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Evaluation of House's Model of Quality Assessment

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ABSTRACT

There are number of methods, approaches and techniques in evaluating translated texts, but none is as systematic as House (1977, 1997, 2004b, 2007, 2009, 2013, 2015) model of translation quality assessment. The present study was carried out to explore House (1997) model of translation quality assessment (TQA). To pursue this purpose, the model was applied to a psychology textbook. The model is based on functional equivalence and is set to give a thorough analysis of the source language, target language and their comparison. Researchers, however, came to realize some shortcomings in the model; there are basically couple of difficulties with the model. First, House (1997, 2015) does not provide any guide to how much translated text should be assessed i.e. what sample size is needed for the model to operate and be reliable. Another even more serious problem is the fact that one cannot spell out exactly to which degree quality of target text is equal to its source? The researchers proposed two main components to be added to the model, one to the beginning and the other to the end of the model. In order to modify this model in terms of sample size and rating scales, researchers decided to adopt Sical system, which stands for the Canadian Government Translation Bureau's Quality Measurement System in order to have a scale for final quality statement. According to Sical measurement system, a passage of 400 words has been randomly chosen from a psychology textbook and tested against the modified model of quality assessment. Researchers found that the translation could be ranked B fully acceptable. The result shows that the modified model is more systematic and accessible.

Indexing terms/Keywords

Translation Quality Assessment, House's model of translation, Functional Equivalence

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INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of questions related to quality assessment (QA) of translation from defining quality itself to the unit of evaluation. “One of the most important questions asked in connection with translation is the questions of how to tell whether a translation is good or bad.” (House, 2013, p. 533) However, no established academic criteria have been set unanimously so far; “There is no real overall consensus on what constitutes an acceptable translation.” (Kelly, 2005, p. 131) Quality assessment (QA) of translation is an area in translation studies, which is in crying need of more experimental research and study. Even some uttered with frustration “we still do not know well enough when a TT can be characterized as ‘good’ or ‘successful’.” (Schaffner, 1997) It seems the works that has been hitherto done on the subject could not meet by any means the great demands of this field of study. Consequently, some scholars in the field felt this urgent need and called for more research on the issue. (e.g., Melis & Albir, 2001; Angelelli & Jacobson, 2009)

There are different models for quality assessment, none has been as successful as House’s model of quality assessment since it is “the only fully worked out, research-based, theoretically informed and interdisciplinary conceived approach”. (House, 2015, p. 1) “House’s model of translation quality assessment has enjoyed particular success in the academic domain, especially because students appear to find it highly accessible and amenable to implementation.” (Saldanha & O’Brien 2013, p. 101) The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the application of the well-documented House’s model (1997) of translation in quality assessment of a given text could result in a more solid and sound evaluation or otherwise. In academic contexts of translation studies, we have heard enough of theories and models, for verification they should be put into action and see if they can pass muster. Today, the significance of a systematic approach to evaluation a translated text is central.

METHODS

In the following sections, House’s model is thoroughly presented and discussed, then the inherent problems with the model are discoursed and the solutions for them are offered.

A functional pragmatic model for translation quality assessment

House (1977, 1997, 2004b, 2007, 2009, 2013) proposes a model based on pragmatic theories of language use; House’s model “distinguishes between two main situational dimensions: the dimension of language user and the dimension of language use.”(Saldanha &O’Brien 2013, p. 99)The model involves producing the analysis of the linguistic situational particularities of source and target texts, a comparison of the two texts and the resultant assessment of their relative match. The basic requirement for equivalence of original and translation in this model is that the translation should have a function (consisting of an ideational and an interpersonal functional component, in the Hallidayan sense) which is equivalent to that of the original. The translation should also employ equivalent pragmatic means for achieving that function.

The operation of the model involves initially an analysis of the original according to a set of situational dimensions, for which linguistic correlates are established. The resulting textual profile of the original characterizes its function, which is then taken as the norm against which the translation is measured; the degree to which the textual profile and function of the translation (as derived from an analogous analysis) match the profile and function of the original is the degree to which the translation is adequate in quality.

The model has been developed on the basis of contrastive German–English discourse analyses (House 1996). Empirical work with the model has resulted in a distinction between two basic types of translation, overt translation and covert translation. An overt translation is required whenever the source text is heavily dependent on the source culture and has independent status within it; a covert translation is required when neither condition holds, i.e. when the source text is not source- culture specific.

