

1894901

Advanced Translation (I)

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**Tehran
2018/1396**



**The Organization for Researching and Composing
University Textbooks in the Humanities (SAMT)
Institute for Research and Development in the Humanities**

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Advanced Translation (I) / Zohreh Gharaei, Shahrzad Parvaresh,

Saeed Ketabi.

سرشناسه: قرائی، زهره
عنوان و نام پدیدآور: مترجمان: زهره غارای، شهرزاد پورآر، سعید کتبی

مشخصات نشر: تهران: سازمان مطالعه و تدوین کتب علوم انسانی دانشگاهها (سمت)، پژوهشکده تحقیق و توسعه علوم انسانی، ۱۳۹۶ = ۲۰۱۸ م.

مشخصات ظاهری: ده، ۲۴۲ ص.

فروست: «سمت»؛ ۲۱۴۱. مترجمی زبان انگلیسی؛ ۱۹.

شابک: ۹-۰۵۳۷-۰۲-۶۰۰-۹۷۸-۱۲۰۰۰۰ ریا.

وضعیت فهرست نویسی: فیبا

یادداشت: انگلیسی.

یادداشت: پشت جلد به فارسی: ترجمه پیشرفته (۱).

یادداشت: انگلیسی.

آوانویسی: ران: ادونسد ترنسلیشن وان

موضوع: زبان انگلیسی — ترجمه به فارسی — راهنمای آموزشی (عالی)

موضوع: English Language -- Translating into Persian -- Study and Teaching (Higher)

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شناسه افزوده: پرورش، شهرزاد Parvaresh, Shahrzad

شناسه افزوده: کتبی، سعید Ketabi, Saeed

شناسه افزوده: سازمان مطالعه و تدوین کتب علوم انسانی دانشگاهها (سمت)، پژوهشکده تحقیق و توسعه علوم انسانی.

The Organization for Researching and Composing University Textbooks in the Humanities (SAMT), Institute for Research and Development in the Humanities.

رده‌بندی کنگره: ۱۳۹۶ ۴ الف ق / PE

رده‌بندی دیویی: فا ۴۲۸ / ۰۲

شماره کتابشناسی ملی: ۵۰۹۴۳۰۴



The Organization for Researching and Composing University Textbooks in the Humanities (SAMT), Institute for Research and Development in the Humanities

Advanced Translation (I)

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Edited by: The Editorial Staff of SAMT

1st Impression: Winter 2018/1396

Print Run: 500

Price: 120000 Rials

Typesetting and Lithography: SAMT

Printing & Binding: Mash'ar

نشانی ساختمان مرکزی: تهران، بزرگراه جلال آل احمد، غرب پل یادگار امام (ره)، روبه‌روی بومپ گاز، کدپستی: ۱۴۶۳۶

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تلفن: ۰۲-۴۴۲۴۲۵۰۰

قیمت: ۱۲۰۰۰۰ ریال. در این نوبت چاپ قیمت مذکور ثابت است و فروشنده‌گان و عوامل توزیع مجاز به تغییر آن نیستند.

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Preface

The prime purpose of any translator training program is no doubt training students who are capable of meeting translational demands that different texts in various situations confront them. The B.A. translation program in our country with the emphasis it lays on practice courses is no exception. Among practice-based courses in our educational program, *Advanced Translation* courses are arranged to be taught after students have passed such basic courses in translation as *Principles and Methodology of Translation* and *Translating Simple Texts*, and before they face the challenge of translation in more subject-specific courses such as *Translating Political Texts*. This is indicative of the fact that *Advanced Translation* courses are, in essence, intended to facilitate the transition that students – who are now familiar with translation theories and approaches – are to make from the basics of translation to the more specifics. As such, the courses, if planned and practiced purposefully, could help learners broaden their minds and gain increased awareness into the concept of translation; they can also provide students with an opportunity to acquire techniques and skills they need as their life companions not only in their upcoming courses but also in their future vocational pursuit as translators. With such considerations in mind, *Advanced Translation (I)* was planned to feature a book that marks a change of direction in the available practical translation textbooks and, thereby, gear toward the needs of students.

