

The Role of Translation in Teaching Pragmatics

(Based on traditional and modern language teaching methods)

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Abstract

Recent studies have shown that cross-cultural differences are one of the main points in which English second language learners continuously attempt to overcome. Different cultures oblige learners to know where and how should they use certain expressions in particular situations. It is believed that Cross-cultural differences in communication make the learners perplexed immensely and may affect conveying the messages inappropriately. Second language teachers apply various techniques to tackle the problem. Translation as a technique requires cultural knowledge extensively. The consideration of translation as the specific technique that attempts to prepare learners to use the certain expressions in specific situations was investigated in this paper. The aims of this paper are to illuminate what different tenets are allotted to teaching pragmatics based on translation and how translation can contribute significantly a main role and as a viable strategy in teaching pragmatics in different learning and teaching levels.

Key words: cross-cultural, pragmatics, translation, teaching. Technique

Introduction

This paper at the first step deals with the definitions of pragmatics and translation based on different scholars' fundamental tenets, then explicate the existing and inevitable relationship between translation and teaching pragmatics and argues that the translator who utilizes his knowledge of pragmatics can translate a text appropriately through using non-linguistic dimensions of verbal communication in different contextualized situations.

Based on conventional perspective, pragmatics operates in two different phases of the translation task: First, processing of source text (message), second conceptualizing and reformulating the target text (message). In both moments a great awareness of the pragmatically relevant differences is needed so as to achieve an adequate translation that can fulfill its communicative role in the target culture. As a mediator, the translator performs as text receptor in the first place by trying to understand and capture the message of the source text based on cross-cultural differences. During this comprehending phase, the translator is bound to the source text pragmatics that he tries to decode appropriately and convey the true and intelligible meanings to the listeners. In the process of translation, the translator is bound to manage the pragmatic differences between both source and target context. So, in educational systems and as a beneficial device and communicative event, translation can help teachers substantially to teach the different forms of pragmatics through three related speech acts of illocutionary act, illocutionary force and prelocutionary effect.

Statement of problem

Knowledge of the world, which is considered as one of the main points applied in pragmatics in numerous papers, can be helpful in accurate perceptions through different contexts. There may be pragmatic problems of translation for the translator. In a similar way, speech events differ cross-culturally just as social distance and closeness and are often culture-specific. It means in each community there are specific cultural contexts in which word-in –word translation cannot help to convey the true meanings from translator to the interlocutor. The translator is thus involved in using his knowledge of cross-cultural pragmatics to convey the message appropriately in the translated version without causing any offence. In all teaching methods the attitudes towards the role of translation has been changed frequently and it was sometimes praised and focused or ignored and avoided. To examine the role of translation in teaching pragmatics it seems indispensable to define translation and pragmatics at the beginning separately and find the profound influences of translation in teaching pragmatics in subsequent stages and eventually to understand whether the translation is beneficial or detrimental in teaching pragmatics.

Review of Literature

Having meticulous understanding of translation in teaching pragmatics demands to study translation and pragmatics as the multi-facets phenomenon separately based on pertinent scholars' findings and researches and attempt to clarify how translation has been

interwoven with pragmatics for a long time through different methods and approaches . As the first step, this paper deals with the definitions:

What is pragmatics?

Pragmatics is the study of the use language in communication, particularly the relationships between sentences and the contexts and situations in which they are used (Longman 2010). Yule (2010) defines pragmatics as “the study of what speakers mean, or “speaker meaning” and pragmatic is the study of “invisible” meaning, or how we recognize what is meant even when it is actually said or written. (Frankin and Rodman (1988) have referred to the “context” of a sentence or discourse, and the importance of context in interpreting language .The general study of how context influences the way sentences convey information is called Pragmatics. Pragmatics is as complex a subject as syntax or semantics. The term pragmatics comes from the field of Semiotics, or the study of signs. Within semiotics, syntax means “the way signs are arranged”, semantics means “what signs mean or signify”, and pragmatics means “the relationship between signs and their users”. Pragmatics has to do with people’s use of language in contexts, so it is a part of what we have been calling “linguistic performance”.)

