Aided and Specialized Translation Practice: An Applied Pedagogical Principle

Dr. M. Gopalakrishnan[1], Dr. P. Ranjitham[2]
[1]Associate Prof & Head, Dept. of Business Management, Sri Vasavi College, Erode.
[2]Assistant Prof & Head, Dept. of Botany, Sri Vasavi College, Erode

Abstract: *A novel measure to enhance communicative competence has been tried during the last academic year in our college. This case study forms the core element of this paper. It has been pedagogically tried in a classroom setting with self-interested cohorts of BBA stream. The small group of concerned students was regularly assembled and was given the task of reading the page six of the Tamil daily "Daily Thanthi". This page is exclusively devoted for business news borrowed and translated from the English national-daily "The Economic Times". The simultaneous and side-by-side reading of both the related passages was given to sub-groups and they were made to present to the whole group. This aided practice of translating business-related news items can be used as a pedagogical tool to hone the communicative competencies of the first generation higher education cohorts, argue the authors. Other supplementing tools were also in place and the teacher as a facilitator present in the classroom played a constructive role at times of need. The participating learners were required to equip themselves with a comprehensive multi-lingual dictionary. Also they were ensured to possess the average vocabulary level of Oxford - 3000 words – a trademarked lexical list. All of the participating members of the group, after initial inhibition, traitorously followed the instructions. Around one-third of them, after an year of persisting efforts, had ended up with an euphoric enthusiasm and shown the symptoms of entry into the right trajectory to augment the much desired communicative competence.*
Key Words: *Communicative competence – Aided Translation – Specialized Translation – Pedagogy – Traverse between source & target languages (L1 ⟷L2) – ESL learners*

I. Introduction

Skilling the youth of our present India is of paramount interest to nation-building process, because of the catastrophic impact of the other side of the population demography. As we all know, the population demography is a double-edged sword. The inputs into our higher education system are deprived of enough LSRW skills in L2 [English] as well as L1 [Tamil] in their school curriculum, which is driven by rote type of learning to get marks in their terminal examinations at 10th and 12th standards. To alleviate this, an exclusive curriculum component under skill-based category was introduced for BBA students spanning for four semesters commencing from their third semester onwards. In order to fulfill the curricular aspects, students were given ample listening and reading comprehensions. As a part of this curricular progress, a forum under the banner T^3 – Trials, Tribulations and Triumph was mobilized. This forum consisted of true and voluntarily interested participants who are propelled by proactive attitude. They were thirty in total and twenty-six had regularity in their pursuit to enhance their communicative competence. The longitudinal impact study is being presented as a case-study and can be emulated with suitable modifications to suit the local needs. This piece of work examines the theory and practice of translation from a variety of angles, including semantics, equivalence and functional linguistics.

II. Group Formation

The importance of communicative competencies in the context of securing an entry-level job from an MNC was dinned home to the students. Communicative competence refers to a learner's ability to use language to communicate successfully (Canale and Swain, 1980)[1]. This competence is in four areas: words and rules; appropriacy; cohesion and coherence; and use of communication strategies. The group formation was initially a normative with some specific prerequisites, such as possession of a multi-lingual dictionary and a predetermined level of active-cum-passive vocabulary. The brain-stormed MNC-covered job opportunities helped to garner a large number of participants. However, this group was trimmed down to thirty active participants based on their exhibition of continued interest which was evidenced through the completion of home-based easy-to-do assignments. After norming and storming stages, a performing group with cohesiveness bonded by the objective was in place. Seven sub-groups of four each were subdivided with distribution based on abilities and this made

the groups almost homogeneous. Two have been remained out of the sub-groups and became the rapporteurs to oversee the home-based learning assignments and presentation of the sub-groups.

III. Imbibing the Objective

In order to voluntarily bind the members with the group, norms and compulsive or punitive measures alone may not yield the desired results. Therefore, the benefit of inculcating communicative skills were evidenced to them by showcasing the senior cohorts who got a decent placement based only on the communicative count. This value and objective imbibing is didactic and every member has thus become goal-oriented; and not worried on the means of achieving the same. This soaking has helped in sprouting the enthusiasm and group activities flourished and blossomed. The window through which the participants looked the external world has altered their mental landscape and this opening had been captured by the teacher facilitator to drive home the necessary vocabulary.