The present book is organized into two sections. The first section, within five instructional units, attends to the preliminaries of translating

texts: the basic knowledge that students need to apply in all translational situations they face. The book starts with a unit on translation strategies and procedures, which helps students achieve a deeper understanding of the concept of translation and the associated terms. This understanding is complemented in the next unit. In the second unit, students, who have already passed a two-credit course on translation theories, are recalled the fact that what goes on in translation is more than a linguistic transference; they are invited to grasp different approaches in practice, a concern that is further reinforced in other units. This unit on approaches to translating is followed by another unit in which text types are introduced and students are invited to not only discern their dominant features in actual practice but also perceive that each text type may pose specific demands in translating. What comes in the next units is the skill that all successful translators need to possess, i.e., editing. While felicitous use of language is a requisite of translation, it has not received due attention in most of our existing instructional books. Therefore, in this book two units are devoted to this important yet undervalued part of translators' job; one unit considers a number of issues pertaining to Persian editing, and one sees to those that relate to the English language. While no claim is made on the comprehensiveness of the editing units, it is hoped that they sensitize students to the correct use of language in all its aspects and spark the interest of prospective translators to further investigate into this skill in their future translational engagements. The points raised in the first section are additionally reinforced and practiced throughout the book. Further to this, in the second section a variety of information-centered texts are introduced and discussed in terms of their genre conventions in both Persian and English to not only pinpoint the challenges of translating them but also shed light on the ways the challenges could be met. It is hoped that in *Advanced Translation (II)* the same path is followed to work on vocative and literary texts.

In writing the book attempts have been made not to stay far away from

the recent advances in translation pedagogy (notably Kiraly, 2000¹); sparking among them are the focus on the real-world, vocational side of translation in training, highlighting the role of students as active individuals who are responsible for their learning, can learn from their experiences and transfer their findings from one situation to another. Focus is also on marking the role of the instructor as a sophisticated individual who, though competent and skilled, develops excellence among learners by letting them go through the challenges of translating and make decisions on thorny situations. He/she, in turn, fulfills his/her role by first showing them the way and then supervising and guiding them through. To facilitate such learning, students are invited to learn from not only the book and their instructor's guidelines but also their mistakes and peers. Such concerns and many others of the same ilk are typified in the book through the descriptions of each instructional unit and the goal-oriented activities students are called to engage in, which depending on their purpose, demand, process, and outcome take the form of *exercises*, *tasks*, and *projects*. While the three of them work as scaffolding tools (Calvo, 2015²), guidance and prompting gradually diminish as students move on to the end of each unit and start working on the projects.

Exercises, which intervene between lesson descriptions and are in line with the point at issue, have a more restrictive focus while tasks are designed so that their fulfillment process addresses a combination of competences and the outcome typifies a real-world translation job. To guide students through the process of translation, which is one underlying objective of the book, the

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1. Kiraly, D. C. (2000). *A social constructivist approach to translator education: Empowerment from theory to practice*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
 2. Calvo, E. (2015). Scaffolding translation skills through situated training approaches: Progressive and reflective methods. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, 9(3), 1-17.

tasks are mainly organized into three sets of activities titled “Pre-translation Activities,” “Translation,” and “Post-translation Activities,” each comprising a number of steps to be taken by students. The steps included in Pre-translation Activities, despite their occasional variations from task to task, pursue one global purpose: sensitizing students to the importance of careful reading and understanding the content of the material to be translated; this is mainly achieved through students’ active collaboration with their peers and discussions with the classmates and instructor. In the Translation part of each task, the conventional instruction of “read and translate” is avoided; instead, students are commissioned to translate according to the specifications stipulated by a given client. This in some tasks takes the form of a formal translation brief, and in some a description of the needs of the client is given without making any explicit mention to the word *brief*. Depending on the specifications in the brief, the more, approaches and strategies that students should employ to meet the demands vary from one task to another. In some cases, even in one task students are asked to translate according to different briefs so that they come to this understanding that translation in real world is more than a mere linguistic transference.

When students are finished with the translation, they continue working on the task through the steps designed in Post-translation Activities where they are asked to reconsider the translation decisions that they have made throughout and revisit their translation. Thereby, students can evaluate their translation by way of their own contemplation and the discussions they enter into with the classmates and instructor. Attempts are also made to do away with the lamentable practice of accepting *one* translation as the correct rendition and stifling other voices. Instead, it is believed that all voices are worth being heard and all justifiable translation decisions could be valid. Each task is concluded with calling students to reflect on the activities that they have just completed. Taken together, all the steps in each task are intended to result in a coherent whole that pursues a unified goal through

apparently varied activities. In keeping with the objectives of the book, the projects of each unit follow the same concerns asking students to translate and analyze existing translations, and providing the ground for them to gain insight into the conditions under which translators work in real situations.

