

Implementing Pedagogical Translation in Teaching ESP Reading Skill

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Abstract

The present study sets as its main purpose to examine attitudes toward the uses of pedagogical translation in teaching ESP. The assumption behind this investigation is that much can be gained from the suggested input in raising the students' reading comprehension of scientific texts. As teachers tend to use only English to expose students to the target language, this method, in some situations, does not ensure the students' understanding. Thus, this study is accomplished to afford an illustration about such difficulties met by first year master at the department of biology, Kasdi Merbah University, Ouargla, when they read scientific texts in English. It aims also, at highlighting the role of translation especially into the mother tongue in teaching ESP and teaching situations of L1 uses. Moreover, the study seeks finding out students' attitudes toward that uses in ESP classroom that help ESP teachers to decide whether to implement it or to avoid translation into the mother tongue. To meet these mentioned objectives and to gather data, descriptive method is selected. After analyzing the data obtained, results reveal that translation into the mother tongue has an important impact on the learning and teaching contexts. On the basis of the results achieved, conclusion is draw.

Keywords: Translation, mother tongue, reading skill, ESP, Scientific texts.

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تفحص وجهات النظر حول الاستعمال البيداغوجي للترجمة لتدريس اللغة الانجليزية حسب الأغراض الخاصة، مفترضين بذلك أن هذه الأخيرة يمكن أن تحسن من فهم النصوص العلمية حيث إن اعتماد الأساتذة على اللغة الانجليزية فقط لإقحام الطلبة في اكتسابها والتفكير بها لا يضمن الفهم الصحيح للنصوص العلمية في بعض الحالات. إذا أنجزنا هذه الدراسة لتقديم توضيحات حول الصعوبات التي يواجهها طلاب السنة أولى ماستر، قسم بيولوجيا، جامعة قاصدي مرباح ورقلة، عندما يدرسون النصوص العلمية باللغة الانجليزية، وهي تهدف إلى تسليط الضوء على دور الترجمة إلى اللغة الأم في تدريس اللغة الانجليزية وحالات استعماله. كما أننا نسعى من هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن وجهات نظر الطلبة حول دمج اللغة الأم في قسم اللغة الانجليزية حسب الأهداف الخاصة مما يساعد أساتذة المادة من اتخاذ قرار الصائب بشأن إدماج اللغة الأم أو تجنبها بعد توضيح حالات استعمالها واستحضار وجهات نظر الطلاب حول استعمال هذه الأخيرة في قسم اللغة. ومن أجل تحقيق تلك الأهداف وجمع المعطيات اخترنا المنهج الوصفي، وبعد تحليل المعطيات استنتجنا أن للترجمة إلى اللغة الأم دور مهم في إطار التعلم والتعليم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مهارة القراءة، اللغة الأم، الترجمة، اللغة الانجليزية حسب الأغراض الخاصة، النص العلمي.

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1. Introduction

The use of translation as an aid in EFL context goes back to Grammar-Translation Method which is advocated by German scholarship during the nineteenth century. The first language accordingly, is maintained as reference system to the linguistic units of the syllabus. However, at the end of the nineteenth century, group of theorists, mainly phoneticians, linguists, and language teachers criticized the Grammar-Translation method as being an unsuccessful and wanted farther reformulation in FLT. They supported a natural approach of language learning and teaching as translation, for them, is confined to one skill (typically written one), whereas the spoken mode of language is primary; and the native speaker is the best source of L2 acquisition (Cook, 2010). Due to that exclusion, the use of the mother tongue from the time of Grammar Translation to these days is a debatable issue.

2. Reasons of the Rejection

For many years translation has been seen rejected for many reasons, these are summarized as the following:

1. An inefficient way of teaching and testing skills and time-consuming;
2. The co-presence of L1 and L2 hampers L2 learning as it produces interference;
3. It prevents students from thinking in foreign language (Lado 1964; Bearrdsmore 1982; Faerch and Kasper 1983; Brown 2002; Malmkjaer, 1998 as cited in Lenardi, 2010).
Criticizing Arguments of Translation Avoidance.