Functional equivalence is only possible in covert translation, which is more difficult than overt translation because differences in the cultural presuppositions of the source and target language communities may require the translator to apply a cultural filter, i.e. a set of cross- cultural dimensions along which members of the two cultures differ in socio-cultural predispositions and communicative preferences. This also makes evaluation difficult because it involves assessing the quality of the cultural filters introduced in translation, as well as operationalizing the concept of ‘context’ (House 2006). House’s model is based on a Hallidayan register analysis using the categories of field, tenor and mode. Halliday (1973) puts ideational function as “a major component of meaning in the language system that is basic to more or less all uses of language” (p. 314) which is realized through transitivity system of language. Next constituent, interpersonal is what “embodies all use of language to express social and personal relations, including all forms of the speaker’s intrusion into speech situation and the speech act.” (p. 316)

Interpersonal aspect is characterized by means of mood and modality in which mood is the speaker “determination of the choice of roles for the addressee, and the expression of his judgments and predictions” (ibid) is called modality. The other macro-function namely, textual, Holliday believes “fills the requirement that language should be operationally relevant- that it should have a texture.” (p. 317)This model not only draws on Hallidays functional theory but also base itself on the notion of equivalence. House (1997) perceives translation in the course of the equivalence “translation is constituted by a “double binding” relationship both to its source and to the communicative conditions of the receiving lingua culture, and it is the concept of equivalence which captures this relationship.” (p. 29)

House (1997) distinguishes between two types of translation overt and covert. She asserts that just in the covert translation "in this case, an equivalence is sought in and via the vessel of the new language for the function that the original has in its lingua-cultural setting" (p. 29), as a result, equivalence plays a pivotal role subsequently she postulates that through deploying cultural filter one could obtain the desired functional equivalence. However, she notifies should be reserved solely for necessary occasions. House (1997) proclaims that "given the goal of achieving functional equivalence in a covert translation, assumptions of cultural differences should be carefully examined before any change in the source text is undertaken." (p. 71)

On the other hand, in overt translation, which the addressees of the translation text are quite "overtly" not being addressed, House asserts (1997) "a direct match of the original function of the source text is not possible in overt translation." (p. 71) She even goes on and declares discovering a functional equivalence in such a translation requires second level of function in which we try to find approximate equivalent.

The following scheme is providing a visual system which House (1997, p. 108) suggested for analyzing original and translated texts and assessing their functional equivalence:

