

**IN THE NAME OF GOD**



**SHEIKHBAHAE UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TRANSLATION QUALITY AS  
DONE BY BILINGUALS AND TRILINGUALS: A CASE  
STUDY OF PERSIAN BILINGUAL & KURDISH  
TRILINGUAL TRANSLATION STUDENTS OF ENGLISH IN  
IRAN**

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**Dedicated to my Dear Father and Mother**

“Make up your mind to act decidedly and take the consequences. No good is ever done in this world by hesitation.” Thomas Huxley

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**Abbreviations:**

<b>L1:</b>	First Language
<b>L2:</b>	Second Language
<b>L3:</b>	Third Language
<b>ST:</b>	Source Text
<b>TT:</b>	Target Text
<b>TLT:</b>	Target Language Text
<b>SLA:</b>	Second Language Acquisition
<b>TLA:</b>	Third Language Acquisition
<b>TQA:</b>	Translation Quality Assessment
<b>TQI:</b>	Translation Quality Index
<b>ITT:</b>	Interpretive Theory of Translation
<b>RT:</b>	Relevance Theory
<b>IQ:</b>	Intelligence Quotient
<b>EQ:</b>	Emotional Intelligence Quotient
<b>TOM:</b>	Theory of Mind
<b>EC:</b>	European Community
<b>DGT:</b>	Directorate-General for Translation

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## **Abstract**

Individual case studies by linguists (Leopold, 1939, 1947, 1949; Ronjat, 1913) had concluded that early bilingualism was advantageous to children's cognitive and linguistic development. Furthermore, the existence of more than two languages in the brain suggests that multilinguals have enhanced cognitive control when compared to bilinguals. Accordingly, this study examined the differential role of bilingualism and trilingualism (multilingualism) on the quality of translation. Participants were 48 students (group A was 24 bilinguals, group B was 24 trilinguals) of BA course in translation. In order to homogenise them in terms of English language proficiency, Oxford Placement Test was administered. The participants were asked to translate thirty sentences from English into Persian. After collecting the participants' translations, three raters evaluated the quality of their translations. The results revealed that the mean score of the trilinguals' translation test was significantly higher than the mean score of the bilinguals' translation test. In other words, the observed T was significant at the 0.000 level. Moreover, the correlation between bilingual 1 and the mean score of bilingual 1, 2 and 3 was 0.873, the correlation between bilingual 2 and the mean score was 0.858, and the correlation between bilingual 3 and the mean score was 0.769. On the other hand, the correlation between trilingual 1 and the mean score was 0.868, the correlation between trilingual 2 and the mean score was 0.914, and the correlation between trilingual 3 and the mean score was 0.917, which were very high at the 0.01 level. That is to say, the correlation between trilingualism and the quality of translation was higher than the correlation between bilingualism and the quality of translation.

**Key Words:** bilinguals, trilinguals, translation quality

# **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1.1. Bilingualism**

The ability to be proficient in two languages has always been viewed with mixed opinions. The two conflicting views on this subject are that it is a deficit on the one hand, and an advantage on the other. Those who take the view that being bilingual taxes one's cognitive and/or linguistic system do so with the assumption that one's mind has been programmed to handle only one linguistic system at a time. On the other hand, those who take the opposing view that one's ability to be proficient in two or more languages at a time is advantageous presuppose that such a linguistic phenomenon impacts positively on and enhances one's metalinguistic skills. It has been claimed that balanced bilingual children outperform their monolingual peers on measures of concept formation (Bain, 1974; Liedtke & Nelson, 1968), divergent thinking skills and creativity (Torrance, Wu, Gowan, & Allioti, 1970) and field independence (Duncan & De Avila, 1979) as well as in their capacity to use language to monitor cognitive performance (Bain & YU, 1980). With unusual consistency, the findings suggest that bilingualism has a positive effect on a child's developing intelligence. Furthermore, Peal and Lambert (1962:14) assert that "their bilingual sample (French-English speaking) shows superior performance on measures of verbal intelligence and on nonverbal tests "involving concept-formation or symbolic flexibility". Moreover, Peal and Lambert (1962) believe that the possibility of switching linguistic codes while performing cognitive tasks gave bilingual children a flexibility that monolingual children do not enjoy (code switching refers to the observation that bilinguals can move from one language to the other with relative ease). Bilingual code switching might, indeed, facilitate the development of a more flexible "mental set" to approach cognitive tasks (Duncan & De Avila, 1979). Grosjean (1985, 1992) sees the bilingual as making use of his or her two languages depending on the requirements of the situation. Further, Lambert (1978: 132) states that "It may be that translator's bilinguality, a prerequisite for membership in the profession, has the effect of providing them with special forms of intelligence, sensitivity, and skills at finding out what is meant and what is implied". An important article by Lambert (1985) cites a number of studies about the enhanced cognitive flexibility that balanced bilinguals experience, which makes them better able to engage in problem solving and adapt to new ideas. Coggins, Kennedy & Armstrong (2004: 73) point out that "Flexibility in adapting to and using different linguistic systems enables the taking of an existing concept and synthesising it with

and/or differentiating it from others, using this to fuel the emergence of new ideas. This is where the possible that bilingual learning can have a profound effect on brain structures.”