For House (2009), such arguments are neither valid nor proved in scientific research. Howatt (1984) puts it beautiful by saying that such arguments are “without any really convincing reasons that it is perhaps time the profession took another look at it” (quoted in Baker, 1989 p. 120). Even scientific researches confirm findings that are not compatible with the arguments listed above: Hatch (1983) finds out that there are other factors other than L1 and L2 interference that produce errors. Holding this view Corder (1978) reformulated interference into learner strategy that takes place to compensate the lack of linguistic resources of L2 which is for him “a communicative strategy” (as cited in Ellis, 1985). Furthermore, bilingualization involves contact between the two languages (L1 and L2). This contact was rejected since it was believed that it minimizes the natural development of L2 learning and produces transfer when the two language systems fuse into one system. This process is “compounding bilingualism” whereas second language pedagogy sought to promote “coordinate bilingualism”, when the two language systems are kept apart (Widdowson, 2003). However, even language pedagogy attempts doing so, students pass through compounding process. Moreover, it is “foreignness” of L2 that require the presence of L1 since what is foreign is recognized by what is familiar. The teaching methodology should be compatible with the students’ natural learning style then.

In addition, Duff criticized Grammar Translation Method as confined and eccentric, whereas, the use of translation has different implementations: Learners focus on the text as linked entities, so they are exposed to such

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awareness of discourse features of the genre as they are looking for stylistic and pragmatic equivalences (1989 as cited in Baker, 1989). Furthermore, an up-to-date reconsideration of translation is that it is viewed as a fifth skill (Ross, 2000; Leonardi 2010). Not only the fifth skill but “It is misleading to suggest that translation is radically different from the other language skills if it depends on and includes them.” (Malmakjaer, 1998 as cited in Leonardi 2010)). Even more translation can solve different learning and teaching difficult situations. [Baker, 1989; Chambers 1991; Auerbach, 1993; Schweers, 1999; Ross, 2000; Harmer (a2001, b2007)].

3. Translation in ESP Context

In ESP context, teachers combine a synthesis of methodologies, procedures, materials to help in context-specific teaching. In other words, the focus is on the practice language in use to convey a certain communicative function relevant to the learners’ situations (Hutchinson and Watter, 1987). Translation is one of the techniques that help achieve this goal of ESP classroom. So, “Translation here, then, is an operation on language use and not simply on language usage and aims at making the learner aware of the communicative value of the language he is learning by overt reference to the communicative functioning of his own language” (Widdowson, 1979, p.160). Even, translation is a way to engage in understanding a form of real life communicative function (House 2009). Scientific Discourse as a language for specific purpose“... is a universal mode of communicating or universal rhetoric, which is realized by scientific text in different languages

by the process of textualization.” (Widdowson 1979, p.52). Pedagogically speaking, Widdowson recommended for teachers, then, to make recourse to L1 and non-verbal as means of manifesting this process.

4. Respondent and Method

The questionnaire is administered to thirty biology students. Its main aim is illuminating the students’ views on the use of translation and the mother tongue itself in L2 classroom, contexts of its uses and, students’ attitudes toward English only classroom. For the sake of authenticity, the designed questionnaire is submitted face to face and randomly to thirty students. Finally, the collected data will be analyzed quantitatively, and then presented in graphic histograms.

5. Uses of L1 in L2 Classroom

In the first section of the questionnaire, the aim is to find out students’ attitudes and feeling toward the uses of L1 in L2 classroom. The data were, then, obtained for the thirty students were asked to rate 8 statements on the two Likert scale: Yes, No. The statements are reproduced below:

1. I think Arabic should be used to Manage classroom interaction
2. I think Arabic should be used to explain instructions,
3. I think Arabic should be used to translate and explain vocabulary,
4. I think Arabic should be used to explain grammatical rules,

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5. I think Arabic should be used to contact with students,
6. I translate even if my Teacher does not allow me to do so when I read scientific Text,
7. I prefer using specialized bilingual dictionary (Arabic-English) when reading scientific text rather than monolingual specialized dictionary (English-English)?
8. Do you feel comfortable when teachers use L1?

The results are summarized in Table 1. Numbers 1 to 8 in Table 1 match the above statements.