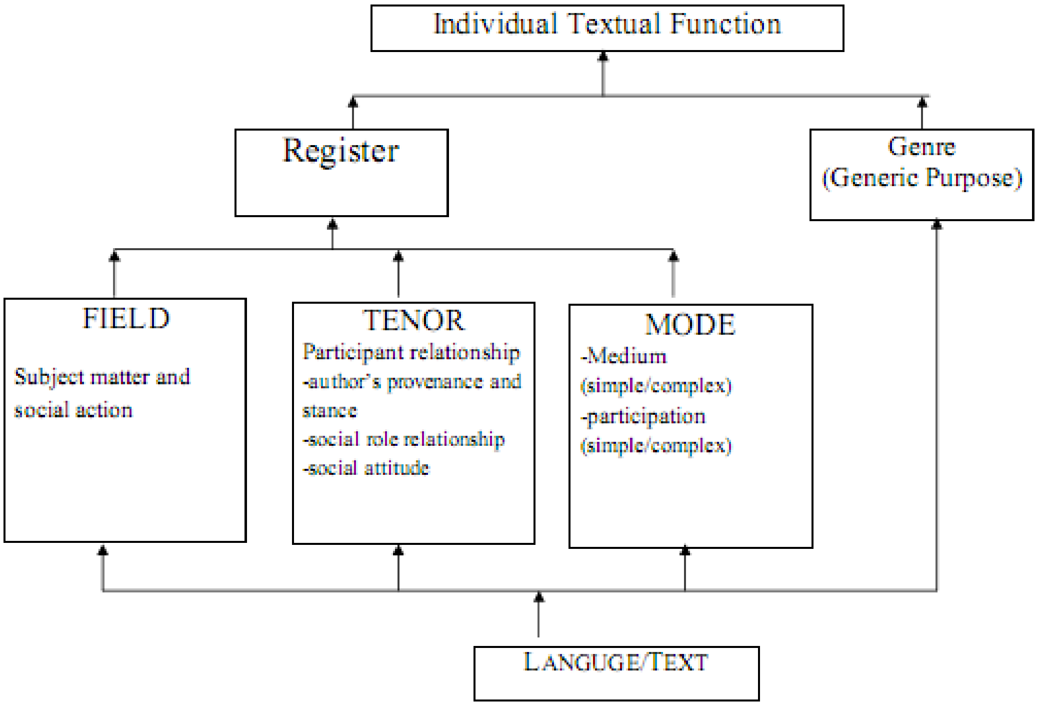

Fig 1: a Scheme for Analyzing and Comparing Original and Translation Texts

(House, 1997, p. 108)

Model Elaborated

In the following, the subcategory of components in register is explained in details:

1. Field

a. Subject matter: it captures "what is going on," i.e., the field of activity, topic, content of the text.

b. Social action: it explains "degrees of generality, specificity or granularity (the amount of detail that is included in something such as a system) in lexical items according to rubrics of specialized, general, popular."

2. Tenor

a. Author's provenance and stance: it is relationship between the addresser and the addressees in terms of social power and social distance as well as personal viewpoints.

b. Social role relationship: analyzing the role relationship between addresser and addressees, which may be either symmetrical (marked by the existence of solidarity or equality) or asymmetrical (marked by the presence of some kind ofauthority). In considering the addresser's social role vis-à-vis the addressee(s), account is further taken of relatively permanent position role (teacher, priest) and the more transient situational role (visitor in a prison, speaker at a given occasion).

c. Social attitude: it is the degrees of social distance or proximity resulting in relative formality or informality. House categories them in tripartite division as following:

a) Formal: in this style addressees' participation to a large degree omitted. Formal text is well structured, elaborate, logically sequenced and strongly cohesive

b) Informal: "informal style is especially marked by various degrees of implicitness, in which the addresser may indulge because of the level of intimacy between himself and the addressee(s). Background information is not necessary: casual style is used with friends or "insiders" of all kinds with whom the addresser has something to share or desires or imagines that there is something to share. Ellipses, contractions, and the use of lexical items and collocations marked [- formal] are characteristic linguistic markers of casual style." (House, 1997, p.41)

c) Consultative: "It is the norm for conversations or letters between strangers and it is mostly marked negatively, i.e., through the absence of both formal and informal style markers. In using consultative style, the addresser does not assume that he can leave out certain parts of his massage, which he might be able to do in a socially closer relationship where much of the message is "understood". In consultative style, the author has to be fairly elaborate in supplying back- ground information. A further characteristic of consultative style is the participation of the addressee(s) - hence the term "consultative" - either directly or implicitly." (ibid)

3. Mode

a. Medium: it refers to both the channels spoken or written (which can be "simple," e.g., "written to be read" or "complex," e.g., written to be spoken as if not written"), and the degree which Potential or real Participation is allowed for between the interlocutors.

b. Participation: A text may be either a simple monologue with no addressee participation "built into the text" or dialogue, or a more complex mixture involving, in an overt "monologue", various means or mechanisms of indirect participation elicitation and indirect addressee involvement manifest linguistically, for instance, in a characteristic use of pronouns, switches between declarative, imperative and interrogative sentence patterns or the presence of contact parentheses, and exclamations. For any of above-mentioned categories and in order to analyzing them, House uses a tripartite means; syntactic, lexical and textual. To textual features, she adopts three main aspects: Theme-dynamics: Theme dynamics elucidates the various patters of semantic relation, which "themes" recur in texts (e.g. repetition anaphoric and cataphoric references, pro- forms, ellipsis, synonymy, and near-synonymy). The definition can simply be of (a) the rheme, which refers to facts either taken for granted, universally known, or given from the context, and which therefore do not, or only marginally, contribute to the new information conveyed by the total utterance; (b) the theme containing the main "new" information conveyed by the utterance. Word order is the primary formal means of realizing the theme-rheme distribution: in "normal," unmarked speech, the theme precedes the rheme in "motive speech, however, the rheme precedes the theme ("subjective position"). (House, 1997, p.44)

In order to facilitate the recognition of textual cohesion endophoric relations are to be described as relations that do form cohesive ties within the text. Endophoric relations are of two kinds: those which look back in text for their interpretation, Which Halliday and Hasan call anaphoric relations, and those which look forward in the text for their interpretation, which are called cataphoric relations. (Brown & Yule, 1989, p. 192)

Clausal linkage: Clausal Linkage is described by a system of basically logical relations between clauses and sentences in text, e.g. additive, adversative, alternative, causal, explanatory, or illative relations.

