



MEASURING STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE IN USING ELLIPSIS AS A COHESIVE DEVICE IN THEIR WRITING AND TRANSLATION

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Abstract: Both translation and writing are two productive skills that involve decoding and encoding a message and also translation is a kind of writing skill. The purpose of the present research was to investigate if it is possible to measure the relationship between a minor ability of translation students in relation with two major related ability such as using cohesive devices (ellipsis) and students' writing ability in relation to their translation ability at the academic level. For conducting this research, 180 students of English translation studies at B.A. level participated in general test of ellipsis. From among this population, a total number of 94 students took the writing and translation tests. The writing tests and translation tests were assessed by qualified raters in translation studies. Also, two researcher-made rubrics was designed to evaluate the use of ellipsis in writing and translation tests of the participants. The obtained results indicated that there is significant relationship between students' ability in using ellipsis in their writing and translation of this cohesive device from English to Persian. Also, it was found that application a particular rubric for evaluating translation or writing would not be sufficient in case of investigating the specific details, therefore combination of the related rubrics could fulfil the aim of assessing writing or translation tests of the participants in a test.

Key Words: cohesive device, ellipsis, translation, writing

1. Introduction

A translator's most important skill is writing in the target language. Brockbank (2001, p. 2) declares that "writing and translation are traditionally addressed as two different objects of study. However, when scrutinizing the research done in the two fields, it is obvious that they coincide in many ways". Kaur (2005) found that both translating and writing are two productive skills that involve decoding and encoding a message and also translation is a kind of writing skill. Both writers and translators need good linguistic skills to cope with the logical component of text production. However, writers and translators may be presented with problems that seem insoluble if they rely solely on logical skills.

According to Halliday and Hassan (1976) a text takes its shape through texture which is provided by the cohesive relations through cohesive devices. One of these cohesive devices is called ellipsis. Halliday and Hassan (1976, p. 143) state that "when we talk of ellipsis, we are not referring to any and every instances in which there is some information that the speaker has to supply from his own evidence. Typically, ellipsis as a subcategory of cohesive devices is known to occur in responses in spontaneous conversations but is seldom used in formal writing. Zoltan (2013), however, found that whereas L1 writers incorporate ellipsis in their texts, L2 writers do not.

1.1 Purpose and Significance

It seems that lack of familiarity of the translators with the functions of cohesive devices especially ellipsis in translation and writing could be considered as one of the problematic areas which affects the quality of translation. The purpose of the present research was to investigate if it is possible to measure the relationship between a minor ability of translation students in relation with two major related ability such as using cohesive devices (ellipsis) and students' writing ability in relation to their translation ability at the academic level. In the following part of this article the theoretical and practical part

of our research along with the findings obtained from our data analysis would be presented.

1.2 Research Question

The present study is an attempt to provide answer to the following question:

Is there any significant relationship between students' ability in using ellipsis in their writing and translation of this cohesive device from English to Persian?

2. Review of the Related Literature

Dam- Jensen and Heine (2013, p. 92) claim that "in our view, the logical component of writing and translation can be defined as the process in which the text producer uses language systematically, according to the rules by which language is composed".

The concept 'translation as rewriting' was put forward by Lefevere. In translation, rewriting and the manipulation of literary fame, Lefevere (1992) formally presents his theory 'translation is a rewriting of an original text'. According to him:

All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewriting can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of ever increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulation processes of literature are exemplified by translation can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live. (p.7)

Aksoy (2001) points out to the relationship between translation and writing and states that writing plays a very important role in any translation. Since a translation happens in a context and implies the transposition of a source text into a target text, this must fulfill the same constraints of an original text written in the target language. He maintains that translation activity takes the form of rewriting with respect to the idea that society is a constituent of a system which comprises categories and norms which influence the translation process with the intention of affecting the audience according to the ideology and poetics of that society.