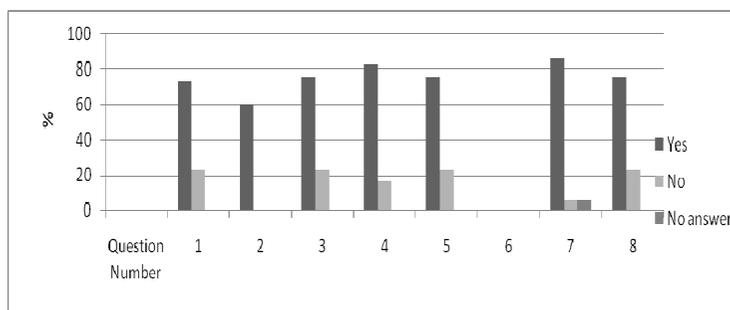


Table 01: Students' Attitudes toward L1 in L2 Classroom

Most of students studying technical English welcome the use of translation into the mother tongue in the teaching and learning context, especially when explaining ESP reading course because they believe that the presence of the mother tongue is necessary in understanding concepts, vocabulary, grammatical rules, and instructions (statements 1 to 5). Also, the implementation of the mother tongue ensures students'

feeling of comfort what increase their motivation and self confidence (Statement 8). Moreover, the statements 6 and 7 logically imply that translation is a *reading strategy* and a *learning style*.

6. Students' Attitudes and Feelings toward English Only Classroom

In the second section, data discussion centres in students views and appreciation of the monolingual L2 method. The six questions submitted for that purpose summarized in *table 2* are as follow:

1. I feel that I lack linguistic competence
2. I feel that I am unable of understanding the teachers' instructions
3. I feel that I unable of understanding the spoken language
4. I feel that I unfamiliar with scientific vocabulary
5. I feel bored
6. I feel not satisfied with

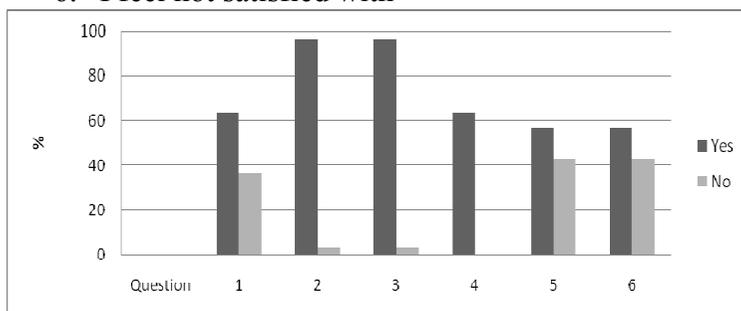


Table 02: Students' Attitudes and Feelings toward English Only Classroom

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The results in figure 2 show that most of students disfavor English only method since they face difficulties in understanding the teachers' explanations and scientific reading texts especially when they are unfamiliar with scientific terms, that is to say, they lack linguistic knowledge. To bridge the gaps translation is an effective technique that deals not only with linguistic aspect of the language, also it deals with communicative acts. Moreover, students feel bored (*question 6, table 2*) when the teacher uses only English as a medium of instruction what effects classroom discussion because the foreign language speaker tend to use Arabic as a speaking strategy to avoid communication break downs when they lack language knowledge.

7. Concluding Remarks

To wind up, it is recommended that on the part of the student to be aware of the context of elements within the text. Thus, they should contextualize specific item to grasp its appropriate meaning on one hand and to avoid word for word translation which may lose the meaning of the text on the other hand.

The role of the teacher, henceforth, should not be restricted to equip students with L1 equivalences but to explain and make analogies between the key items (whether words, expressions, phrases, concepts) within the same language and between SL and Target one, and whether they differ or resample those in L1. In addition, L1 should be used just from time to time; it is important in foreign language classroom to create an English environment, that is, the L2 should be more dominant.

The results of the analysis, then, went hand in hand with the hypothesis which emphasizes the usefulness and effectiveness of pedagogical translation and the mother tongue in teaching ESP students. The findings reveal that most students prefer the use of translation and the mother tongue as it handles their reading difficulties seeking for farther investigation for the cognitive process of interlanguage processing (L1 and L2) when reading.

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