

## The Importance of Higher Education in the Success of the Translator: The Case of Iranian Educated and Uneducated Translators

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### Abstract

*The present study investigated the important role higher education plays in the success of the translator in his/her profession. To end this, the researcher prepared a translation test consisting of 12 short literary texts for data collection from both educated and uneducated translators who were equally divided into two groups. The 20 judges were invited to judge the level of communicative function of the translations made by both groups of translators on the basis of a five-point scale on a continuum from "Uncommunicative" to "Communicative" that was designed according to Nord's (2018) functionalist approach. As the results indicated, the educated translators produced the highest communicative translations that put into Nord's instrumental translation category. By contrast, the uneducated translators made the translations with the average level of communication that led their translation to be placed into documentary translation category. In conclusion, the educated translators, who held a master's degree in Translation Studies, were more successful in producing communicative translations because of their profound knowledge of translation theories and mastery over translation strategies. This gives the indication of the utmost importance of higher education in the achievement of the translators in their career.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

As cultural and language mediators, translators play a crucial role in acquainting the target readers with the foreign language and culture. Nida (1964) implies that the translator needs to know the target language (TL) and be familiar with the target culture (TC) as well when translating because translation takes place in the context of the relationship between two cultures, two worlds of thought and perception. In this relation, Newmark (1998) argues that the translator should decide according to the message and purpose of the translation and have in-depth knowledge about the source text (ST) and target text (TT) because of the engagement of the person universal, and culture with texts. Furthermore, having higher education in Translation Studies (TS) puts the translator at an advantage in achieving much success. This is because the translator becomes familiar with a wide range of translation methods/strategies and learns to have appropriate use of such strategies/methods.

Unfortunately, the number of uneducated translators in Iran is not few. In other words, anyone who has mastery of English language and holds a master/bachelor's degree, even if unrelated to TS considers himself as a translator and enters the profession(Mahdy, 2020,;

Taheri, 2021). This causes some graduates in TS to enter other professions, such as teaching English. None of them will gain any success in their work due to a lack of knowledge and skills of unrelated degree holders to TS about translation theories and profound knowledge about teaching methods that TS holders need to acquire. Furthermore, many translation teachers hold a doctoral degree in other English language disciplines, affecting the quality of graduates in TS. In approval, Glanz (2009, p. 19) states that a good teacher is one who can "plan better, apply a range of teaching strategies, understand students' learning needs, and better organize instruction" because of his/her specific knowledge, skills, dispositions, and experience.

From available translation methods/strategies, for instance, Nida's (1964) formal and dynamic equivalences, Newmark's (1981) semantic and communicative translations, House's (1997) overt and covert translations, and many others, to educated translators who enjoy considerable benefits of them, Nord (2018) devotes her functionalist approach to the analysis of the texts at, or above, sentence-level by proposing a more detailed model. Her model includes *documentary translation* and *instrumental translation* as two types of translation strategies. The former strategy bears a very close resemblance to Nida's formal equivalence, where the translator employs word-for-word and literal translation strategies. By contrast, the latter strategy is similar to Newmark's communicative translation, where the translator employs the appropriate strategies to fulfill the communicative purpose of the translation by establishing the highest level of communication with the target readers.

Using Nord's (2018) functionalist model, the present study investigated the importance of higher education in the translator's success by exploring the type of strategy each group of Iranian translators employed as the overall strategy for the given task. To fulfill the objective of the present study, the following questions were raised:

1. Which of Nord's (2018) translation strategies, documentary translation or instrumental translation, did each group of Iranian translators employ as an overall strategy for the given task?
2. Which group of Iranian translators, the educated or the uneducated translators, was more successful in fulfilling the given task?
3. Can higher education be considered as a significant advantage in the success of the translator?

