



Teaching Foreign Languages Based on Translation Theories

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Abstract

Translation is an old method of teaching foreign languages. Its usefulness in this area heavily relies on the fact that utilizing the mother tongue's linguistic system serves as a suitable foundation of linguistic rules to be assimilated by FL learners. Translation provides a meaningful context with in which the FL rules are compared and contrast with those of the mother tongue. Such strategies that are based on translation help learners produce FL texts that are expected to be correct after a series of revisions of rules and, also of words and expression, pertaining to particular contexts. In translation, the learner develops the skill of producing written texts after spending a good time relying on translation theories and considering language theories, as well. Interpreting, on the other hand, helps foreign language learners produce spoken texts based on the theories of interpreting, as well as language as a system. Using stories, for example and making students translate them, improves the students' ability to write similar stories in that foreign language. Learning a foreign language, then, necessitates learning translation theories that works on texts and their equivalents.

Key Words: Translation, Foreign Language, Teaching, Learning

Introduction

Learning languages is highly significant in a realm of globalized interaction among and in between individuals. Languages in the Social Media are indispensable of. They are the basic element without which no interaction can take place between the members of any platform. People find themselves in a need to learn foreign languages. Learning languages at schools is

the starting point for getting exposed to other cultures. At schools, varieties of methods are adopted in teaching foreign languages, such as English and French in the Arab world in particular. In answering the question of: “Why should we learn second or foreign languages? Macau (2003:15) states that it is, “Because nowadays languages are an important part of the real world to communicate with each other in all academic and professional fields.”

Foreign Language Teaching

Foreign language teachers were traditionally concerned about teaching L2 using Howatt’s Grammar Translation Method. GTM makes use of the mother tongue in teaching the second or foreign language. So, it is a kind of limited use of translation. Bagheri & Fazel (2011: 292) state that, “Early in the twentieth century, according to the tenets of the Grammar Translation Method, translation was highly thought of and utilized as a means to learn language.”

Macau (2003:20) states that, “There are different ways of teaching a foreign Language”, adding that, “The methods have transformed through history as the linguistic competence required has changed through time.” Macau emphasizes that, “...the main aim of language study implies all four skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing, whereas in ancient times the objective was focused on the written expression and on reading.” Macau further stresses the fact that, “the change in the methodologies has also reflected the theoretical changes of the nature of language and its learning.” In the same vein, Vermes (2010: 85) explains that, “The Grammar-Translation Method was a modified version of the ancient Scholastic Method, which was traditionally used to study the written form of the classical languages through a meticulous lexical and grammatical analysis of classic texts.” Vermes identifies that the GTM “...involved, as a natural component of language learning, producing translations of parts of the original text.”

Translation in FL Learning:

In emphasizing the role of translation as an essential activity in education, Cordero (1984: 350), states that, “As an educational activity, translation is considered a learning device or a convenient means of verifying comprehension and accuracy.” In the same respect, Bagheri & Fazel (2011: 299) asserts that, “the use of translation can be a valuable resource or means which can pave the way for the development of the writing skill.” Dagilienė (2012:128), as well, postulates that, “When integrated into daily classroom activities translation can help students develop and improve reading, speaking, writing skills, grammar and vocabulary.”

Translation, then, is highly valued as a medium of FL teaching, as Cordero (1984: 351), asserts that, “When properly developed and taught, it can maintain and strengthen its own vital role, while contributing to the development of other skills and consequently to a higher overall competence. Translation is thus conceived as an end desired in itself and as a method of furthering proficiency in the foreign language.” In answering the question of “How to integrate translation in existing courses”, Popovic (2001) asserts that, “preparatory activities, or pre-translation activities, should simultaneously be prewriting, or post-reading, or grammar or vocabulary practical tasks, adding that, translation activities can occasionally be employed for consolidation, while post-translation activities may be focused on rewording, rewriting, revision and evaluation. Popovic provides a strong evidence for using translation in FLT, asserting that, “If a strong case for translation in the language classroom is to be made, at least three things ought to be demonstrated: that criticisms against it are not valid, that learners need it, and that it promotes their learning.” Popovic, then, stresses that translation, “...undoubtedly has place in the language classroom.” Cordero (1984: 355) explains that, “The various activities taken up in translation courses are designed to develop practical and marketable skills for the foreign language student.”

Translation and FL Learning: Pros & Cons

Vermes (2010: 86) states that, “The usefulness of translation in the practice of foreign language teaching has long been brought into question.” According to Vermes (2010: 83), “Pedagogical and real translation differ from each other on three counts: the function, the object, and the addressee of the translation”, explaining that, “The object of real translation is information about reality, contained in the source text, whereas in pedagogical translation it is information about the language learner’s level of language proficiency.”

According to Dagilienė (2012: 124) translation, “is perceived differently by linguists, methodologists and teachers”, adding that, “Its use in foreign language teaching provokes a great deal of disagreement and criticism.” Dagilienė states that, “the main reason for this is the fact that throughout the years there have been a number of studies carried out, which have either favoured or completely ignored the use of translation as a learning method.”

Vermes (2010: 91) explains that, “The objections to the use of translation in foreign language teaching are all based on a limited view of translation”, adding that, “...translation is not only structure manipulation; it is primarily a form of communication.”

Conclusion

Dagilienė (2012: 125) emphasizes that, “Translation heightens language awareness”, adding that, “While translating students are focused on identifying differences in structure and vocabulary, they have to evolve strategies to deal with them and to negotiate the potential of both languages.” According to Vermes (2010: 87), “Translation, can also be performed orally, and can thus, in principle, be used to develop spoken language fluency.” In the same respect, Cunningham (2000) expresses hope, “...that more people will consider the potential usefulness of translation as an aspect of language learning...” Edge (1984), as cited in (Cunningham, 2000) emphasizes that, “If translation aids the student in relating the L2 with the L1, then it is good. If it helps students realize where their mistakes are developing or how others may interpret what they are saying in the L2, then it is something to consider.”

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