Also, Aksoy (2001) declares that translation has never been an isolated activity. There is always a context in which translation takes place, a history from which a text emerges and another one unto which a text is transposed. Translation has always served a special purpose or many purposes at the same time, and each time it has been shaped by a certain force, power or reason. Since translation cooperates more with the domestic rather than foreign culture, the translator should not be frustrated by expectations of an institution, person or body of individuals. In its intellectual aspects, translation as a means of cultural enrichment, the choice of the works to be translated and the guidelines and goals of the translation activity are set by certain forces. Hence, translation takes the form of rewriting an original text, since it is performed under certain constraints and for certain purposes. The original text is chosen for a certain purpose and the guidelines of translation are defined to serve this purpose by the translator and/ or by those who initiate the translation activity. In this case, rewriting in order to fit that purpose, along with fidelity to the original, becomes the main issue for the translators.

The concept of 'cohesion' was introduced by Halliday and Hasan (1976), whose major concern is to investigate how sentences are linked in a text. Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 26) explicitly state that 'cohesion does not concern what a text means; it concerns how the text is constructed as a semantic edifice'. That is, although cohesion usually plays a role in a paragraph, it does not lead to the global flow of a text across paragraphs. Halliday and Hassan (1976) state that every text has a texture which is provided by the cohesive relations through cohesive devices. According to them, these relationships are set up where the interpretation of one element in the text is dependent on the interpretation of another. They argue that grammatical cohesive devices express more general meanings and lexical cohesive devices express more specific meaning.

To provide a framework for studying and judging the cohesion and coherence of writing, Halliday and Hasan (1976) introduced five different types of cohesive ties: (1) reference (i.e., the indication of information from elsewhere such as personals, demonstratives, and comparatives), (2) substitution (i.e., the replacement of one component by another), (3) ellipsis (i.e., the omission of a component), (4) conjunction (i.e., the indication of specific meaning which presupposes present items in the discourse, such as additive, adversative, casual, and temporal), and (5) lexical cohesion (i.e., the repetition of the same or relative lexical items). They contended that through analyzing the use of cohesive device, one could evaluate or assess writing quality from the perspective of coherence (Chen, 2008).

McCarthy (2005, p. 43) defines ellipsis as 'the omission of elements normally required by the grammar which the speaker/ writer assumes are obvious from the context'. Halliday and Hassan (1976) state that ellipsis can be regarded as a kind of substitution in which the item is replaced by nothing. In fact, both of these devices involve referring back to something earlier in the text.

2.1 Theoretical Background

Weigle (2002) stated that writing assessment refers to some procedures which are used in evaluating the written products. Weigle (2002) introduces three analytic scoring schemas like Test in English for Educational Purposes (TEEP), Michigan Writing Assessment Scoring Guide, and Jacob et al.'s model (1981). The third model was explained in detail by the researchers of the present study: One of analytic scoring schema was developed by Jacob et al. (1981). The researchers was more focused on this model because according to Weigle (2002, p. 115) "one of the best known and widely used analytic scales in ESL was created by Jacob et al (1981)". There are five features or aspects of writing- content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics in this scoring system based on which the scripts are scored. In this model each of the five aspects are divided into four levels consisting of excellent to very good, good to average, fair to poor, and very poor. Moreover, each level receives one score. "The five aspects are differently weighted to emphasize content (30 points), language use (20 points), organization and vocabulary weighted equally (20 points), and mechanics receiving very little emphasis (5 points). This scale has been adapted by numerous college-level writing programs, and is accompanied by training materials and sample compositions so that users can fairly quickly learn to apply the scale" (Weigle, 2002, p. 115). According to Weigle (2002, p. 115), Jacob et al.'s scale was extensively piloted and revised to make sure that it could be applied reliably by trained raters.

Generally Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) is considered to be the evaluation of the criterion of goodness of a piece of translation; in fact it is a kind of measurement far from of mentioning only the good points and defects (House, 2010). In order to improve the practical translation quality assessment, several translation scholars have developed their own translation quality assessment models in order to be applied in reproducible and inter-subjective assessments. In the present research, Holistic Method C of Waddington's Quality Assessment was used.

