Teaching an Invisible in Translation: On the Effect of Genre in Translation of Political News

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Abstract

Despite the fact that a bulk of research has been done in the field of translation studies and news reporting, the effect of precision and authenticity of translation on reframing the message, constructing meaning, political stance, institutional practice and the way through which we control our audience is little investigated. The current research, therefore, was an attempt to bring to light the extent to which Iranian news translators are familiar with genre features of source language texts. For that reason, a bulk of 50 political news stories translated by Iranian news translators in different news agencies were analyzed through genre analysis tools and frameworks. Also, 20 different news translators were selected non-randomly based on purpose sampling procedures to enquire into the extent of Iranian news translators’ familiarity with genre and its textual features using a diagnostic tool. The results showed that Iranian news translators are not familiar with steps and moves that realize news report genre and therefore, fail to preserve genre characteristics of source language in Persian translation which brings about an inadequate translation. Finally, to redress this deficiency, the research put forward some suggestions for teaching genre-related issues in translation courses such as TSPs (translation for specific purpose), genre-based tasks and strategic resources. The results of the study have implications for Iranian English teachers and students, journalists, news agencies and politicians.

Keywords: Genre Analysis, News Reports, Political News, Teaching Translation.
1. Introduction

In the last three decades, many studies were conducted in the field of translation with a sharp focus on various approaches in translation and linguistic, literary, and sociolinguistic issues associated with it. In spite of this very fact, according to Schäffner and Bassnett (2010) and Schäffner (2012), translation issues related to politics and national institutional practices and on top of that genre features behind these practices have been neglected in the research. Intactness of this area on one hand and professional difficulties of this setting on the other has caused problems the roots of which can be traced back in the lack of adequate knowledge on genre, invisible in discourse which stands in the need of a sophisticated mastery to deal with.

Swales (1990), one of the pioneers in the field of genre analysis studies has stated that genre is a class of communicative events behind each of which one can find a communicative purpose. He has also claimed that these purposes or communicative goals are discernable only by the expert members of the source language. These communicative purposes not only select the organization of discourse but also the way content is embedded in it. Two years later a bulk of research by Wallace (1993) firmly endorsed this stance, where she defined genre as the social events, roles and purposes that are created by speakers and writers of a discourse community. Not unlike Swales, Wallace has also claimed that particular listeners or readers can get to the bottom of these communicative functions and purposes. Besides, in his definition of genre and what comprises it, Bakhtin (1986) had previously culminated in the same conclusion. He had already postulated that function of language can be realized if one can understand the thematic content, style, and compositional structure of a discourse, the integration of which comprises a genre. The difficulties in understanding genre-related features are also relevant in translation and interpretation of discourse. Investigating these difficulties, Pagano (1998) devoted herself to the study of transformations occurring in genres when transposed from their original medium, especially in translations. He observed that translators are troubled with understanding macro structures and rhetorical patterns of the discourse and the way through which meaning is organized. These findings are in line with more recent findings in the filed of genre analysis such as those by Bhatia (2008) who had felt around this problem in a more elaborate statement when he claimed that one area for which teaching English as a foreign language received criticism is that, language learners, when placed in professional settings suffered defeat to handle textual features and rhetorical patterns of the professional genres because they knew little about discursive realities of the foreign language discourse, if at all. In Iran, as an EFL context where most of language learners stop short behind native-like proficiency, the same problem comes on the scene in the performance of those who are graduated in language and work in professional settings. As an example, professional translators working for news agencies are among those whose deficiency in terms of genre knowledge and mastery of rhetorical patterns of source language discourse, may bring about mistranslations and failure in conveying the message, with all those functions, roles and practices behind it. Although indifferent wordings, this problem was also touched by translation theorists such as Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), who believe...
that when a discourse is translated from one language to the other, it undergoes two kinds of changes, obligatory changes that are brought about as a result of linguistic differences, where the target language does not allow a literal translation of the corresponding item in the source language, and optional changes which are concerned with preferred linguistic structures in the target language. In this sense, rhetorical patterns of a discourse are among those obligatory parts that if failed to be correctly conveyed, incapacitate the functions the discourse plays and consequently throw translation into disorder and interfere with its accuracy and authenticity.

Considering the problem stated above, the current research is an attempt to answer the following questions.

- Are Iranian news translators familiar with the genre-related features of news report discourse?
- Which teaching techniques and strategies may help translation students to overcome genre-related difficulties?

