

# SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TRANSLATING: A PERSPECTIVE

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## **Abstract**

Learning a second language means to get linguistic competence in Second Language normally done by developing the four basic linguistic skill (LSRW). In language pedagogy translation or translating has not yet been accepted as a skill to be developed along with the four basic ones. But in SL learning translating as a process works at a psychological level So the role of translating in SL learning needs an independent study distinct from the study of translation as used in the translation of a text / discourse. The discussion over the theory of translation, at present, is primarily carried on treating translation as an art used or involved in translating a text from one language to another, e.g. from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL). But my point of discussion over translation here is different in a way as it looks at it from the point of view of SL learning process in which almost the translation of same process functions for a different purpose; this is not to decode and recode, but to facilitate learner gain Moreover, competence in SL/TL. of this the theory of aspect translation to be discussed in the present paper, finds its basis in the existing theory of language and second language learning.

**Keywords:** Second Language, Target Language, Source Language, Mother Tongue etc.,

## **1. Translating: A Process**

1.1 The two terms 'translating' and 'translation' as 'process' and 'product' respectively (Smith: 1994) are very much used in connection with the discussion over the translation where the translated version of a text in TL is the end product recorded by a translator, the process involved in such an act of translation is like a skill or an art. But in case of SL learning the process is a psycholinguistic one and the end product is not like that of a translated version of a text in TL. In fact, translating plays a facilitative role in the whole process of SL learning or, to say, in the formation 'inter-language' (IL) which again has been considered an 'observable product and also a 'process', an IL process (Smith: 1994).

1.2 Translating as a process in IL formation in SL learning functions with many other processes and factors. Obviously the role of translating in SL learning needs an independent study distinct from the study of translation as used in the translation of a text /discourse. The paper, however, attempts to explore. explore the role of translating as a psycholinguistic learning and also as a language skill process in SL to be developed and tested in the language pedagogy at school /university level.

1.3 In the process of learning a second language what goes on inside a learner's mind difficult to ascertain fully. In fact, linguistic competence in SL is achieved through various learning processes which we are only just beginning to understand (Smith: 1994). Though it functions as a psycholinguistic process in SL learning, it is yet to get acceptance among theoreticians who have, in some way the or other, accepted the fact that in SL learning

the creation of inter- language' is very much done through NL or L1; and this invariably is done through the process of language transfer or cross-linguistic influence where 'structural congruence' serves as a necessary condition (Selinker, 1992). SL learners look to TL for items structures which are NL like. Undoubtedly, "the phenomenon of NL influence on the learning of a second language has been recognized for centuries and is a most substantial influence. (Selinker 1992). To emphasize, "all second language learning definition by implies the previous presence of first language" (Stern: 1983).

1.4 Translating as a psycholinguistic process in SL learning operates both at conscious and subconscious levels involving almost all the processes which a translator has to use in his effort to translate a text from a source language to a target language. The search for equivalence or match in the process of translation, language transfer or borrowing restructuring expressions in absence of exact or near equivalence in cases of cultural untranslatability or some other cases and many more are some of the features involved in translating of a text. All such things help a translator to make 'translation' as a product effective in communication by transferring meaning from SL to TL as far as possible. Nida (1975, 1995) in proposing his theory of translation finds Chomsky's concept 'competence' in TG grammar a valid base to treat translation as communication where the importance of linguistic competence is stressed. Translation, for involves analysis, transfer restructuring to enable a translator to find equivalence in TL. The process, as explained above, works at the mental level of a translator as well as an SL learner. But the difference in the operation of translating' as a process in case of a translator of a text and an SL learner is that in the former it works both at conscious and subconscious levels. Besides, a translator in translating a text from SL to TL is supposed to have almost equal competence in both SL and TL whereas a second language learner is possessed with competence in NL mainly (if he/she has no previous knowledge of other languages) to develop his /her competence in second language or target language..