The book with its focus on the practice of translation aims at familiarizing students with some foundational concepts of translation through authentic and simulated learning activities. Throughout the book, students are also referred to some related theoretical concepts. Nevertheless, the translation theories included are of significance only inasmuch as students understand the considerations of a given unit since theories serve to provide further clarifications to specific issues raised in each unit. Therefore, focus should not be exclusively directed to the teaching of theories, and, accordingly, instead of testing students on their mastery of pure theoretical principles, instructors can include in their exams translation situations where students' ability to apply theories to practice is evaluated. In doing so, instructors can make sure that they are progressing on the right path, i.e., their assessment is in line with the objectives of each unit and the learning activities. This reflects a kind of view of unit design that begins with the end in mind and necessitates synergy between objectives, assessment and learning activities. Known as backward design, this kind of planning is used by a number of educators as an underlying framework for their unit design models (for example, see Wiggins & McTighe, 2011¹).

The side-by-side development of theory and practice underlies all parts of the book from lesson descriptions and exercises initiating the discussions to tasks and projects terminating them. To fulfill the objectives of a given unit, therefore, these four components, i.e., lesson descriptions, exercises, tasks, and projects, have been developed to work in synergy. As with the

1. Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (2011). *The understanding by design. Guide to creating high-quality units*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

tasks, it should be noted that the steps included have been designed not only to review and reinforce the considerations of a given unit, but also, at times, to practically address certain new learning points. Thereby, tasks per se are worthy of careful attention. Projects, moreover, are to engage students in work that is valuable in realistic settings and to challenge them to think more deeply. Group collaboration is, of course, at the heart of the projects designed. Although students have themselves the central role in conducting the projects, the observations and recommendations made by the instructor – from start to finish – can certainly have a pivotal role in guiding students and encouraging them to work collaboratively toward meaningful learning goals. Depending on the time available and the specific needs of their students, therefore, instructors can assign one or more of the projects or they can let students have their own choices. To both encourage and facilitate collaboration among students and engage them in thinking and learning continuously throughout the week, instructors are suggested to make use of a well-designed e-learning platform such as **Moodle, Schoology, NEO LMS, CANVAS** and **Edmodo** as a complement to the face-to-face class.

In view of this immense load of work, it is hardly possible to cover all the ten units over the course of one semester; therefore, instructors can include in their syllabus units that are more in line with their students' background knowledge, needs, and interests. Semester time restraints may even dictate that a few selected units, or parts of them, be assigned as self-study materials, the two units on editing can be chosen for this purpose. Mention should be made that the issues raised and activities designed in these two units can help students refresh their already existing knowledge – assuming that they have attained the fundamentals of writing in both languages – and better perform editing operations on the upcoming translation activities. Editing practices should evidently be assigned early in the semester before starting the second section of the book. Besides, assistance must be provided to students and feedback must be obtained from

them throughout to ensure that they are on the right track in meeting the defined learning objectives.

Any new step taken toward a pre-set goal would bring one closer to its accomplishment and would certainly prepare the ground for future steps ahead. However, certain shortcomings and drawbacks always exist when new trends are introduced. The present book, the result of several years of research and teaching, reflects the realization of one major step we took toward our educational goal. Innovative as it is in its own kind in dealing with translation practice, the present book is, of course, not void of shortcomings. Teaching the book as a teaching material at various universities and institutes of higher education across the country is one important means through which its strengths and deficiencies can be examined. The constructive comments of professors and colleagues would, therefore, help us identify them. We will wholeheartedly welcome the suggestions and criticism from all learned readers so as to enrich the book by enhancing the strengths and eliminating the deficiencies and take more determined steps in this direction.

As a final word, we would like to thank all those academics who, using the book for their classes, guided us by their valuable remarks. Our thanks also go to all of the students whose comments, discussions, translations, concerns, and even mistakes inspired us a lot in writing the present book. Last but not least, we would like to express our extreme gratitude to SAMT publications for providing us with the opportunity to prepare this book.

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April, 2017