way ANOVA test was calculated.

Table 1: distribution of frequency and percentage of the sample scores according to translation from English to Persian and Persian to English

Translation scores	Eng. to Per.	Per. to Eng
0 - 24.9	5(14.3%)*	5(14.3%)
25 - 49.9	9(25.7%)	10(28.6%)
50 - 74.9	13(37.1%)	12(34.3%)
75 - 100	8(22.9%)	8(22.9%)
Total	35(100%)	35(100%)

\*Number(percent)

The score is expressed in percentage to make all scores comparable. So the raw score is not important, only the percentage.

Table 2: English to Persian. \* Persian to English. Cross tabulation

			Per. to Eng.				Total
			0 - 24.9	25 - 49.9	50 - 74.9	75 - 100	
Eng. to Per.	0 - 24.9	Count	2	2	1	0	5
		Percent	5.7%	5.7%	2.9%	0%	14.3%
	25 - 49.9	Count	3	3	1	2	9
		Percent	8.6%	8.6%	2.9%	5.7%	25.7%
	50 - 74.9	Count	0	2	6	5	13
		Percent	0%	5.7%	17.1%	14.3%	37.1%
	75 - 100	Count	0	3	4	1	8
		Percent	0%	8.6%	11.4%	2.9%	22.9%
Total		Count	5	10	12	8	35
		Percent	14.3%	28.6%	34.3%	22.9%	100%

### Kappa Coefficient agreement and statistical result

		Kappa coefficient	P-value
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.096	.343

Measure of agreement in Kappa in this study is (Kappa=0.096). In other words, the agreement between two variables is low so it is not significant (according to table 2).

Table 3: distribution of mean scores for theory in gender groups examined.

	Sex	Mean	SE
Theory	Female	18.60	1.29
	Male	25.70	3.70

Table 4: the result of statistical exam, comparing theoretical scores in two groups by T-Test

T-Test Result			
t	Df	P-value	Mean Difference
-2.251	33	.031	-7.10143

Mean difference in gender groups (Male and Female) is compared. It is obvious from the table that mean difference of theoretical scores in females is  $18.6 \pm 1.29$  and mean difference for male is  $25.7 \pm 3.7$ . Mean difference of theoretical scores in male and female is 7.101. According to the table there is a significant difference in theoretical scores between male and female, ( $p=0.031$ ).

#### **Mean score of translation in gender groups**

Mean score of translation (from Persian to English and English to Persian) in males and females is presented in above table.

Tables 5 and 6 show the scores in two groups are very similar. Mean score of practical translation in females is  $50.32 \pm 4.00$ , while this score in male is  $50.30 \pm 6.39$ .

Table 5: distribution of mean scores for practical translation in gender groups examined

	Sex	Mean	SE
Practical translation	female	<b>50.32</b>	<b>4.00</b>
	male	<b>50.30</b>	<b>6.39</b>



Table 6: the result of statistical exam, comparing Practical translation scores in two groups by T-Test

T-Test Result			
t	Df	P value	Mean Difference
.002	33	.999	.01571

The result of these score makes clear that there is no significant difference in two groups. (p=0.999).

### *Mean scores of English to Persian translation in gender groups*

As table 9 displays Mean scores of English to Persian translation in females are compared to the Mean scores of English to Persian in males.

Table 7: distribution of mean scores of English to Persian translation in gender groups examined

	Sex	Mean	SE
Eng. to Per.	Female	50.47	4.43
	Male	50.59	8.97

Table 8: the result of statistical exam, comparing English.to Persian scores in two groups by T-Test

T-Test Result			
t	Df	P-value	Mean Difference
-.012	33	.990	-.11929

There is no significant difference in both groups. Mean score in females is 50.47±4.43, while this score in male is 50.59±8.97. Statistical test shows no significant difference in these groups. (p=0.99) p value is greater than 0.05.

### *Mean scores of Persian to English*

Table 9: distribution of mean scores for Persian. to English translation in gender groups examined

	Sex	Mean	SE
Per. to Eng.	Female	50.16	4.77
	Male	50.01	6.78

Table 10: the result of statistical exam, comparing Persian to English scores in two groups by T-Test

T-Test Result			
t	Df	P-value	Mean Difference
.015	33	.988	.15071

In this table we can see that Mean scores of Persian to English translation in both gender groups are similar to their scores in translation of Persian to English, nearly 50. As it is shown in the table, comparison of translation scores in males and females, Mean scores of translation in females is equal to  $50.16 \pm 4.77$ , while this scores in males is equal to  $50.01 \pm 6.78$ . P-value of observed T-Testis ( $p=0.988$ ), greater than .015, as a result there is no significant differences between two mentioned groups' scores. According to the scores of practical translation (English to Persian and Persian to English) in both genders and T-Test was resulted that:  $H_0$  is accepted, because T observed is smaller than critical.

## DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between gender, theoretical knowledge of translators and their practical translation skills (English to Persian and Persian to English). Consequently, a group of M.A students majoring in translation were selected. The finding of this study shows that students' practical skill in translation was better than their theoretical knowledge. The result of students' scores in practical translation was compared to their scores in theoretical exam in two gender groups in order to investigate, whether gender had any significant effect on students' translation skill and their theoretical knowledge. This study shows that there was not any relationship between gender and translation capability, but there was a direct relationship between gender and theoretical knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

This study attempts to undertake an approach seeking to know the difference between the translators' theoretical knowledge and their practical skill in gender group, on translating field at the university level, undergraduate students. The finding of this study shows that students' practical skill in translation both male and female was better than their theoretical knowledge, but male's theoretical scores were better than females.

Based on the findings of the present study, we can conclude, that gender is an important factor on theoretical scores.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Like any other research, some unavoidable limitations, which may raise new questions for further researches in the same field in the future, will be imposed on this research. In addition to the small sample size and its short duration, some limitations are present in this study. Variables such as age and personal variables are not taken into account due to the limited number of the available participants. Another important restriction in this study can be related to the reliability of the theoretical test, due to lack of any other sources.

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