For some of these relations, a few examples are provided from Brown & Yule (1989 p. 191):a) Additive: and, or, furthermore, similarly, in addition b) Adversative: But, however, on the other hand, nevertheless c) Casual: so, consequently, for this reason, it follows from this d) Temporal: then, after that, an hour later, finally, at last There are, however, other types of relations that are going to be explained in following list: Alternative relation: "it is an inter-propositional relation in which at least one of the connected propositions is held to be true, but not necessarily, or perhaps not even possibly, all of them. Examples (English): or, alternatively, on the other hand (some uses)." (Loos & Anderson, 2004) Illative relation: "Elative case is a case expressing motion out of or away from the referent of the noun it marks." (Loos & Anderson, 2004) Explanatory: Iconic linkage: iconic linkage or structural Parallelism occurs when two or more sentences in a text cohere because they are, at the surface level, isomorphic (having similar appearance but genetically different).House (1997) distinguishes two types of text in this respect: Emic texts: a text which "is solely determined by text- immanent criteria." (p. 45) Etic texts: a text "which is determined through text transcending means i.e. temporal, personal or local deictics pointing to various features of the situation enveloping the text, the addressee(s) and the addresser." (Ibid)

To gain better understanding the terms used in this definition, it has been broken down to following definitions: Deixis: the words "which can be interpreted only with reference to the speaker's position in space and time." (Crystal, 1997, p. 106) it has three types: Personal deixis; "the use of pronouns, such as I and you, which identify who is taking part in the discourse." (Ibid) Spatial deixis: "forms that distinguish the position of the speaker in relation to other people or objects, such as this / that /, here / there, bring / take and come /go; come, for example, implies direction towards the speaker." (Ibid)

Temporal deixis: "forms that distinguish time with reference to the speaker, such as now, yesterday, then, and the various kinds of tense maker." (Ibid) There is other deixis such as Empathetic deixis, which is: the metaphorical use of deictic forms to indicate emotional or other psychological "distance" or "proximity" between a speaker and a referent. For example: The use of this to indicate the speaker's empathy and the use of that to indicate the speaker's emotional distance. (Levinson, 1983, p. 81)

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The next deixis worthy of mentioning here is discourse deixis, which is: deictic reference to a portion of a discourse relative to the speaker's current "location" in the discourse. For instance, use of this to refer to a story one is about to tell in: I bet you haven't heard this story and also reference to Chapter 7 of a book by means of in the next chapter or in the previous chapter, depending on whether the reference is made from Chapter 6 or 8. (p. 63)

House (1997) believes that we should find mismatches along the close inspection functional dimensions of source text and any deviation from it in the translation may lead to an error. Such dimensional errors were referred to as covertly erroneous errors. These were differentiated from those overtly erroneous errors which resulted either from a mismatch of the denotative meanings of source and translation text elements or from a breach of the target language system. These two types of errors results from the following mismatches, which are clearly sketched out in the following tables:

Overtly erroneous errors

Breaches from source language:

Table 1. Change of Denotative Meaning

Change of denotative meaning through following items:	
a. omissions	b. additions
c. substitutions	wrong selections
	wrong combinations of elements

Table 2. Breaches of the target language system

Breaches of the target language system:	
cases of ungrammaticality;	clear breaches of the language system
cases of dubious acceptability;	breaches of the norm of usage

Table 3. Covertly Erroneous Errors

Covertly erroneous errors		
Mismatch in field	Mismatch in tenor	Mismatch in mode

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Problems with the model

There are basically couple of difficulties with the model. First, House does not provide any guide to how much translated text should be assessed i.e. what sample size needed for the model to operate and be reliable has not been addressed. Another problem which is even more serious is the fact that one cannot spell out exactly to which degree quality is equal?

