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YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE AND DEGREE IN TRANSLATION: PREDICTORS OF TRANSLATION QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

The gap between theory and practice is better felt when assessing quality of translation of professional translators with and without an academic degree in Translation. The present study aimed at investigating whether translators' years of professional experience and degree in Translation predict their translation quality. Following a causal-comparative study, 100 professional translators were selected using purposive sampling method. The participants were divided into two groups each containing individuals with and without a degree in translation, respectively. The participants were asked to translate a paragraph to assess their translation quality. For data analysis, appropriate statistical procedures including correlation and regression were used. Results showed that both degree in Translation and years of professional experience significantly predict translation quality. Also, the interaction of translators' years of professional experience and degree in Translation significantly affect their translation quality. An implication could be that besides providing translators with academic knowledge of theories, ample practical training in translation is necessary as a prerequisite for a competent translator. Another implication is that both professional and non-professional translators with a degree in Translation should acknowledge that they still need academic and practical experience, respectively.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent studies made it obvious that translation has always gone hand in hand with so many factors. There are a lot of questions about why two translators with the same age and academic background are different from each other in their task of translation [1, 2, 3]. The basic step of a planned and organized approach toward training competent translators is the mastery over theoretical frameworks [4]. A brief review of the literature indicates that translators' degree in translation positively affect the quality of their translation, the process of translating and producing a good translation [3, 5, 6]. Considering the relationship between individuals' level of education and their job performance, it is believed that years of work experience do not moderate the education-performance relationship since work experience indicates the quantity not the quality; however, some dimensions of performance are influenced by education [7]. Professional translators without an academic degree in Translation do not focus on the revision stage which can challenge the quality of their translation. On the contrary, qualified translators and academics recognize the significance of this stage. Thus, the academic status of translators should be taken into account as one of the elements of their sense of responsibility which influences the process and the quality of translation [5].

On the other hand, it has been argued that investigating years of professional experience is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the translation process [5]. Also, years of professional experience has proved to be correlated with successful task performance [8]. As certain career fields highly emphasize years of professional experience than others [9], further research was needed to focus on a specific years of professional experience construct which successfully predicts translators' job performance.

While people tend to specialize in as few as narrow areas as possible, translators are expected to have a very good knowledge of all the domains with which their work interferes. That is why translation students expect to receive solid and complex training meant to enable them to face the challenges of translating in real world situations. Most of the students expect their teachers to give them the opportunity to acquire various specific knowledge and skills associated with their future profession [10]. In this respect, professional translators have been provided with ample

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experience of translating different types of texts from various fields of study and seem to be more confident than non-professionals with only an academic experience, when facing such conditions.

To sum up, degree in translation and years of professional experience are among those factors that seem to affect the translator's performance and his/her translation quality. A main point which makes the present study significant is that there has not been much research in Translation Studies regarding the effect of translators' degree in translation, years of professional experience and the interaction of these two factors on their translation quality. Therefore, the focus of the present study was to investigate whether translators' degree in translation and years of professional experience predict their translation quality.

This study was designed to seek answers to the following question:

- Does translators' degree in translation and years of professional experience significantly predict their translation quality?

Based on the research question, the following hypothesis was formulated:

- Translators' degree in translation and years of professional experience significantly predict their translation quality.

The concept of *quality* has been approached from different perspectives, taking into account, different factors which claimed or seemed to influence translation quality. For instance, study revealed that higher-quality of translations and better performance of translators is related to their training and experience [11]. Another study found that there is a positive correlation between being a risk-taker and the quality of translation among BA students of Translation Studies [1]. One study showed that translator's personality had no impact on translation quality of narrative texts [12].

In the field of Translation Studies, some studies have focused on the influence of translator's degree in translation on the quality of their translations. For instance, the role of the translator's degree in translation have been implicitly recognized which enable him to produce a 'good' translation and to facilitate quality control [6]. The education of translators is of paramount importance in enhancing the quality of their work. She emphasized that the need for integrating the aspect of terminology science is obvious while for experienced translators without any translator-specific education, the connection between various aspects of terminology science and their everyday work comes more or less as a revelation [13]. Cultural assessment in clinical Psychiatry, formulated by the committee on cultural psychiatry group for advancement of Psychiatry also found that the translator's level of education influences the translation quality so that a translator with a low educational level might have difficulty translating some specialized texts including psychiatry [14]. In addition, one of the crucial elements to enhance the quality of translation is knowledge of pragmatics, more specifically when, how, and in what situation the target language is used in the society [15]. The results of another study shed more light on the positive effects of incorporating teaching functional translation theories on translation quality of translator trainees [4]. The translator's degree in translation may play an important role in predicting the quality of his/her translation. Translation trainees being aware of theoretical frameworks and having knowledge of theories of translation may affect the quality of the translation product [1]. Finally, regarding the translators' years of professional experience, years of work experience did not moderate the education-performance relationship due to the fact that work experience indicates the quantity not the quality; nevertheless, some dimensions of performance are influenced by education [7]. For instance, some professional translators, mainly without a degree in Translation, seem to ignore or underestimate the role of revision as pertains to the quality of the translation product while qualified translators acknowledge the importance of the revision stage [5].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design

The design of this quantitative study was causal-comparative in nature. In this design, cause was identified as the effect of translators' degree in translation and years of professional experience, and the impact of this interaction on the translation quality remained to be investigated.