Leopold (1949) suggests that bilingual children have two words for each referent and, early on, are forced to realize the conventional nature of language. Leopold (1949) postulates that bilingual children are forced to higher levels of abstract thought by the early need to separate the word from its referent. The separation of the word from its referent is seen as one of the major milestones in the development of symbolic thinking. Furthermore, as Vygotsky (1962:10) suggests, since bilinguals could express the same thought in different languages, a bilingual child tends to “see his language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to an awareness of his linguistic operations”.

### **1.1.2. Multilingualism**

Ansaldi, Marcotte, Fonseca, & Scherer (2008) assert that “As scientists unlock more of the neurological secrets of the bilingual brain, speaking more than one language may have they’re learning that cognitive benefits that extend from childhood into old age (EC, 2009:17)”.

Much of the research in lexical retrieval compares the relative ability of multilingual speakers to perform such tasks as naming the pictures in their two (or many) languages (Costa & Santesteban, 2004; Hernandez, Martinez, & Kohnert, 2000), making semantic classifications for words in the two languages (Dufour & Kroll, 1995), or translating between languages (Kroll & Stewart, 1994).

European community (2009) reports that language and creativity are mental faculties which form part of the natural skills of human beings. In business, multicultural and multilingual teams are often created to solve problems, find innovative solutions and develop new goods and services. This approach is based on the idea that multicultural teams can bring different perspectives to problems, leading to new solutions that foster creativity and innovation. Having access to multiple languages and cultures also seems to have a positive impact on the region's talent itself.

It is suggested that bilinguals may indeed have certain advantages with respect to general language proficiency and therefore be able to acquire a third language more easily than a monolingual learns a second language. Thomas (1988) discusses the role played by metalinguistic awareness in the case of monolingual and bilingual performance. In her examination of learners she found that bilinguals had developed more sensitivity to language



as a system, which helped them in the solution of certain linguistic tasks, apart from also possessing enhanced lexical knowledge.

Furthermore, Clyne (1997) claims that bilinguals and trilinguals use the same kinds of mechanisms and processes, but that these are more complex when three languages are involved. Some of the explanations he offers for his data in terms of multilateral competence suggests that there are features which can be seen as being quite unique to trilinguals and which can be seen as forming part of trilingual competence, such as the “triple interlingual identification” and the establishment of a special triangular relationship between the three languages.

As Hoffmann (2001) argues, trilingual language competence contains the linguistic aspects, i.e. vocabulary and grammar, from the three language systems, and also the pragmatic component, consisting of sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences pertaining to the three languages involved. Hoffmann also adds that trilingual language competence includes the ability to function in bilingual or trilingual contexts, which require decisions on code choice and code-switching. He asserts that trilingual competence enables speakers to create their own linguistic means in order to master particular communicative situations.

### **1.1.3. Quality of translation**

The problem of producing a high-quality translation has preoccupied the minds of translators and academics for ages. Different assessment methods (e.g. Leuven-Zwart, 1989, 1990; Toury, 1995; House, 1997; Maier, 1998; Schaffner, 1998; Fawcett, 2000) have been developed by scholars and the translation industry (Williams & Chesterman, 2002). However, none of these methods is without problems because the process of assessing translation is by itself highly subjective (Ahmadi, 2011). Moreover, the field of Translation Quality Assessment, as Hajmohammadi (2005) states, is problematic.

As early as 1790, Tytler (1992: 128; in Bassnet and Lefevere (1992) wrote in his *Essay on the Principles of Translation* that: "I would therefore describe a good translation to be, that in which the merit of the original work is completely transfused into another language, as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs, as it is by those who speak the language of the original work." (Original emphasis)

He proceeds with his 'laws' of translation:

- 1- That the translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work.
- 2- That the style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original.
- 3- That the translation should have all the ease of the original composition.

His emphasis on comprehensibility and normality (in the sense of a translation's effect on the native speaker) clearly evidences two yardsticks that are and will be present in any TQA model – viz. informativity and naturalness.

Moreover, Nida (1964:4-8; in Ülsever [1999: 52]) suggests three criteria for assessing a translation: (i) general efficiency of the communication process, (ii) comprehension of intent, and (iii) equivalence of response.

The last criterion, Ülsever explains, is closely linked to Nida's principle of dynamic equivalence where the effect on the target reader is the focus of attention (see also Nida, 1996).

Hatim and Mason (1992: 93-96) voice important opinions about the status of Target Text (TT). They integrate linguistic approaches into cultural considerations to judge the effectiveness of a translation. They also link culture to the 'cognitive environment' of source and target text users, benefiting from the maxims of Grice. They pose the question of what to include and what to omit from a text. They touch upon (ibid: 187-189) the limits of the translator's freedom in relation to Reiss's concept of text typology. This implies in some text types (e.g. Holy Scriptures) the translator cannot exercise any degree of deviation from the original text. Their approach is thus mainly discursual, focusing on ideational and interpersonal functions, together with a view to the semiotic level of discourse (Enani, 2003: 191-192). They (ibid: 190) conclude that the appropriateness of translation can be judged in the light of such considerations as the translator's decisions about lexical, syntactic and other choices, especially the rhetorical purpose 'as the basis of the evolution of text type.'