The researchers proposed two main components to be added to the model, one to the beginning and the other to the end of the model. In order to modify this model in terms of sample size and rating scales, researchers decided to adopt Sical system, which stands for the Canadian Government Translation Bureau's Quality Measurement System in order to have a scale for final statement.

In the third-generation Sical, texts were given quality ratings according to the number of major and minor errors in a 400-word passage: A superior (0 major errors/maximum of 6 minor); B .fully acceptable (0/12); C. revisable (1/18); and D. unacceptable. (Williams, 2009)

At this instant, another problem crops up with this rating concerning the topology of the errors, which needs consensus of some sorts or a criterion to reconcile. Moreover, major and minor dichotomy is a vague division, which needs more clarification and precision. Williams (1998) defines the major error as follows:

Translation: Complete failure to render the meaning of a word or passage that contains an essential element of the message; also, mistranslation resulting in a contradiction of or significant departure from meaning of an essential element of the message. Language: incomprehensible, grossly incorrect language or rudimentary error in an essential element of the message. (p.26) In the definition provided by Williams, any breaching from "essential terms" is considered major error. Moreover, "Larose (1989) considers that the seriousness of the error depends on textual level at which it occurs (superstructure, macrostructure, microstructure): the higher the level, the more serious the error" (Melis&Albir, 2001)

From what Larose and Williams, researchers draws the following conclusions, first, the major error is an error, which affects the whole passage we are analyzing; i.e., if the error is going to impede the reader from receiving the message of source text, it is going to be a major error. Moreover, if the error has an effect on the level of rhetoric or phrase and it does not change an essential term, it is going to be considered minor error.

Adopting Sical Criterion for translation assessment begs the question, how to marry this criterion with the model, considering definitions of major and minor errors, researchers deemed it reasonable to consider covert errors in House's model to be major errors and overt errors to be minor ones.

In conclusion, after we choose a passage of 400 words, it is going to be analyzed according to House's model of translation quality assessment. Afterwards, the errors discovered through the analyses are going to be classified into two categories of major and minor according to seriousness of the errors. Finally, we can decide about the final quality statement of the passage based on Sical criterion which has been summarized in table 4.

Table 4. Sical Criterion for Translation Assessment

A	B	C	D
Superior (0major errors/maximum of 6 minor)	fully acceptable (0major errors/maximum of 12 minor)	revisable (1major errors/maximum of 18 minor)	unacceptable more than 1 major errors

Corpus

The research is administered through applying House's model of translation quality assessment on a translated work. In order to achieve this goal, the researcher selected a psychological textbook. The Theories of Personality is an academic work in psychological history written by Jess Feist and Gregory J. Feist. The Theories of Personality fifth edition is published in2002.

There is only one Persian translation of the above mentioned book. This work is translated by Yahya Seyed Mohammadi who is prolific translator in psychology from English to Persian. Moreover, the broad use of students and professors of psychology of this translation adjoins more significance to assessment of the translation done by this translator.

The Theories of Personality consists of eighteen chapters, each deals with one great scholar in psychology. Each chapter contains 10 to 13 sections in which, each section serves different propose in disparate genres. In this study, according the standard of 400 words of Sical, we chose a passage of 400 words randomly from the book. For every chosen section, the following theoretical framework is applied. In order to see if the suggested modifications on House's model of translation assessment can be applied less troublesomely. Researchers chose another expert to consider its viability.

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Results and Discussion

The detailed analysis of the selected text is presented to be evidence for internal work of the modified model of House (1997)in assessing of translation to see its practical value. According to Sical, we have selected a 400 words passage randomly from a textbook to be scrutinized in order to test the true value of applied model of quality assessment. In the beginning of the passage, analysis of the original text gives a structured description of the status of source text and followed by comparison of original and translation finally it ends in statement of quality. After applying the modified House's model of translation quality assessment, researchers found out that the model cold be accessible and much more structured in terms of unit of analysis and scale of rating.

Analysis of source text

Field

In this part, which is named (concept of humanity); the writers provide the given theorist's perspective on the key issues of human kind. The text has written clearly and concisely. However, it is required that the reader has already understood the theory concepts earlier in the chapter.

Lexical means: Frequency technical references applied are part of psychology field are used. For example; neurosis, deterministic, causality versus teleology, and intrapsychic conflicts.