Stalnaker’s definition is more explicit (see Hatim and Mason 1991:59):

Pragmatics is the study of the purposes for which sentences are used, of the real world conditions under which a sentence may be appropriately used as an utterance. Through pragmatics, contextual meaning is exploited and analyzed to discover the “real” meaning. It is important in pragmatics to talk about implied and intended meaning, assumptions, purposes and goals of people in communication and various types of actions. The inability of semantics to satisfactorily explicate the sociolinguistic and other non-linguistic components of verbal communication gave birth to pragmatics. Thus, pragmatics is a fairly new field of study, which shares borders with sociolinguistics and semantics. Pragmatics is discourse in action, action determined by society or interlocutors. When the action is determined by society, it becomes more or less sociolinguistics, but when it is more of intended meaning, it tends or leans towards semantics.

What is translation?

Translation is the process of rendering written language that was produced in one language (the source language) into another (the target language) or the target language version the results from this process (Longman 2010). B.F. Skinner (1974:95) says that “translation can best be defined as a verbal stimulus that has the same effect as the original (or as much of the same effect as possible) on a different verbal community”. The Russian formalist,

Roman Jakobson, divides translation into three parts: intralingual, intersemiotic and interlingual. Intralingual translation is “rewording” which consists of the interpretation of linguistic signs within the same language. Intersemiotic translation has to do with the interpretation of linguistic signs by using non-linguistic signs. Interlingual translation is translation properly, and consists of interpretation of linguistic signs from one language to another. Against the background of Roman Jakobson’s standpoint on three-fold definition of translation, it can be asserted that translation is as old as man is. The primary purpose of translation is the successful transmission of the original message using the medium of different linguistic signs. In the process of reproducing a message and its resultant nuances from one linguistic form into another, the translator is often confronted with problems of contextual meanings. Both sociolinguistics and semantics have links with translation. According to Newmark (1981:5), translation theory as being mainly an aspect of semantics while sociolinguistics has a “continuous bearing on translation theory”. Translation is a discipline that enjoys interesting links with a wide variety of disciplines such as Linguistics, Comparative study of Cultures, Comparative Ethnology, Computer Science, Comparative Sociology, etc. Its relationship with Linguistics is particularly profound. Newmark (1981) and Kwofie (1999) have argued that Translation is a sub-set of Linguistics. Proponents of such views regard Translation as part of Applied or Comparative Linguistics. We have argued that this view, which is influenced by the efforts of structuralists, tends to negate the role of communication, which cannot fit into most of the de-contextualized examples often cited by linguists. Translation, by its interdisciplinary nature and character, draws immensely from many other disciplines without necessarily being part of them. One such discipline is Pragmatics. The relationship may appear obscure, but a close examination of the two disciplines brings out striking areas of interest. The main concern of this paper is to bring out this relevance based on the theoretical explications of different linguists and approaches. After abovementioned definitions as second step it seems indispensable to review different point of views and research findings on using translation in different fields especially pragmatics:

1. Eliza Kitis (2009) considered the various levels of analysis of language from a pragmatic viewpoint, and showed how they contributed in distinct ways that need to be taken into account in translating into another language. These pragmatic levels are regarded as constituting the infrastructure of the translation process, and, it is claimed, raised awareness of their multifunctionality in this process must be visible in the translation product.
2. Anthony Pym’s research showed that Translators increasingly had to work on texts written in two or more languages. Such texts might typically was working documents, minutes of meetings or similar interim reports on the activities of scientific research

teams, international bureaucracies or multinational companies. Indeed, they were likely to emanate from any institutional framework where more than one language was used. The result was that many technical translators were called upon to work from multilingual source texts, and did so quite successfully. Yet their success was at the same time a failure for many traditional and not-so-traditional ways of looking at translation. The rendering of these texts required a mode of pragmatics that adopts an economic-probabilistic approach to the genealogy and authority of texts, ultimately accepting that the place of source-text production might be more intercultural, and indeed more hybrid, than that of translations.