It is hoped that the results of this research will shed lights upon rhetorical differences and similarities between source language and target language news reports and help news translators accurately identify important textual features, organizational patterns and possible social, political and cultural elements that affect nature, usage and accuracy of translation in this important professional discourse.

2. Literature Review

Studies in the field of genre analysis and discourse typology from Swales (1990) to Hyland (2010) and even more recent studies of this kind unanimously indicate that discourses are organized according to a distinguishing way of using languages, structures, purposes and institutional practices which make one genre different from another. Hyland (2010) stated that every study in the field of genre analysis and genre determination, before anything else must postulate that features and rhetorical patterns of a similar group of discourses depends on the social contexts in which they are created and used. The related literature shows that different researchers have been investigating this issue from a variety of theoretical perspectives. In line with Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics, Swales (1990) gave a functionalist linguistic definition of genre as a class of communicative events and gave prominence to the functions different discourses perform for their producers and receivers. Some years later Martin (1997) gave birth to a new concept of genre and expounded genre as a stratal one in which he deviated significantly from the concepts of text type and register of Hallidayan linguistics because he believed that ideational, interpersonal, and textual language usage give birth to register and consequently genre is realized through register. A more recent wave of research in the field of genre analysis has laid stress on the communicative events for the realization of genre. This approach which was also called ESP approach to genre analysis and was put forward by Hyland (2010) concerned with contexts in which and for which the
discourse is produced. In other words, this approach takes into account the connection between social contexts and individuals and communities, who are involved in the creation of discourse. Therefore, whatever that makes one genre different from another is the social context in which genre is given birth to.

Accordingly, taking translation into account, Choi (2010) believes that familiarity with knowledge about genre, text typology and rhetorical organization of discourses will help language learners and users both theoretically and practically. Since the source discourse is highly conventionalized and rhetorically and structurally organized, translators may fail to pinpoint these rhetoric and conventions and as a result bring an inadequate translation into life. Choi (2010) also believes that it is important for a translator to enjoy an adequate amount of particular knowledge on the particular genre features in the source and the target languages because this knowledge is necessary criterion for evaluating the quality and equality of translation. The importance of genre knowledge has been underscored by many researchers from decades ago. Reiss (2000), for example, stated that understanding the typology of texts is crucial to the process of translation and failure in understanding this typology and the function it plays in discourse, often leads to a distorted translation. Besides, investigating a sample of postgraduate students of translation rendering some articles from the Times magazine, Hatim and Mason (1990) concluded that in spite of the fact that some communicative functions and text types are all-embracing and universal; they fulfill the functions of particular cultural norms based on which discourses are organized, therefore turning a blind eye to the knowledge of genre, communicative functions and discourse types brings about a distortion in translation. Seven years later House (1997) developed a genre-based model for translation analysis in which she stated that familiarity with Filed (subject matter and social action), Tenor (participants’ relationship), Mode (the medium through which message is conveyed), register and genre purpose act on the accuracy of translation. Insisting on the importance of genre knowledge in translation, the latest researches on translation studies have underlined the issue of institutional practice – a factor that not only gives birth to different genres but also gives identity to the discourse produced by a special institute or agency. The importance of this factor is doubled in news agencies. In the latest studies of this kind, the issue of institutional practice which shapes translators works, conditions and options available to them, has been inquired into by a variety of researches including Mossop (1990), Gagnon (2006, 2010) and Koskinen (2008, 2011). Taking these views and theoretical positions into account, the current research, too, is an attempt to bring to light the effect of these contextual differences and those of use and institutional practice in the product of political news reports.

3. Method
3.1 Participants and Data Collection

Based on the procedures of convenient sampling two major news agencies were selected from which the data of the research were gathered. From each news agency 10 different news
translators who were involved in translating political news reports were selected purposively. In a period of 10 working days a bulk of 50 different translations produced by these translators were selected non-randomly for further analysis. To ensure the homogeneity of English political news reports the Hallidayan tripartite model was taken into account based on which it was ascertained that the data were selected from a similar field, mode and tenor in American media context.