Textual means: Strong textual cohesion achieved through

a) Repetition of topic terms: Horney and neurotic individual.

b) Iconic linkage; for example in sentences like: (XV) parallelism of phrases of "their." Anaphoric "she, her, they, and their" are used in sentences (I), (VIII), (XI), (XII), (XIII), (XV), (XIX) and, (XXII). Additive (and) used in (IX), (XII), and (XXI) sentences, however, adversatives like "however" and "but" are used in (III), (XII), (XVIII), (XIX) and, (XXII).

Tenor:

Author's provenance and stance: Authors have professional interest in the subject. They have the last word on the subject at hand and do not include themselves personally, as it is behooved from an academic text, subsequently; by no means have they involved addressees in the text to preserve authenticity of the text. Due to the fact that the relationship between authors are parental a father and a son, it is quite marked.

Syntactic means:

a. lack of addressers personal pronoun

b. no addressee's direct involvement in the text.

Social attitude: this text is formal due to the fact that addressees' participation is largely omitted. Although, there are a few general personal pronouns, the complex sentences and authority the writers exert in providing with definitions and examples signifies its formality. It is well structured, clear, logically sequenced and strongly cohesive.

Mode:

Medium: It is "simple" and that is "written to be read". Medium in this text can be characterized as explicit and abstract.

Lexical means: absence of interjections, anacolutha and other characteristics of the spoken mode. Presence of [+ abstract] noun Phrases.

Syntactic means: Absence of contractions, contact and comment Parentheses and other kinds of spoken language signals such as gambits, modal Particles etc.,

Frequency of long and complex clauses featuring subordination, apposition and multiple coordination.

Textual means: the text is largely emic, although there may be several references to some terminologies, in pervious sections, it has been expanded and described, so there is no need to go beyond the text to know a reference. Therefore, the immediate circumstances of the text's production and reception are irrelevant for the organization of the message. Because of this, the text is determined through text-immanent criteria and is marked through the explicitness and elaborateness of the monologously written mode.

Participation: simple: monologue

The reactions of the readers are never directly elicited, i.e. there are no overt participation devices such as e.g., pronouns, questions directly addressing readers, speech acts with the illocutionary force of e.g., a request, etc. In this text, Even though, the writers have tried to approximate the readers by the use of pronouns, it is clear that technicality of subject eventually left them in control of language.

Genre

The genre is an academic text, which features a subheading and a section to a psychological textbook. It is written by two specialists in the field to be read by undergraduate students. Moreover, it is characterized by its instructional, informative nature, and belongs to user friendly, self-study science books.

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Statement of function

The function of the text consisting of an ideational component may be summed up as follows: the authors' intention is to (1) to inform the readers about the background of the subject matter at hand.

Comparison of original and translation

Field: The cohesion of text has been affected by a few changing of theme-rheme in the following sentences: (XII), (XIV), and (XVII). Moreover, changing referring pronoun to its referent changed the cohesion in (XVIII).In the context of this section; we see a few deviations from source text through omissions. For better evaluation, they are listed below:

Omissions: (VII) than pessimistic, (XI) she, (XVI) concept of personality, and (XX) highlight.

Apart from above mentioned errors other materials have been transferred to the target language in an acceptable manner.

Tenor: The translator feels more symmetrical with the audience because he is not a PhD in the field of psychology as the authors are. However, translation enjoys the same relationship between addresser and addressees; furthermore, it has the same degree of academic formalness.

Mode: In terms of medium, which is "simple to be read" and participation that is "monologue" in the source text, it is the same story in the target text. Therefore, no mismatch has been seen in this area.

Genre: The genre is an academic text in the target text as it enjoys the same degree of formality in the Persian language.

Statement of Quality

In two areas of field and tenor, there seem some mismatches, which need modification and amending. However, one can argue that the text holds the nearly same function that is ideational despite some changes, which are not detrimental to the whole message. As a final point, there are eight minor errors in this passage, which according to Sical ranks it as B fully acceptable.

Suggestions for Further Research

Researchers could only test one passage of 400 words of the book which according to Sical ranks is B fully acceptable. The next step for them was to test the reliability and validity of the modified House's model of quality assessment. For that purpose ten passages of the same book has been tested. The result of this study will be reported in another forthcoming paper.

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