3. Ana Maria Bernardo's paper was to show how different the production of a translated text was from the one of other texts produced under the constraints of a single context, especially at the pragmatic level. In the textualizing process of translation, the translator was bound to manage the pragmatic divergences between both source and target context, i.e., he must eventually recreate textuality in all its dimensions anew. In order to achieve an adequate effect with his translated text, high demands are set in the translator's textual competence. That was why the latter should integrate every translator's training course and knowing about pragmatics as the core of translation could help translators to be more efficient. According to aforementioned papers' results translation seems to be interlocked with pragmatics .

The pros and cons of using translation are discussed below:

1. Cook (2010) focused mainly on using translation in teaching especially in pragmatics as the positive environment, which changes the attitude towards the teaching translation (TILT). Cook (2010) enunciated an overview on the relationship between translation and language teaching. Accordingly, there is an obvious discrepancy between the practice and the theory of language teaching: Despite the widespread popular assumption that translation should play a major and necessary part in the study of a foreign language, twentieth-century theories of language teaching and learning have at best ignored the role of translation, and at worst vilified it. From the turn of the century onwards almost all influential theoretical works on language teaching have assumed without argument that a new language (L2) should be taught without reference to the student's first language (L1)". (Cook 1998: 117).

Cook states his case in bold style in his new book: *Translation in Language Teaching (TILT)*. In her ideas much emphasis is laid on the importance of bilingual or cross lingual interactions. The aims of the modern-day language learner, he argues, have shifted from the old-guard (monolingual, teacher-stated) aims to bring learners as close as possible to native competence, to new aims which involve a constant awareness of how languages interact, cross over and complement each other.

In addition, Ziafar's investigations on teaching pragmatics have the following notes:

Pragmatic aspect of formulaic language must be emphasized and employed in second language acquisition. Translation of formulaic speech can help learners better understand the pragmatic nature of L2 prefabricated language through comparing them with their L1 (first language) equivalents. Metapragmatics as an effective strategy in teaching and learning pragmatic aspect of language is highly apt to be achieved through a contrastive lexical pragmatic practice which results in learners' conscious raising and understanding about pragmatics. Rich sources of pragmatic (mostly pragmalinguistic) knowledge, comparisons made between L1 and L2 prefabricated expressions are highly effective in bringing second/foreign pragmatic acquisition and second/foreign language acquisition together. Whenever pragmatic failures occur, through a metapragmatic process, prefabricated expressions are revised in the light of their L1 equivalents in order to fulfill functions in certain contexts. Translating is introduced as L1 stereotypical equivalents for a pragmeme which can almost always account for all its pragmatic actions.

According to aforementioned ideas translation plays an important role in increasing awareness and understanding among different cultures and languages. Translations can help these different cultures reach a compromise. The attention given to pragmatic facts and principles in the course of translation can enhance the understanding of the text and improve the quality of translation. A good translation not only is concerned with transferring the propositional content of the source language text (SLT), but also with its other pragmatic and cross-cultural features. Accordingly, using translation will allow the teachers and learners to utilize the first language in the classroom environment and using the native language will be more common in classroom management and learning and teaching areas and prepare positive environment to learn L2 as new practical experience to reduce negative psychological effects of learning a new language.

The following opinions avoid using translation in teaching:

Some Scholars such as Newson and Carreres have claimed totally different opinions and are not interested in using translation in teaching a language specially teaching pragmatics.

1. Newson (1988) argued that using translation as a teaching and testing tool has four disadvantages. Translation (1) encourages thinking in one language and transferring to another, with accompanying interference; (2) deprives teacher and learner of the benefit of working within a single language; (3) gives false belief of the idea that there is a perfect one-to-one correspondence between languages; and (4) does not facilitate achievement of generally accepted aims such as emphasis on the spoken language.