The present study is significant because it deals with one of the main problems in the profession and addresses the existing gap in the research. It also acknowledges the importance of higher education by highlighting its role in the achievement of the translator in his/her career. Thus, the findings of the study should be beneficial to those who are interested in entering the profession and becoming a good translator and to those who do not take into account higher education as a professional qualification and also do not pay serious attention to its effect on the success of the translator. The findings could also be helpful to those responsible for organizing and certifying translators, such as Iranian Association of Certified Translators and Interpreters (IACTI) and General Office of Documents and Official Translators of the Judiciary (GODOTJ), and for recruiting of the translators, such as Iranian publishing companies and translation offices.

## **2. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1. Functional Approach to Translation**

Functionalists are those who worked on *Skopos theory* and developed their theories accordingly. They also gave their full attention to the concept of equivalence at text level rather than word or sentence level. *Skopos theory* was first proposed by Hans J. Vermeer to establish a new position of the ST in the TT and increase "the awareness of this, both among translators

and the general public" (as cited in Abdi & Satariyan, 2020, p. 17). Munday (2001) believes that the translator plays the main role "in the process of intercultural communication and production of the *translatum*" (p. 80). In *skopos* theory, as Vermeer emphasizes, the *skopos* rule is of the utmost importance and should be taken into careful consideration because a translational action is only determined by the *skopos*.

Reiss (2000) focuses on the concept of the text and proposes a systemic assessment translation model based on the text types and the communicative function each text type has. Her model includes a content-focused/informative text, a form-focused/expressive text, an appeal-focused/operative text, and an audio-medial text. She well-defined each text type as follows:

in a content-focused text, it is whether primary concern has been shown for accuracy of data; in a form-focused text, whether special attention beyond the general concern for accuracy of information has been paid so that rhetorical structures will achieve a comparable aesthetic effect; in an appeal-focused text, whether it achieves the purpose intended by the original. (p. 47)

Reiss (2000) points to the importance of prioritization that differs for different text types because it creates serious problems if not observed. For example, as she explains, the priority should be given to the accuracy of the information which needs to be considered in the translation of the content-focused texts or to the structure of the content, which is the prime priority in the translation of the content form-focused texts. In the same context, Snell-Hornby (1995) deals with the communicative purpose of text types by borrowing "the notion of *prototypes* for the categorizing of text types" (Munday, 2001, p. 75) that led to including a wide range of subjects in her categorization based on the text type. The aim of creating this category was to integrate different translation areas and "to bring the gap between the commercial and artistic translations" (p. 77). In what follows, a brief description of Nord's (2018) model, which analyzes texts in more detail, is provided.

## 2.2. Nord's Functionalist Model of Text Analysis

In her book *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, Nord (2018) provides a more detailed analysis of texts at or above sentence level. She begins with a description of the book, from title to chapters, and explains that the term *functionalist* appeared in the title means "focusing on the function or functions of texts and translations" (p. 1), and used by many scholars have had functionalist approach to translation. She claims that such scholars were inspired by Vermeer's (1989) *skopos theory* when developing their functionalist models. She further states that "translating is an activity" and refers to a theory of translation that can be firmly fixed in a theory relating to human action or activity.

Nord (2018) proposes two basic types of translation process/strategies in her functionalist model, documentary and instrumental. The purpose of the former, as she argues, is to create a communicative interaction in the TL via a kind of *document* in which a SC sender communicates with a SC audience via the ST under SC conditions whereas, the latter aims to establish a new communicative interaction between the SC sender and the TC readers in the TL via *an instrument* that the ST is considered as a model. In this relation, Georges L. Bastin (2018), who wrote a foreword to the book, puts into words that documentary translation intends "to document a communicative interaction under source-culture conditions," whereas instrumental translation aims "to channel a new communicative interaction using the source text as a model" (p. x).