Waddington (2001) indicated that method C is a holistic method of assessment. The scale in this method is unitary and treats the translation competence as a whole, but requires the corrector to consider three different aspects of the student's performance. In this method, five levels are defined and for each of the levels there are two possible marks (i.e. accuracy of transfer of ST content & quality of expression in TL) ranging from 0-10; this allows the corrector freedom to award the higher mark to the candidate who fully meets the requirements of a particular level and the lower mark to the candidate who falls between two levels but is closer to the upper one.

2.2 Related Studies

Several researches show that there is correlation between students' writing abilities and their translation ability. Also, the researchers of the present study found some evidence about the use of ellipsis in writing. Abbasi and Shabani (2011) examined the effect of proficiency in writing on EFL students' translation ability. The results of their study revealed that there is a relationship between proficiency in writing and EFL students' translation ability, i.e. those students who gained high scores in writing test, had better performance in translation.

Akbari Pakdaman (2007), in line with Abbasi and Shabani's research (2011), conducted a research to find the relationship between English writing ability and translation of Persian texts into English. He concluded that there is a high correlation between these two variables and students who have good English writing ability can produce better translation of Persian texts. Also, some researchers (Newmark, 1988; Aksoy, 2001; Inaba, 2009; Pouya, 2012 & Lefevre, 1992) declare that there is a relationship between writing ability and translation ability. Moreover, Yang & Sun (2012, as cited in Ahangar, Taki & Rahimi, 2012) explored the use of cohesive devices in argumentative writing by Chinese sophomore and senior EFL learners. The results of ellipsis analysis revealed that it was mostly found in spoken language and were seldom used in formal written discourse.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample/ Participants

In order to perform this research, 180 junior and senior students of English translation studies at BA level took the general test of ellipsis but just a total number of 94 students took the writing and translation tests. The participants were selected randomly from foreign languages faculty of Central Tehran Branch and South Tehran Branch of Islamic Azad University. Also, one MA translation student in this research, along with the researchers was selected as the rater of the study who was as qualified as the researchers in the field of translation studies. The raters were asked to evaluate both the translation and the writing tests based on the required rubrics.

3.2 Instruments

To conduct a reliable research, the researchers tried to choose the most appropriate instruments and procedures for achieving useful data and results. These instruments consisted of three types of researcher made tests including a general test of ellipsis, an English to Persian translation test and an English writing test. These tests were scored according to determined rubrics by three raters. As mentioned before, the writing tests and translation tests of the participants were evaluated based on Jacob & et al's (1981) scoring profile of writing and holistic method C of Waddington' (2001) translation quality assessment, respectively. But since the aim of this research was to evaluate knowledge of ellipsis in particular, the researchers proposed two models of writing and translation assessment which are as follows:

The Researchers' Additional Rubrics for Evaluating the Designed Writing and Translation Tests

In writing test, the researchers assumed a total number of 10 for each part of the writing test. For any type of ellipsis used in this part, two points was considered. One point for using them in their writing and the other point for the correct use of them. The writing test consisted of two parts of sentence making and essay writing. In essay writing test, for the ease of composition, the introduction and conclusion paragraphs were written by the researchers themselves. Therefore the subjects were asked to write only the main body of the writing, using elliptical sentences or phrases. The time for performing this part was 45 minutes. The obtained scores of ellipsis in essay writing part was added to the scores given by the raters given to the students according to Jacob & et al's (1981) scoring profile of writing.

In order to fulfill the aim of assessing the quality of translation among the participants regarding elliptical sentences, a maximum score of 10 was considered for the five sentences of each text. In other word, if the participants translate the elliptical sentence correctly, they gain two scores. In case of translating incompletely, they receive one score, and when no translation is presented by the participant, they mark no score. The scores that the subjects gained from these sentences added to the scores given to the whole text which was assessed based on Holistic Method C of Waddington' (2001) Translation Quality Assessment.