2. Additionally, Carreres (2006) put forward some arguments against using translation as a language teaching tool. 1) Translation is an artificial exercise that has no place in a communicative methodology. Also, it is restrictive in that it confines language practice to two skills only: reading and writing. 2) Translation into L2 is counterproductive in that it

forces learners always to view the foreign language through their mother tongue; this causes interferences and a dependence on L1 that inhibits free expression in L2. 3) Translation into L2 is a purposeless exercise that has no application in the real world, since translators normally operate into and not out of their mother tongue. 4) Translation, particularly into L2, is a frustrating and de-motivating exercise in that the student can never attain the level of accuracy or stylistic polish of the version presented to them by their teacher. It seems to be an exercise designed to elicit mistakes, rather than accurate use of language.

3. (Marsh, 1987) claimed translation is a method that may well work with literary-oriented learners who enjoy probing the intricacies of grammar and lexis, but it is unsuited to the average learner. It is also a widely held view that translation is not a suitable exercise in the initial stages of learning (It is argued that, before learners can tackle translation productively, they need to have acquired a significant level of proficiency in the L2 language. They need to have moved beyond beginner's level.

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Discussion

To clarify the points it seems essential to mention all opposing ideas briefly in two items. First: Translation was considered as one of the main factors, which plays a key role in teaching language especially in teaching pragmatics. Second: Translation was considered as an ineffective item and interfering issue to teach a new language and has negative effect on teaching and learning. In one side, we are considered L1-based creatures and translation is a potential bridge to L2. Translation can be stimulating, fun and enriching. On the other side, translation is considered not only as an ineffective factor in teaching language but also as an obstacle on the way of teaching and learning. Based on some conventional teaching methods like direct method and Audio lingual method on using native language, using translation was not allowed. The target language had to be used and meanings could be communicated "directly" by associating speech forms with actions, objects, mime, gestures and situations. Direct Method and Audiolingual Method used the techniques and activities which were based on rote learning (mechanical) and were not meaningful, that is, the new knowledge was not connected the existing one. Thus, students did not commit any problematic errors because of repetition and substitution drills and lack of using communicating drills. Pragmatics as a key role in learning a language is the study of the use of language in communication, particularly the relationship between sentences and the contexts and situations in which they are used. Then, defining communication helps to illuminate the subject as clear as possible. Communication: is the exchange of ideas, information, etc, between two or more persons. In the act of communication, there is usually at least one speaker or sender, a message that is transmitted, and a person or

persons for whom this message is intended (the receiver). Thus, using translation as an effective factor in some teaching method like DM and ALM is was not possible and never be applied because of the approaches that support these nearly old fashioned methods but some post methods such as communicative teaching method and task-based and content - based methods are determined to use cooperating and collaborating teaching techniques in their new methods and pragmatics as a main components of communication .Thus, these new methods are adjusted to the role of translation and it can be used minimally in the situations that the teacher cannot convey the message clearly to the students

Conclusion

The role of translation in conventional and post methods had been viewed based on two important factors First: The role of translation in communication and making communicative framework to engage learners to learn pragmatics of a new language .Second: To avoid using translation as interference of first language into second language learning. The followings are two main reasons to accept translation as an effective item in teaching pragmatics.

First: Pragmatics is extremely interlocked with culture values and during teaching some parts of lessons it is inevitable to translate the cultural notes to the foreign learners because their culture values may be are different or even opposite of the lessons cultural points.

Second: Using translation in the form of interpretation (getting sender's message intention) by listener or learner and translating into his /her native language simultaneously helps to activate learner's mind as a bilingual and also some difficult words or utterances are abstract and explanation or illustration cannot help to clarify the meanings, so the shortcut in these predicaments is translation.

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