Nord (2018) discusses that a documentary translation process/strategy results in a text with a metatextual function. That is to say; the TT is "a text about a text, or about one or more particular aspects of a text" (p. 46). An instrumental translation results in "a text that may achieve the same range of functions as an original text" (p. 48). In general, the target readers are well aware that they are reading a translation when encountering a documentary translation

because of the difference between the function of the ST and TT. By contrast, as Nord states, the target readers do not know that what they are reading is a translation when facing an instrumental translation because the form of the text is usually made suitable for TC norms and conventions of text type, genre, register, and tenor.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Participants**

The participants of the present study were 30 Iranian translators who were randomly selected from the following websites ([www.motarjeman.org](http://www.motarjeman.org)) and ([www.proz.com](http://www.proz.com)). They were divided equally into the educated and uneducated translators. It should be noted that the educated translators were those who held a master's degree in TS while the uneducated translators held a master's degree unrelated to TS. All participants had more than five years of experience working as translators. Furthermore, 20 judges were invited to judge the translations produced by both educated and uneducated translators based on a five-point Likert scale to find out how much communicative their translations are. The judges were certified translators and selected from the official website of IACTI that was available on the Internet (<https://www.iacti.ir>).

#### **3.2. Instruments**

A translation test consisting of 12 short literary texts was prepared for data collection. The 15 literary texts were extracted from Tolkien's (1995) *The Hobbit*. The book is a fantasy novel and enjoys great popularity among teenagers who are the main audiences. The book also covers many cultural items that can pose severe challenges to the translators and meet the present study's objectives. That is why the 12 short literary texts were selected from *The Hobbit*. The test was validated by a panel of translation teachers who were asked to provide their comments on the content and length of the texts. According to the comments derived from the translation teachers, a minor revision was made on the length of the texts. The reliability of the test was evaluated through the test-retest method. Thus, the test was administered to 15 translators who had many similarities to the participants of the study. The same translators retested the test after two weeks. The scores obtained from test 1 and test 2 were correlated. The results indicated the reliability of the test ( $r = .823$ ).

#### **3.3. Data Collection and Analysis**

The test was mailed to the participants via email in order to be translated. The same procedure was applied to receive their translation. The participants were informed of the importance and objective of the study and the audience type, who were teenagers, before translating the test. They were kindly asked to spend more time on the translation of the test and translate the 12 short literary texts carefully and send their translation within a week. This affected the quality of their translation and improved the validity of the study and helped the researcher achieve the intended results. The 12 short literary texts alongside the translations produced by the educated and uneducated translators were given to the 20 judges who were provided with a five-point scale on a continuum from "Uncommunicative" to "Communicative" to judge the degree of communicative function of the translations according to Nord's (2018) functionalist approach. This led to determine which Nord's translation process/strategy, documentary translation or instrumental translation, each group of the translators applied to the translation of the 12 short literary texts. That is to say, the more communicative their translation was, the more they tended to use instrumental translation as the overall strategy. The less communicative their translation was, the more they tended to use documentary translation as the overall strategy. In a wider sense, the more the translators maintain a local color, the less they can communicate with the intended target readers, who are teenagers. This is because the retention of most ST items in the TT may have no effect on the understanding of other types of readers, such as adults, but it probably has on teenagers' understanding that leads to a decrease in the level of communication. In addition, the frequencies and percentages of the

results derived from the analysis of continuums were illustrated in tabulation forms. One sample Wilcoxon signed-rank test was also run to justify the hypothesis.