Therefore, for assessing each test of writing and translation two types of scores were considered. The first one was the score gained by rubric of Jacob & et al's (1981) scoring profile of writing and Holistic Method C of Waddington' (2001) Translation Quality Assessment, and the second one was the scores obtained through researcher made rubrics. These two sets of scores were added to each other and divided by two to obtain one single score.

3.3 Procedure

1. The researchers chose 180 junior and senior students of English translation studies at BA level. Thirty of these students participated in pilot phase and 150 of them were the participants of main administration but just 94 students whose scores were in the range of one SD (standard deviation) above and below the mean (X) were chosen for this study. The pilot phase was conducted among 30 BA translation students of Central Tehran Branch of Islamic Azad University with the purpose of minimizing the possible errors not only considering the prepared items but also the correction process of the tests before administrating the whole tests to the main participants.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Obtained Scores on General Test of Ellipsis

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
General Test of Ellipsis	30	15.00	44.00	32.7000	8.63493	74.562
Valid N (listwise)	30					

2. Then, the general test of ellipsis was scored based on the exact answers which were provided in answer sheet. Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of the obtained scores on general test of ellipsis. The reliability of this test was calculated through KR-21 formula which was equal with 0.86.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Total Scores of Writing Test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Ellipsis in Writing	30	35.33	83.83	56.4500	11.00306	121.067
Rater Total						
Valid N (listwise)	30					

3. Table 2 represents descriptive statistics of the scores obtained in the pilot phase on the writing tests. The values of mean, standard deviation and variance in this table were 56.45, 11, and 121.06 respectively. The tests of writing were scored by three MA translation students as the raters of this research based on the theoretical framework of this study. The researcher used Pearson correlation in order to calculate the correlation between the raters given scores to obtain a total score. The obtained correlation between the first and the second raters was 0.84, between the first and the third raters was 0.83, and between the second and the third rater was 0.90.

4. Then in order to calculate the inter-rater reliability among three raters of writing test, the Cronbach's Alpha was run and the amount of 0.948 achieved which is a highly accepted reliability and show a positive relationship among the scores given by the three raters and the scores are constant.

5. After analyzing the writing scores of the three raters, the researcher calculated the amount of ellipsis used in writing tests by the participants based on her proposed rubric. In this rubric, a maximum number of 10 was considered for each participants. The obtained scores were converted to the scale of 100 to be added to the scores given by three raters through Jacob et al's (1981) scoring profile of writing correctly. Finally these two sets of scores were added to each other and divided by 2 and a single score was gained.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Total Scores of Translation Test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Ellipsis in Translation	30	43.83	72.83	58.5611	8.50800	72.386
Rater Total						
Valid N (listwise)	30					

6. Table 3 shows descriptive statistics of total scores of translation test in the pilot phase which was administered to 30 BA translation students. Then the students participated in the researcher made translation test. They were supposed to translate a total number of 25 sentences in this part in 45 minutes.

7. In order to evaluate translation tests of the participants, Holistic Method C of Waddington's (2001) Translation Quality Assessment Rubric was used. The researcher used Pearson formula to calculate the correlation among the raters. Based on obtained results, since the obtained correlation was acceptable, the three sets of scores given by the raters were added to each other and a total score of translation was assumed for the participants. There was the correlation of 0.848 between the first and second raters and the amount of 0.833 between the first and the third raters and the amount of 0.901 between the second and the third raters which are significant at the two tailed level.

8. To calculate the inter-rater reliability among three raters of translation test, the Cronbach's Alpha was run and the amount of 0.864 achieved which is a highly accepted reliability and show a positive relationship among the scores given by the three raters.