Instruments

Waddington's translation quality assessment model D was used to determine participants' translation quality. This model is designed and validated by Waddington (2001). Model D actually consists of combining error analysis and holistic methods of Waddington's model in a proportion of 70/30, respectively.

Participants

The population under study was a group of professional translators, working in official and non-official translation centers, and freelance translators. For selection and homogeneity purposes, subjects were selected to be translators with 2-7 years of experience. Individuals with both Bachelors' and Masters' degrees in translation and those who have studied or lived abroad were excluded from the study to minimize the impact of their degree in translation and proficiency level. 100 translators selected using purposive sampling method participated in the study. They were divided into two groups and each group contained 50 subjects. Group 1 and group 2 contained translators with and without a degree in translation, respectively.

Data collection procedures

First, the study participants answered the demographic questions. Then both groups were asked to complete a translation task in 30 minutes. The translations were assessed and scored based on Waddington's model D. To do so, a paragraph containing 232 words was given to be translated into Persian; the text was part of George Orwell's 1984 novel. The scores were entered in SPSS 21.0 for statistical analysis.

Data analysis

After data entry, the appropriate statistical analysis including descriptive statistics (Frequency, Percentage, Mean and Standard Deviation) were used to analyze demographic data; in order to investigate the hypothesis, inferential statistics including correlation was used.

RESULTS

Reliability of the measures

The reliability of the measures and instruments was estimated as a preliminary step by Chronbach's alpha which supported the previous reliability findings of the instrument [16, 17]. The reliability of Waddington's model D was calculated to be 0.82.

Results of the descriptive and inferential statistical analysis

First the normality of the scores was initially checked. The normal Q-Q Plot showed that the distribution of scores was reasonably normal. Mean age of the participants was 28.2 years (SD 6.8). **Table- 1** summarizes the results of descriptive statistics of the variables. **Table- 2** and **Table- 3** present the results of scoring the translations based on Waddington's model D. As explained in part 3, this scoring system makes use of two subjective (holistic) and objective (error analysis) scoring methods, respectively. According to **Table- 2**, mean holistic, objective and total score of participants in group 1 was 5.3, 5.7 and 5.5 with (SD 1.1), (SD 1.3) and (SD 1), respectively. On the other hand, mean holistic, objective and total score of participants in group 2 was 5.1, 5 and 5.1 with (SD 0.9), (SD 1) and (SD 0.9), respectively. Mean total score in groups 1 and 2 was finally calculated to be 5.5 and 5.1 with (SD 1) and (SD 0.9), respectively.

Table: 1. Descriptive Statistics of variables

	Years of experience	Age
N	100	100
Mean	4.0404	28.2828
Std. Deviation	1.95312	6.83036

Table :2. Descriptive Statistics of variables (Total score)

		N	Mean	SD
Group 1	**Holistic**	50	5.320	1.11465
	Objective	50	5.712	1.34387
	Total score	50	5.594	1.07847
Group 2	**Holistic**	50	5.180	0.98333
	Objective	50	5.082	1.08377
	Total score	50	5.111	0.91117

Table: 3. Mean and Std. Deviation of variables (Total score)

		N	Mean	SD
Total score	**Group 1**	50	5.5944	1.07847
	Group 2	50	5.1114	0.91117

For investigating the effect of translators' degree in translation, years of professional experience and the interaction of their degree in translation and years of professional experience on their translation quality correlation and regression statistical procedure was run the results of which are presented in **table- 4** and **Table-5**. According to these two tables, degree in translation and professional experience significantly predict translation quality. Also, the interaction of translators' years of professional experience and degree in translation significantly affect their translation quality. An implication could be that besides providing translators with academic knowledge and theories, practical training in translation is necessary as a prerequisite for a competent translator.

Table: 4. Results of correlations

		Score
Degree	Pearson	-0.237[*]
	Correlation	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**0.017**
	N	100
Years of experience	Pearson	0.342[**]
	Correlation	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**0.001**
	N	99

Table :5. Results of regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error		
(Constant)	5.299	0.396	13.367	0.000
Years of experience	0.156	0.050	3.132	**0.002**
Degree	-0.397	0.193	-2.053	**0.043**

DISCUSSION

Hypothesis: Translators' degree in translation and years of professional experience significantly predict their translation quality.

The results of correlation coefficients and regression procedure revealed that the hypothesis of the study could not be rejected ($p < 0.05$). While some studies showed that, years of work experience did not moderate the education-performance relationship due to the fact that work experience indicates the quantity not the quality; nevertheless, some dimensions of performance are influenced by education. The findings of the present study support the fact that years of experience in translation could predict translation quality. Taking into account the previous studies which indicate that academic knowledge and having a degree in translation significantly affect translation quality [17], it seems that both *degree in translation* and *professional experience* should be regarded as two wings necessary for a translator to fly with and they should not be considered as two factors which form a dichotomy; instead they form a unity.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions drawn indicate that translators can acquire a higher quality translation through further training in translation courses, translation theories and techniques included in the academic environment. Another implication of this study is that a translation task could be better completed by translators with degree in translation in Translation Studies. What is more, we should not ignore the important role of years of professional experience in the act of translation. In other words, besides providing translators with academic knowledge and theories, practical training in translation is necessary as a prerequisite for a competent translator. Translation students and trainees need to be provided with ample practice in translating different texts during their courses so that they can practice the theory and theorize the practice to become a competent translator.

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