In his book *Approaches to Translation*, Newmark (1982) discusses several issues touching upon translation evaluation. He comments (ibid: 128-129) on the naturalness of translation, emphasizing that “ the translator should write within his own idiolect or his conception of the SL text author's, always provided the text appears to be written naturally.”

The simple question of “How do we know when a translation is good?” is, according to House (2001), the main concern with translation criticism. In translation criticism, it is important to be aware of the difference between linguistic analysis and social judgement. Judgements of the quality of a translation depend on a variety of factors that enter into any social evaluative

statement. It is the linguistic analysis which provides grounds for arguing an evaluative judgement about the quality of a given translation (House, 2001).

House's functional-pragmatic model (1977/1981;1997) for translation evaluation, first proposed in the mid-70s, revised in the late 90s and developed to its maturity more recently (House, 2001, 2006), has foregrounded its foundation theory on translation as re-contextualisation, which is defined as "taking a text out of its original frame and context and placing it within a new set of relationships and culturally-conditioned expectations" (House, 2006: 366). Her model has always been regarded as one of the leading text-oriented or theoretical models (Zarandona, 2008). House's model, as a kind of translation quality assessment, is regarded as a cross-linguistic cultural practice primarily based on the Hallidayan systemic-functional theory (Halliday, 1994) which looks at language in social life and focuses on texts, the product of human decision processes that are the most tangible and least ambiguously analysable entities (House, 1997: p.118), but it also relates to Prague functional stylistics, pragmatics, corpus-based distinctions between the spoken and written language, speech act theory and discourse analysis (House, 2001). The reason for preferring functional approaches to language, functional pragmatics and Hallidayan systemic-functional linguistics over philosophical, psychological, pragmatic, sociolinguistic and conversation-analytic approaches is that their notion of context is found to be more suitable for written text and thus for a theory of translation as re-contextualisation (House, 2006).

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

There are different arguments among linguists on what bilingualism is. For example, for Bloomfield (1933:56) 'nativelike control of two languages' can be taken as the criterion for bilingualism. Recent studies on bilinguals have shown that bilinguality has profound effects on cognitive processes. Children in a bilingual context may be able to transfer their decontextualized skills and knowledge from one language to another. Ben-Zeev (1977) argues that in order to avoid linguistic interference bilingual children must develop a greater awareness and sensitivity to linguistic cues. In the same way, a review of literature on early code-switching (Koppe & Meisel, 1995) shows that bilingual children acquire the necessary knowledge very early. Already by age 2, they choose the language according to the addressee, and soon afterwards they begin to adapt to other sociolinguistic requirements. Furthermore,

bilingual children have heightened metalinguistic awareness because they routinely pay attention to language form (i.e. which language is spoken) in order to make decisions on their own language choice. “Metalinguistic awareness refers to a speaker’s conscious awareness about language and the use of language and bilinguals have sufficient metalinguistic awareness to speak the contextually appropriate language, as we mentioned”. (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2003:378). On the other hand, multilingualism has been defined in different ways but it basically refers to the ability to use more than two languages. It is likely that the multilingual mind differs in some respects from the bilingual mind, but in what way and with what outcomes is at present an open question. With regard to trilinguals the experience of three different languages also results in further enhanced awareness of the analysis and control components of processing to enable the speaker to make the right choices and respond in linguistically and communicatively adequate ways. Furthermore, language processing in the multilingual mind must differ from the bilingual mind because there are more than two languages to use at a given time. The existence of more than two languages in the brain suggests that multilinguals have enhanced cognitive control when compared to bilinguals. In the same way, Bialystok (2002) claims that language and cognition proceed through similar mechanisms with mutual influence on each other. In other words, EC (2009) claims that knowledge of more than one language points to the expansion of certain types of human potential, including the potential for thinking, learning, problem-solving and communicating which show signs of being enhanced through multilingualism. Moreover, EC (2009) asserts that the impact of multilingualism on interpersonal communication is reported in terms of understanding and responding to the communicative needs of others, contextual sensitivity, interactional competence in communication, and enhanced skills in differentiating languages in contextually sensitive ways. This suggests that multilingualism tends towards multiskills in interpersonal interaction. If so, then this can have a bearing on the potential for creativity. Moreover, one might argue that, trilingual competence can be seen as different from bilingual competence rather than more of the same. For this reason, the present study aims to examine the differential role of bilingualism and multilingualism on the quality of translation. In other words, the effect of multilinguals’ enhanced metalinguistic awareness, intelligence, sensitivity, flexibility and other superiorities on the quality of translation was investigated. In this study, it was hypothesized that multilinguals’ enhanced cognition affects the quality of their translation. Generally speaking, quality can be defined as” the totality of characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs” (ISO 8402 standard; Quality Management and Quality Assurance)”. More specifically, Juliane House (1977, 1997, 2007) introduces some