9. When the researcher made sure of inter-rater reliability, she calculated the amount of ellipsis used in translation tests by the participants. Translation tests consisted of 5 short passages. In each passage, there were 5 elliptical sentences. A maximum score of 10 was considered for every passage and therefore, a total number of 50 was determined for the whole translation tests. These scores were multiplied by 2 to have the same scale as holistic method C of Waddington's (2001) translation quality assessment rubric which was calculated out of 100. The obtained scores given by three raters were added to the scores of researcher-made rubric and were divided by two.

10. After making sure of the reliability of the tests, general test of ellipsis was administered to 150 BA translation students. The allocated time for performing these tests were 45 minutes for grammar and writing tests.

11. By correcting their tests, the students whose scores were one standard deviation below or above the mean were excluded from the sample of this research and the writing test was administered to 94 subjects. The participants based on their performance in this test as the indication of the independent variable of this research were divided into two groups of 47 participants: the students who used more ellipsis in their writing (Group 1) and the students who used a lower amount of ellipsis in their writing (Group 2).

12. Then one week later, the translation test was run in a 45-minute session.

13. After running the main tests on 150 students of translation, the researcher exactly administered and scored writing and translation tests as it was explained at the pilot level and calculated inter-rater reliability between the scores of three raters.

14. The obtained correlation of the raters for the writing test based on spearman formula was between $R1 \& R2 = 0.884$, $R1 \& R3 = 0.80$ and $R2 \& R3 = 0.84$ and the reliability of the obtained scores was 0.949 which let the researcher sum up their scores and calculate one set of scores for the writing part of the participants. The obtained scores of ellipsis in essay writing part was added to the scores given by the raters.

15. The obtained correlation of the raters in translation test based on spearman formula was between $R1 \& R2 = .892$, $R1 \& R3 = .934$ and $R2 \& R3 = .936$ and the reliability of the obtained scores was 0.972 which let the researcher calculate one set of scores by getting the average mark of them and add her additional rubrics.

4. Results and Data Analysis

In this research, the following six set of scores were calculated: writing scores, ellipsis in writing scores, total writing score of major and minor scores, translation scores, ellipsis in translation scores, and total translation score of major and minor scores. The scores of the writing parts majorly and in minor was obtained (table 4).

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Total Writing Scores

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Total Writing Scores	76.7394	8.32658	94
Ellipsis in writing (out of 100)	28.9362	18.46054	94
Total writing score of major and minor scores	52.7606	9.69112	94

Based on the findings of Table 4, students showed weakness in applying ellipsis as a cohesive device in their writing.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Total Writing Scores

Ellipsis in writing (out of 100)	Mean	N	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Std. Deviation
.00	80.2000	15	16.0	16.0	6.70767
10.00	72.6000	5	5.3	21.3	6.43623
20.00	73.5000	19	20.2	41.5	9.33780
30.00	78.4118	17	18.1	59.6	8.07240
40.00	78.5455	22	23.4	83.0	8.19975
50.00	76.1667	9	9.6	92.6s	5.96343
60.00	74.4000	5	5.3	97.9	7.23187
70.00	78.5000	1	1.1	98.9	.
80.00	54.0000	1	1.1	100.0	.
Total	76.7394	94	100.0		8.32658

As Table 5 represents, from total score of one hundred, 92.6% of students gained less than score fifty and only 7.4% of students could apply ellipsis correctly in their writing, which indicates great weakness in applying ellipsis as one of the most important cohesive devices.

