Use of Translation in Language Teaching-Learning

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Abstract: Language teaching and learning is an area of interest and research for many across the globe. Since it plays a pivotal role in the process of learning, it is given importance irrespective of the discipline. Grammar, Translation and Communicative Approach are a few to mention which reflect the kinds of research that have taken place in the domain of language education. This paper is an attempt to express various opinions about integration of translation as a tool to teach English language.

Index Terms: Translation, Language Teaching, Second Language

1. INTRODUCTION

For effective English language teaching and learning, teaching of grammar, teaching the language through communicative situations and through translation – are the three most adopted techniques worldwide. All three have their advantages and disadvantages; and they have been practices in different educational settings. Present work aims to present various thoughts on use of translation for teaching and learning English language.

2. A NOTION AGAINST THE USE OF TRANSLATION IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Since twentieth century, it has been a practice that second language should be taught without reference to the learners' first language. Some opine that translation of first language gets in the way with the acquisition of second language.

According to Newson (1988), the following are the disadvantages of using translation as a teaching tool:

1. Translation encourages thinking in one language and transferring to another, with accompanying interference;

2. It deprives teacher and learner of the benefit of working within a single language;

3. It gives false belief of the idea that there is a perfect one-to-one correspondence between languages; and

4. It does not facilitate achievement of generally accepted aims such as emphasis on the spoken language.

There are some others who have opposed the use of translation in language teaching. Carreres (2006) has stated that Translation is an artificial exercise which cannot foster communicative environment in the language classrooms, and it con-
fines language practice to reading and writing only; Translation of first language into second language forces language learners to view the foreign language through their mother tongue; Translation can’t help students in achieving the level of accuracy of the version presented to them by their teachers; Translation can be of use to the literary-oriented learners but it cannot be of use to the average learner.

In a research work Owen (2003) has stated that when translation is used as a tool to teaching second language, students have to share their second language use time with the first language which is not a productive use of the opportunities given by the class.

Though there are views against the adoption of translation for language teaching-learning, there is a pool of research that suggests that it is one of the most effective ways to offer learners with an open language learning space. The next section deals with all such views.

3. USE OF TRANSLATION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING-LEARNING

As many have gone against the use of translation for language teaching, perhaps the problem was not translation as such, but a teaching methodology that separated language from its communicative function. In fact, when a person is engaged in the act of translation, he/she is linked to a communicative purpose.

One would agree to Duff (1994): "translation happens everywhere, all the time, so why not in the classroom?". Duff’s statement clearly reflects the positive impact an act of translation can bring in the language teaching-learning process. In fact, translation into second language can help learners systematize and rationalize a learning mechanism for language acquisition.

Since the process of translation requires the translator to understand the contents of Source Text and present them in the Target Text, he is engaged in two mental processes – understanding and verbalization. This enhances the understanding and analyzing ability of the one dealing with two languages. Same can happen to the language learners if they are put in such a translating situation with an objective of language learning. It can help them get the advantages and exposure of multiple languages at the same time and also acquire hold over it.

Roman Jakobson in Hatim and Munday (2004) has mentioned a distinction between three types of written translation:

A. Intralingual translation – translation within the same language, which can involve rewording or paraphrase
B. Interlingual translation – translation from one language to another
C. Intersemiotic translation – translation of the verbal sign by non-verbal sign for example music or image.

Nababan (2008) has mentioned different kinds of translation, such as:

- word for word translation
- free translation
- literal translation
- dynamic translation
- pragmatic translation
- aesthetic-poetic translation
• ethnographic translation
• linguistic translation
• communicative translation, and
• semantic translation.

Among these, word for word translation, free translation, literal translation, linguistic translation, communicative translation and semantic translation are seen as some of the highly productive techniques of giving language learners exposure to dynamic sources of language learning. These techniques provide them with an opportunity to deal with multiple languages and improve upon all of them.

Lavault (1985) in one of the research found that students enjoy the translation exercises in language classroom. Similarly, Conacher (1996) reported excellent student response to a translation course. Hervey et al. (2002) also reported enthusiastic feedback from the students attending her translation course at the University of St Andrew’s in Scotland.

According to Malmkjaer (1998) if translation process can resemble with the the real life activity of translating, it can help learners in gaining command over four basic language skills.

Shiyab and Abdullateef (2001) have stated that translation is very important for foreign language teaching because:

• it allows conscious learning and control of the foreign language, and
• it reduces native language interference.

They say that the use of translation can make learning more meaningful because the learner is an active participant in the process.

Newmark (1991), Husain (1994), Kern (1994) and Omura (1996) have suggested a positive and facilitative role of translation in language learning. It is also observed that greater awareness of first language helps in the more effective communicative use of the second language. Translation is a means by which both languages can be taught and assessed. Finally, the next section focuses on the key benefits of using translation in language teaching-learning process.

4. BENEFITS OF USING TRANSLATION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING-LEARNING

Liao (2006) has stated the following positive aspects of using translation in language teaching-learning:

1. Translation activities can help students in comprehending the second language
2. it can help students to check whether their comprehension is correct and helps them in maintain a level in future
3. it enables them to memorize more words, idioms, grammar, and sentence structures
4. translation plays a pivotal role in helping students develop and express ideas in another language; and
5. it reduces learning anxiety and enhances motivation to learn the second language.

Apart from these, following are some more benefits of using translation as a tool to enhance learners’ language:

1. Use of translation is the most natural way of teaching a new language.
2. It can be an ongoing activity for the language learners. They can practice it as soon as they are exposed to a new language.

3. Translation is an authentic act of communication which helps learners to be in various real-life situations fostering language learning.

4. It also allows the learners to relate new knowledge with the existing one.

To conclude, it can be said that if it is used as a tool to offer the learners exposure to new domain of knowledge, translation can bring in the act of language learning on its own.
REFERENCES