#### 4. RESULTS

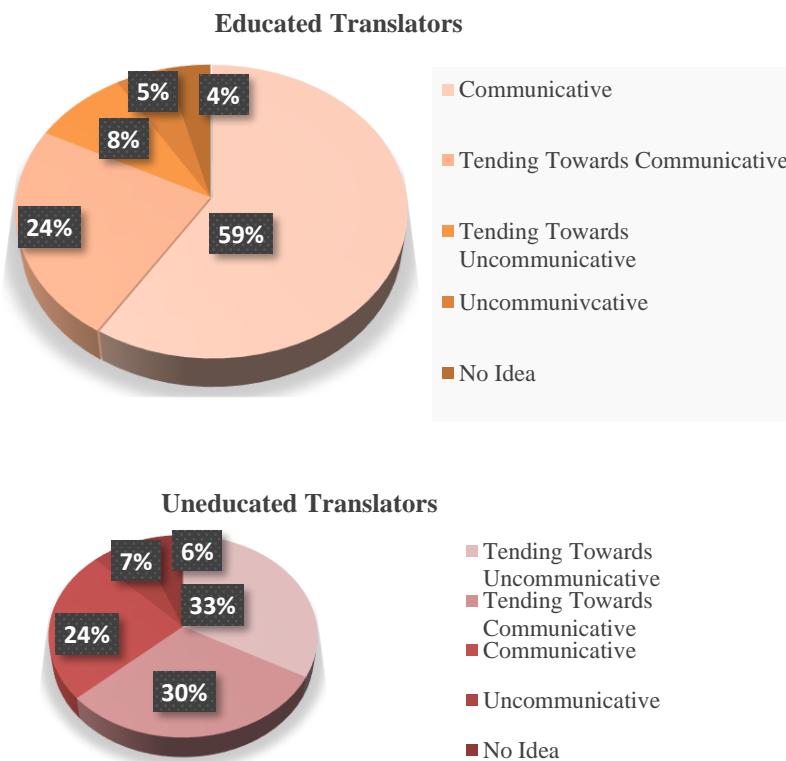
As Table 1 illustrates, the judges agreed that more than half of the translations (59%) made by the educated translators were communicative and 24% tending towards communicative; whereas a few number of translations (14%) were not communicative (5% was uncommunicative and 8% tending towards uncommunicative). By contrast, 24% of translations produced by the uneducated translators were communicative and 30% tending towards communicative from the judges' points of view. The judges considered one-third of the translations (33%) tending towards uncommunicative and a small number of them (7%) uncommunicative. Furthermore, the mean score of the educated translators ( $ME = 4.2$ ) is higher than the mean score of the uneducated translators ( $MU = 3.3$ ) (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Frequencies and Percentages of the Judges' Answers to the Translations Produced by Both Educated and Uneducated Translators*

	N	U	TU		NI		TC		C		N*			
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	M
Educated Translator	15	14	5.0	26	8.0	12	4.0	71	24.0	177	59.0	300	100.0	4.2
Uneducated Translators	15	19	7.0	99	33.0	18	6.0	91	30.0	73	24.0	300	100.0	3.3

Note: N=number of translators; N\*= number of total answers; U = uncommunicative; TU = tending towards uncommunicative; NI = no idea; TC= tending towards communicative; C = communicative.



*Figure 1. Frequencies and Percentages of the Judges' Answers to the Translations Produced by Both Educated and Uneducated Translators*

Table 2

*Summary of One Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for the Translations Made by the Educated Translators*

	<i>N</i>	<i>MDN</i>	<i>p<sub>1</sub></i>
Educated Translators	15	4.5	.000

One sample Wilcoxon signed rank test was applied to test the hypothesis 1. That is to say, the test was run to see whether there is a significant relationship between the judges' opinions about the translations made by the educated translators and the level of communication created via their translations. Thus, the sign value of the test was calculated. According to Table 2, the *p<sub>1</sub>* value of the test is .000 which is lower than .05 (*p<sub>1</sub> < .05*). As a result, the hypothesis was rejected. This alongside the mean score of the total answers to the translations made by the educated translators that was higher than the mid-answers to the translations (4.2 > 2.5), indicates the highest level of communication of the translations. That is to say, the general agreement of the judges with this level of communication is significant.

Table 3

*Summary of One Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for the Translations Made by the Uneducated Translators*

	<i>N</i>	<i>MDN</i>	<i>p<sub>2</sub></i>
Uneducated Translators	15	4	.07

Table 3 indicates the results of one sample Wilcoxon rank test that was run to test the hypothesis 2 and find out that whether the relationship between the judges' agreements and the level of communication established via the translations produced by the uneducated translators is significant. Based on Table 3, the amount of the *p<sub>2</sub>* value is higher than .05 (.07 > .05). Hence, the hypothesis was retained and the judges' agreements was not significantly different from the theoretical mean/median (i.e. 2.5). Moreover, the mean score of the translations produced by this group of translators was higher than the theoretical mean/median (3.3 > 2.5). This alludes to the average level of communication of the translations made by the uneducated translators.

#### 4.1. Discussion

The previous section reported the results derived from the analysis of the translations produced by both educated and uneducated translators to see the level of communication they established via their translations. This section provides a discussion about the obtained results and makes a comparison between the results of the present study and recent studies in the field.