The next step in this research was finding the correlation between the total writing scores as the major ability and using ellipsis in their writing as the minor ability. And the correlation between each parts and the rubrics that we selected. Table 6 represents the findings:

Table 6. Correlation of Total Writing Scores and Ellipsis in Writing

		Total Writing Scores	Ellipsis in writing (out of 100)	Total writing score of major and minor scores
Total Writing Scores	Pearson correlation	1	-.115	.320**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.268	.002
	N	94	94	94
Ellipsis in writing (out of 100)	Pearson Correlation	-.115	1	.904**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.268		.000
	N	94	94	94
Total writing score of major and minor scores	Pearson Correlation	.320**	.904**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000	
	N	94	94	94

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of Table 6 indicates that there is a significant correlation between each part of the exam in the minor, the major parts and the whole work.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Total Translation Scores

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Total Translation Score	77.7872	5.74011	94
Ellipsis in translation	54.2553	9.56802	94
Total translation score of major and minor scores	65.9415	4.79799	94

The researchers followed the same procedures for finding the translation ability of the students in general and their ability in applying ellipsis in their translation as the minor ability (Table 7).

The descriptive statistics of the total translation scores and ellipsis in translation indicates that students pay less attention to ellipsis while they translate the texts, and the dispersion of their scores in this minor part is more than the scattering of their scores in translation as the major part.

Now we needed to know about the correlation between the total translation scores as the major ability and students' ability in applying ellipsis in translation as the minor ability. And the correlation between each parts and the rubrics that we selected. Table 8 represents the findings:

Table 8. Correlation of Total Translation Scores and Ellipsis in Translation

		Total Trans- lation Score	Ellipsis in translation (out of 100)	Total trans- lation score of major and minor scores
Total Translation Score	Pearson Correlation	1	-.299**	.303**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003	.003
	N	94	94	94
Ellipsis in translation (out of 100)	Pearson Correlation	-.299**	1	.818**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003		.000
	N	94	94	94
Total translation score of major and minor scores	Pearson Correlation	.303**	.818**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000	
	N	94	94	94

****. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

Table 8 demonstrates that the correlation between all parts of the translation test is significant at the 2-tailed level.

The final step in our research was analyzing the obtained data to find out the relationship between translation ability and writing ability of our participants considering the application of ellipsis in writing and translation. So we compared their total scores which obtained from our rubrics which was combining the minor scores of ellipsis with the holistic method C of Waddington's (2001) for translation and with Jacob et al's (1981) scoring profile of writing.

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics of Minor and Major Scores of Translation and Writing

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Total translation score of major and minor scores	65.9415	4.79799	94
Total writing score of major and minor scores	52.7606	9.69112	94

Table 9 represents the descriptive statistics of minor and major scores in writing and translation test describing mean and standard deviation in each test and Table 10 represents their correlation.

Table 10. Correlations between Translation Score and Writing Score of Minor and Major Scores

		Total translation score of major and minor scores	Total writing score of major and minor scores
Total translation score of major and minor scores	Pearson Correlation	1	.258*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.012
	N	94	94
Total writing score of major and minor scores	Pearson Correlation	.258*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	
	N	94	94

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 10 proves that the correlation between total translation score and writing score of major and minor parts is equal to 0.258 which is significant at the 2-tailed level.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that there is significant relationship between students' ability in using ellipsis in their writing and translation of this cohesive device from English to Persian.

Aksoy (2001) points out to the relationship between translation and writing and states that writing plays a very important role in any translation. Also, some researchers (Newmark, 1988; Aksoy, 2001; Inaba, 2009; Pouya, 2012 & Lefevre, 1992) declare that there is a relationship between writing ability and translation ability. Bae's (2001) findings revealed that ellipsis showed weak relationships with overall writing quality ($r = .361$, ellipsis and overall; $r = .223$).

The inductive or part to whole evaluation is of great importance in order to be able to assess knowledge of students in a particular grammatical structure regarding their translation or writing. Also, it was found that application a particular rubric for evaluating translation or writing would not be sufficient in case of investigating the specific details, therefore combination of the related rubrics could fulfil the aim of assessing writing or translation tests of the participants in a test.

The aim of the researchers of the present study was to design new rubrics for assessing translation or writing qualities of the students when a specific element of language is considered and in an attempt they tried to represent reliable rubrics for this purpose. In this research ellipsis as a cohesive device was investigated according to the researcher-made rubrics.

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