3.2 Instruments

The current research has employed an adopted analytical framework form Pak (1998) which was later adapted by Jabbari and Farokhipour (2014) for news report analysis. In journalistic terms, news report is regarded as the most frequent type of soft news which stands in sharp contrast with hard news. In other words, soft news is a kind of news in which the editorial comment is incorporated because it represents the partial, national and private opinion of journalists and news editors as well as their cultures, institutional practice and foreign policy while in hard news only the event is displayed (Jabbari & Farokhipour, 2014).

3.3 Procedure

In the first step of the study a bulk of 50 different English political news reports as well as their Persian translations were gathered and investigated in the first round of the analysis. In the second round of the analysis, however, using the analytical framework, the steps and moves realizing the genre of news report were singled out and coded in their respective categories. Then, to bring to light the percentage of conformity of each corpus with the analytical framework, the frequencies of different moves were calculated in English news reports and their Persian translations. Then, in order to see whether the Persian translations matched the English texts in terms of genre features, the comparative analysis of these frequencies was conducted.

4. Results and Discussion

The analytical framework used for the purpose of this story includes six different moves that realize the news report genre. The first move is the title, the one that establishes a theme around which the report is centered. The second move is the preparatory comment which is a kind of writing that prepares the mind of the readers for the things to be followed. The third move is the main topic which is the central topic or issue discussed in the news reports. The fourth move is the main thesis which summarizes the position of the newspaper on the main topic. In other words, the main function of a news report is to present the newspaper’s view on a particular issue, which is performed through this move. The fifth move is analysis or alternatively called argumentation which provides the reader with more explanations on main topic and main thesis through different steps. And the last move is directive which presents a restatement of the main thesis or a summary of the elaboration on the main topic. The directive may also be prediction or recommendation. The result of applying this framework
to English political news reports and their Persian translations are presented in the following table:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Political News Reports</th>
<th>Persian Translation of Political News Reports</th>
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<td>Move 1</td>
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<td>Move 6</td>
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The results of these frequency analyses shows that English political news reports received from a variety of American Media sources swim with the streams and follow the previously established and substantiated genre rules shown in the analytical framework. In their equivalent translations the reverse is the case. The result of frequency analysis shows that Iranian news translators fail to identify the rhetorical organization of the source text and as a result they are found wanting and defective in their work to convey functions and institutional practice of the source language text. As it is seen in the above table, the fourth move which is the main thesis that summarizes the position of the newspaper on the main topic is only preserved in 5 cases and hence is almost lost in the Persian translations of political news reports. As it is mentioned above, this move contains the institutional practice of respective news agencies that Iranian news translators succeed little to provide for, if at all. Missing such an important communicative purpose or discourse level functions brings a disordered and inadequate translation into life. To add flesh to these inadequacies, applying the analytical framework, a representative English news report that conforms one hundred percent to the framework is presented followed by its Persian translation.
MOVE ONE: HEAD

Sanctions Lifted, American Tourists Head to Iran

MOVE TWO: PREPARATORY COMMENTS

- **STEP 1:** The lifting of sanctions on Iran last month has resulted in a surge of bookings, tour operators say, many from Americans undeterred by a State Department warning laying out the risks of taking trips there.
- **STEP 2:** Tour operators say the demand has been so acute that they are racing to add new departures and selling them in record time. Tourism in Iran is already popular with Europeans. Iranian officials told The Associated Press last fall that about five million foreign travelers visited Iran in 2014, and that the country aims to attract 20 million tourists, spending $30 billion, by 2025.
- **STEP 3:** Among growth signs, Air France recently announced that it plans to start three flights weekly between Paris and Tehran beginning in April. Already Iran is a one-stop destination from New York via Istanbul, Dubai or Doha on Turkish Airlines, Emirates or Qatar Airways.
- **STEP 4:** Iran hosts some of the world’s oldest cultural monuments, including 19 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and its varied terrain ranges from desert locales to ski resorts.

MOVE THREE: MAIN TOPIC

- **STEP 1:** Intrepid travelers are booking tours anyway. In response to an increase in inquiries, the Seattle-based Mir Corporation, which has been operating in Iran for 15 years, has added new train trips and small group departures in the country this year, for a total of about 10 different trips.