According to the findings, the educated translators had outstanding performance than the uneducated translators in the translation of the 12 short literary texts because they were able to produce communicative translations almost twice as many the uneducated translators (see example 1).

##### Example 1:

“Not that Belladonna Took ever had any adventures after she became Mrs. Bungo Baggins. Bungo, that was Bilbo’s father, built the most luxurious hobbit-hole for her...”  
(p. 23)

بلادونا توک بعد از این که زن بانگو بگینز شد ماجراجویی را بوسید و گذاشت کنار . بانگو ، یعنی پدر بیل بو ،  
مجل ترین سوراخ هایتی را برای زنش ساخت. (Communicative)

As it is clear from the above example, the ST phrase *not ever had any adventures* was correctly substituted with the TT phrase *ماجراجویی را بوسید و کنار گذاشت*. This continues with the use of addition strategy when translating the rest of the statement *after she became Mrs. Bungo Baggins* into *بعد از این که زن بانگو بگینز شد* and with the use of appropriate TT equivalent for the ST item *the most luxurious*. This is done skillfully many times by the educated translators when translating, that indicates their mastery over translation strategies.

Both educated and uneducated translators were more or less equal in producing less communicative translations. This was due to a mistake in the use of the correct equivalent for the ST item that changed the defined function of the translation from communicative into tending towards communicative (see example 2).

Example 2:

“Great Elephants!” said Gandalf, “you are not at all yourself this morning—you have never dusted the mantelpiece!” (p. 63)

گندalf گفت: او غور بخیر! امروز صبح انگار هوش و هواست سر جاش نیست - روی شویمنه را اصلاً گردگری نکرده ای! (Tending towards communicative)

The cultural expression *Great Elephants* was translated into او غور بخیر by the uneducated translators. The problem is that the chosen TT equivalent is not suitable and understandable to the intended target audiences who are teenagers. The use of such a TT equivalent makes the target audiences confused and decreases the level of communication of the translation. Hence, the TT equivalent needs to be chosen both appropriately and based on the intended target audiences to achieve the highest level of communication.

In some cases, that were not few in numbers, both group of the translators, especially the uneducated translators, frequently repeated such a mistake greatly in such a way that it affected the direction of their translation towards uncommunicative (see example 3).

Example 3:

“...the smell of the pine-trees made him drowsy, so that every now and again he nodded and off, or bumped his nose on the pony's neck... The trees changed to beech and oak, and there was a comfortable feeling in the twilight.

هر قدر پایینتر می رفتد هوا گرمتر می شد و بوی درختهای کاج او را خواب آورد می کرد، تا حدی که پیلی می خورد و یا دماغش به گردن نیمچه اسب می خورد... درختهای کاج جای خود را به درختان راش و بلوط داد، و آرامشی عمیق در گرگ و میش احساس کردند. (Tending towards uncommunicative)

In Example 3, the cultural items *the pony*, *beech*, and *in the twilight* were translated literally into نیمچه اسب, راش, گرگ و میش respectively, and the cultural term *he nodded* was translated very freely into پیلی پیلی می خورد by a large number of the uneducated translators and by a few numbers of the educated translators. Here, the point is that these TT equivalents were chosen correctly, but not appropriately. In a wider sense, they were chosen without considering the intended readers. For example, the TT equivalent نیمچه اسب could be more understandable via the use of an additional short explanation, or would be omitted via omission strategy and just rely on the translation of the ST word *oak* which is more familiar to the intended audiences, or provide a brief explanation alongside the TT equivalent راش to make its meaning clear to the target readers. Furthermore, the more understandable equivalent for *in the twilight* would be هنگام تاریکی هوا or در غروب آفتاب and *he nodded* could be replaced with همانند آدمهای مست. اینورو اونور می شد.

Fortunately, there were very small numbers of uncommunicative translations. Inappropriate use of translation strategies, such as word-for-word strategy, caused the translators to produce these types of translations (see example 4).