## **2. NL/ Mother Tongue Influence**

2.1 The process of looking for similar structures or congruence structures in TL and their transfer through the creation of ILs on a transitory basis is a widely accepted phenomenon where the role of mother tongue or NL is very much there (Lado 1957, Nemser 1972, 1992). It is a selection process in which some NL structures are more likely to be transferred than others. In a way, the use of NL in the formation of ILS itself is and psycholinguistic process translating' is not an independent act but an integral part of that. However, it has been used as a method of teaching SL / FL under much used method of Grammar-Translation teaching with a purpose to develop in the habits language following the behaviorist approach of teaching SL

2.2 But translating as a psycholinguistic process of learning SL helps a learner to gain SL helps competence in SL / TL through conscious or subconscious learning (or cognitive learning) that takes At IL formation. place through different stages of IL formation, an SL for his search besides learner, equivalence, finds, NL as a direct support to maintain communication in SL through the use of NL when substitution or transfer is not possible. This is mostly through borrowing which, according to Corder, is a performance strategy or communication agency (Corder: 1983 ). Borrowing in his words, ' refers to the use of items from the mother tongue, particularly syntactic and lexical, to make good the deficiencies of the inter-language. The use of NL in this way is a transitory use and arises due to the learners' lack of near total competence in SL/TL at early As such, stages of learning translating or translation

in this process of learning is not to allow an SL learner to form habits but to facilitate an SL learner to have a of SL (i.e. learning conscious cognitive learning).

2.3 The concept of learning primarily above, is discussed and such a psychological learning takes place even without study (Stern: formal teaching or 1983). The processes involved in such a learning are cognitive ones involving acts like matching, guessing, comparing, inferring, generalizing, etc. in which the learner possesses 'a complex set of learning mechanism variety 'involving 'a of possible processes' (Smith: 1994 ). Among the central processes discussed by Selinker in his book Rediscovering Inter language are: language transfer (under the influence of NL), over of the rules/ generalization principles of TL, transfer of training input created by the teacher or text book intentionally or unintentionally and backsliding (reverting to previous IL stage as a result of the process of fossilization). These processes, in fact, are used by the learner as fact, are learning strategies' and even if they fail to cope with the situation where communication becomes difficult, a learner possesses strategic ability to keep a conversation going by adopting an alternative process. So behaviourist explanations of learning behaviour do not stand valid and translating as a psycho-linguistic process in learning SL is a cognitive one helping an SL achieve competence proficiency in SL / TL.

### 3. Second Language Proficiency

3.1 The process to achieve proficiency in SL and a necessary test to ascertain this has to be taken into consideration from the point of view of translating which is considered as a cross-lingual skill; and SL proficiency in developing both cross-lingual skill and intra-lingual skills such as LSRW (Stern:1983). The neglect of the former in language pedagogy has been due to excessive importance given to the Grammar-Translation method of teaching where stress is clearly on habit formation rather on a conscious learning of rules of SL / TL. But translating as a process of learning has proved to be cognitive due to the psychological study of the learning process or theory; and, hence, it has been accepted as useful both as a method of SL learning and as a test to check the learner's competence in TL "Currently, there is a growing concern to ensure that (translation) practice is given in activating the generalizable skills. (comprehension believed to represent underlying (even universal) processes for all language users" (Me Donough: 1993).

3.3 Thus, translating as a skill to test the proficiency of a learner in SL along with listening, speaking, writing (LSRW) is reading and acceptable in language pedagogy at school/university level. Proficiency in SL for all practical purposes is to be tested both intra-lingually' and 'cross-lingually for SL learning takes place in both ways. "Proficiency as measured by standardized tests like MLA co-operative test or the IEA French tests (Carroll: 1975) and the IEA English Tests (Lewis and Massad :1975) imply a conception of proficiency which a certain empirical basis in the fact that they reflect what learners at school or university are expected to be able to do" (Stern: 1983).

In such a case SL learners, besides other kinds of proficiency, need bilingual proficiency as well where translating as a skill has to be developed along with LSRW to have 'generalizable skills' used by all users of language. Although, SL proficiency concept has not yet been explained fully, comprehensive study to this effect is to be made to explore the possibilities to meet the SL learners at requirement of school/university level. A pedagogic compromise between intra-lingual and cross-lingual teaching strategies has to be reached to resolve the issue in the interest of SL learners.

3.4 To conclude, translating as a psycholinguistic process in the learning of a second language and as a language skill developed by an SL learner are equally important in SL learning. The second language learning theory as developed at present provides enough evidences accept translating as psycholinguistic process in SL learning and hence its role independent of the translation of a text can very well be established through further research towards this direction.

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