MOVE FOUR: MAIN THESIS:

- **STEP 1:** The State Department warning, however, says that travelers should be wary, noting, “Various elements in Iran remain hostile to the United States.” Last month, Iran freed four Americans of Iranian descent, including a reporter from The Washington Post but the State Department still warns that people with both Iranian and American citizenship in particular risk detention.
- **STEP 2:** “We’d seen it for a while but as people become comfortable with Iran on the world scene, they think it may be a good time to do something they may have wanted to do for a while,” said Annie Lucas, vice president at Mir. “We feel there’s pent-up demand on the part of intrepid travelers.”
**MOVE FIVE: ANALYSIS:**

- **STEP 1:** This year, Britain-based Golden Eagle Luxury Trains, which has run tours via sleeper trains in Iran since 2014, reports that Americans account for 88 percent of its passengers in Iran, compared with about 50 percent in previous years. The company has added a 2016 departure between Moscow and Tehran over 18 days in addition to its 14-day Heart of Persia tour that includes Isfahan, notable for its Islamic architecture; Shiraz, known for its gardens; and Persepolis, ancient ceremonial center of the Achaemenid Empire.

- **STEP 2:** Mountain Travel Sobek has run two trips to Iran each year for the last three, and has more recently added private departures. (Those include trips for Times Journeys, which is operated independently of the New York Times newsroom.)

- **STEP 3:** With the lifting of sanctions, Iran is set to come in from the cold. Apart from opening its door for foreign investors and tourists, it has... Some operators who waited for political clearance to go into Iran are now organizing departures. Norman Howe, president of the luxury tour operator Butterfield & Robinson, said inquiries about Iran began spiking the last few months. The company is organizing several private trips and hopes to run a small group trip in November, to be regularly scheduled come 2017. His clients “were waiting for Iran to normalize and they want to get there before the crowds,” he said.

- **STEP 4:** Where to lodge the growing numbers of travelers may pose a challenge to the country even though Iran’s PressTV reported a dozen new hotels had been built in the past two years, and AccorHotels opened two hotels in Tehran in October. “The issue now for us as a tour operator is there aren’t enough hotels,” said Ms. Lucas of Mir, who noted that some of the hotels in areas beyond the big cities are worn out. “There’s over demand and not enough supply.”

**MOVE SIX: Directive**

- **STEP 1:** It is still difficult to arrange a trip. American travelers must obtain a visa before traveling to Iran, a fairly straightforward process, according to tour operators, but a slow one that can run to months, limiting spontaneous travel. Americans in Iran must also be accompanied by a guide. Banking restrictions, which largely bar the use of credit cards and A.T.M.s, force travelers to bring cash. In keeping with Islamic rules, women must cover their hair and dress conservatively, in loose long-sleeved tunics that go at least to the knee. Men, too, cannot wear shorts. There are other inconveniences, Ms. Lucas said: “The infrastructure is not perfect, but it’s pretty good. The roads are decent. No alcohol can be roughing it for some people. The public bathrooms are not on par with what people would like. But the caliber of attractions and guides balance it out.

As it is seen in American political news report, the greatest weight is given to
institutional practice of the broadcasting agency realized in the fourth move “Main Thesis” which stands in sharp contrast with whatever shown in title of the news report. In other words, in spite of the fact that the title sends words to reader that the sanctions are lifted and it is the time to travel to Iran, the news writer has used this move to put his institutional mission into effect through main thesis and denotes the unwillingness of the country (political stance of the country) regarding citizens’ travel to Iran. These findings are in line with Pak (1998) and Jabbari and Farokhipour (2014).

MOVE 1: TITLE

In Persian translation of the same news report a different structure is used however.

MOVE 2: PREPARATORY COMMENT (LEAD)

ARGUMENT 1:

In Persian translation of the same news report a different structure is used however.
ARGUMENT 5:
آنچه که جالب توجه است این است که هشدارهای وزارت امورخارجه آمریکا از
پرای اتصال به شبکه جهانی بانکی، اختلافات دینی و پوششی از سوی دیگر نتوانسته
است که توریست های آمریکایی را متقاعد کند تا از دیدن بناهای تاریخی، جلوه
های طبیعی، معماری اسلامی اصفهان، باغ های زیبای شیراز و تخت جمشید، مرکز
امپراتوری هخامنشیان، دیدن نکند.

ARGUMENT 6:
بر همین اساس آژانس مسافرتی انگلیسی "قطارهای لوکس گولدن ایگل" اعلام
کرده است که 88 درصد از مسافران این شرکت در سال 2014 آمریکایی بوده اند.