Example 4:

“...what do they say?” asked Gandalf and Thorin together... “stand by the grey stone when the thrush knocks,” read Elrond, “and the setting sun with the last light of Durin's Day will shine upon them key-hole.” (p. 97)

گندalf و تورین با هم پرسیدند: حالا آنجا چه نوشته؟...الروند خواند: بایست کنار سنگ خاکستری وقتی توکا نوک میزند و غروب آفتاب با آخرین نور روز دورین به سوراخ کلید خواهد تابید. (Uncommunicative)

The above example indicates the use of word-for-word by a few numbers of both educated and uneducated translators for the translation of the underlined magical statement. The use of word-for-word strategy poses a significant risk to the translators because they sacrifice the communicative function of the translation for their faithfulness to the ST structure. This type of translation is called by Nord (2018) *word-for-word* or *interlinear translation*, a sub-category of documentary translation, in which the focus is on "the morphological, lexical, or syntactic features of the source-language system as present in the source text" (p. 46). In this case, they may have made the right decision because the ST statement has a magical sense and should be translated to convey the same sense to the TT readers, although communication is not created.

As the results derived from one-sample Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicate, the translations the educated translators produced were mainly communicative and put into Nord's (2018) instrumental translation category. This implies the TT-oriented strategies the educated translators employed at micro level that led to TT orientation at macro level and produce an instrumental translation which is resulted in "a text that may achieve the same range of functions as an original text" (Nord, 2018, p. 48). This helped the educated translators communicate very well with the intended target audiences and produce more understandable translations. By contrast, the uneducated translators mostly produced less communicative translations that fall into Nord's documentary translation because they used the ST-oriented strategies more than the TT-oriented ones. This made their overall strategy the ST-oriented.

The results of the present study had some similarities to the Abdi's (2019) recent study who investigated the way both females and males MA translation students translated the cultural items from English into Persian. According to the results of his study, the males students produced mostly comprehensive translations and communicate with the target readers very well because of the more use of TT-oriented translations; whereas the females students employed frequently the ST-oriented strategies that led them to make the translations with the direction towards the ST structure and be a failure in creating communication with the target readers. The results obtained from Jensen's (2009) study was different with the results of the study in that the participants preferred to employ the ST-oriented strategies rather than the TT-oriented ones that led to their ST orientation at macro level.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

According to Nord (2018), university translator-training institutions play the main role in developing functionalist approaches that led them to be *normative* or *evaluative* in such a way that they evaluate translations by considering "their functionality in a given situation-in-culture" (p. 2). For her, a *good translation* is the same as a *functional translation* and future professional translators need to be prepared to make such translations in order to meet the needs of their clients and to protect their products against criticism made unfairly of clients' and users' judgments. Thus, the importance of higher education was not only a controversial but also an interesting subject under investigation in the present study. As the results show, the educated translators were more successful than the uneducated translators in producing functional translations and communicating with the target audiences. This points to their mastery over translation theories and their skills in employing translations strategies. Hence, the researcher reached the conclusion that the success of the educated translators was mainly because of an academic degree they held in TS through which they passed all translation courses and became familiar with a wide range of translation strategies/methods. That is to say, higher education plays a significant role in being a howling success of the translators in their profession. In approval, Samuelsson- Brown (2010, p. 8) argues that "completing a postgraduate course in TS" is one of the basic qualifications that a good translator needs to have.

The present study provides some pedagogical implications that should be helpful to those responsible for the translation industry in Iran and for the recruitment of the translators, such as Iranian publishing companies and translation offices.

It is kindly recommended that those responsible for organizing and certifying translators, such as IACTI and GODOTJ, consider educational degree related to TS as one of the basic requirements for applicants in judiciary official translator recruitment test as well as impose and strengthen their control over those responsible for recruiting translators, such as organizations, publishing companies, and translation offices. This prevents degree holders in other disciplines from entering this profession and enhances the quality of translations. To achieve this, the cooperation of those interested in and responsible for recruiting translators is needed. Thus, they are warmly recommended to recruit translators who hold a degree in TS and to stop working with unqualified translators.

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