As it can be seen in the report above, Iranian news translator has failed to identify the
macro-structure and rhetorical patterns of the source language texts including moves and steps
through which news report genre is realized. Therefore, the translator, distracted by the
misleading informative title of the news report, lacked the ability and knowledge to render the
main communicative purpose and institutional practice of source language discourse and very
little pointed to the main thesis move of the American news report if at ll. According to Pak
(1998) and Jabbari, et al (2014) this move is an obligatory move and if neglected brings about
failure in understanding the communicative purpose of the discourse and consequently a
disordered translation. Besides, this findings show that the Iranian news translators, unaware
of the difference between soft news and hard news and genre structures inside news reports,
renders this discourse type into simple inverted pyramid model of news writing in which
different parts of a news story are organized based on importance and value – from most
important one at the top to the least important at the bottom – while turning a blind eye to
socio-rhetorical patterns and macro-structures of source language discourse. For instance, in
the translation analyzed above, the deep function of the report –Americans resistance on not
having relations with Iran - is neglected and a completely contrasting message – Americans
willingness to visit Iran – is rendered into Persian. Deficiency in genre knowledge, as it is also
proved in this research; results in deficient and all the more, wrong translation. Therefore it
deems necessary to provide the language learners and students of translation with the genre
knowledge needed for performing in different professional settings including news translation
contexts such as news agencies. The results of the study which inadequately point out the
inadequacy of Persian translators’ knowledge on genre related features also indicate that in
training translators, developing and using genre-based tasks that launch students into
translation, and in this way gradually raise awareness of students on macro structures of texts,
rhetorical organizations and institutional practices behind each discourse through repeated
comparative analysis of genre between the source language discourse and that of target
language are of utmost importance. These tasks can be selected from a variety of news
broadcasting resources, with considering the homogeneity of genre. For instance, in the case
of news reports genre, teacher must select news report genre and nothing else. Homogeneity
of materials and tasks can be assured through Hallidayan tripartite framework (field, mode and tenor) and other genre analysis tools and frameworks. According to Auria (2006), translation tasks can be used as an adequate instructional tool for genre, because they help language learners to infer and deduce the complexities of a professional genre. Besides, genre-based translation tasks are useful for understanding linguistic usage and linguistic variability across different discourses because through them language learners can encode and decode mechanisms involved in meaning making, and the linguistic realization of social practices and purposes in settings of specific purpose and profession. The same stance is also endorsed by Basylev (2008) and Alekseeva (2010).

The second technique that may help language learners to master the discursive practice of genre translation is to develop specific TSP (translation for specific purpose) courses, the objectives and goals of which are established a priori through a need analysis project in which linguistic content, course objectives and evaluation are organized around translation. In this way, translation is used to teach translation and socio-rhetorical differences between source text and target text. According to Lemke (1993), using translation to teach genre facilitates understanding the pattern based on which technical information are organized in the discourse and thematic elements are connected within a rhetorical structure, one that is apparently absent in the translation of Iranian news translators. Besides, using this method, translators can analyzes the source text features at all levels to form a pool of translation difficulties and find the relevant solutions for a translation of equal value (Volkova, 2014).

The third possible technique is to teach strategic resources that writers or speakers use to organize texts logically. Teaching directly the organizational patterns of a typical genre helps professional actors to become equipped with sophisticated knowledge needed in professional settings. In other words, language learners before entering a particular professional setting that stands in the need of special genre knowledge can learn it as prefabricated rhetorical patterns of that typical genre that is established in advance through linguistic analysis. For instance, in the case of news report genre, teachers can teach news translators or students of journalism with already established steps and moves through which native speakers organize their news reports frequently (Farokhipour & Jabbari, 2014).

5. Conclusion

To answer the questions of the research, an analytical framework was used to study the genre structure of English news reports and their Persian translations. The result of this comparative analysis showed that Iranian news translators are not familiar with rhetorical patterns and macro-structures of English news reports and therefore can not convey the hidden communicative messages behind news reports and simply consider the informative function of the media in their translation. This, in turn, brings about an inaccurate translation where the main message remains undelivered in Persian text. To redress this deficiency, translators prior to being placed in professional settings which stands in the need of
sophisticated genre Knowledge, must acquire the necessary skills in dealing with socio-rhetorical patterns and macro structures of different genres through TSPs (translation for specific purpose), genre-based tasks and strategic resources needed in form of prefabricated patterns and rhetorical structures.
6. References