IV. Persistency of Efforts

Initial euphoria thus generated need to be sustained to bring visible results. Therefore, persistency plank has to be banked upon to ensure that the group is cohesive and primarily driven by the objective beforehand. Current topics of interest alone shall be focused initially in the classroom setting. For instance, at the time of writing this article, demonetization and its related issues would be appropriate to make a dent in the learners' mind and to sustain the interest. Hence, it has been made very clear that the discussion forum shall hold three to four weekly get-togethers, if not daily. Even protracted holidays would not deter them from this translation-related news exchange forum. All these had helped in steadfast progress of the group's efforts towards the goal. Had the efforts been inconsistent and piece-meal basis, it would not have yielded the desired results. Consistency and persistency of learning by ESL learners only can show the accelerated pace of skill acquisition.

V. Aided and Specialized Translation

In order to enhance the comprehension in L2, it is foremost essential to traverse between source and target languages – L1 and L2 (symbolically L1 $\longleftrightarrow$ L2); and had been done this initially at conceptual level. Thereafter, translation of L1 $\longleftrightarrow$ L2 had been attempted at clause/phrase level aka sentence-fragmented level. Cascaded approach should be the key to conceptualize the content in both the languages L1 and L2[2]. Specialized translation is a way to categorize translation into scientific, medical, legal, business, economics and so on. Even when translation is frequently divided into the aforesaid types, fuzzy boundaries among them are evident. A special interest group – say for example students pursuing business administration, is interested in the commerce and business news. In this case, cohorts doing BBA are given the L1 and L2 versions of business news published originally in English by "The Economic Times" and its translated vernacular version in Tamil by "*Daily Thanthi*". Since the practices were supported by this current media (newspapers), we wish to call this experiment as aided translation in a specialized domain.

VI. Tools Used

It is recommended that each learner should possess a hard-copy of dictionary on their own apart from mobile loaded soft-copy. Each learner is given complete leeway to choose their dictionary and this has contributed to different dictionaries in the learning environment. These multitudinous references helped in understanding the nuances in the differences in meaning and usage of lexical units. In the group learning sessions, everyone has access to each other's dictionary and hence the spread increased. Also, vocabulary builders[3] were used. Journals prepared by each one were exchanged and usage patterns were also briefed based on the newspaper text. Oxford-3000 wordlist was mandated and ensured that everyone is proficient with the usage of the same in their respective contexts. Frequency based word list were also introduced to challenge the advanced learners. The three basic classification of vocabulary introduced are: Basic vocabulary, High-frequency/ Multiple-meaning vocabulary and low-frequency/ context-specific subject vocabulary[4].

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English Version:

Coal imports fell by 25 per cent to 14.31 million tonnes in December.

Translated version:

□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□, □□□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ 25 □□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ 1.43 □□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□.

Sample News item

கடந்த டிசம்பர் மாதத்தில்

நிலக்கரி இறக்குமதி 25 சதவீதம் குறைந்தது

Apart from these basic prerequisites, translation work formed the central theme and word-by-word translation was discouraged. Instead, meaningful blocks were taken as a chunk and collocated the understanding. Vernacular daily "*Daily Thanthi*" had full-page copy-righted business news items translated from the "The Economic Times". The page number six of the Tamil daily is exclusively devoted for this. The class had seven copies of Tamil daily and photocopied English daily's concerned news items. Each group has to do a group activity by assimilating the difficulties and expressing the learning they had. Also individually, the learners started harnessing the benefits of this treasure-hunt. Refer the following text-box containing both versions of a specific news-item in order to feel the impact of the guided exercise to acquire linguistic mastery. Reflective narratives[5] of the individuals were also welcomed and critical comments were given to the participating learners. For instance, a learner had given a sentence on his own "The teacher is under standing the tree" in order to convey the meaning "The teacher is standing under the tree" [Mrpupau; kuj;jbapy; epd;W nfhz;Ls;shH]. While encouraging their efforts, the flaws were corrected with proper personal attention. The vox-pop conducted by these groups based on the news analysis among the teaching fraternity also added flavor to the learning recipe.

VII. Technological Transition

We are in the midst of ICT era, where technology tries to supersede and learning is not exempted from the tsunami-like transitional waves. The world is embracing technology at every turn to improve efficiency, convenience and speed. The language services industry is no different. Embracing innovative technology can make a real difference to the bottom line if applied in the right situation. As stated earlier, mobile apps like dictionary not only help in giving the meaning but also the typical pronunciation of the words enabling learners to quicken their acquisition. Apart from this various websites such as http://translate.google.com, http://testyourvocab.com, http://www.thefreedictionary.com, etc., help the learners to instantaneously to get translation. However, a word of caution has to be given with regard to the machine translation which may not be

contextual and exact equivalent of the source language text. Every learner is motivated to embrace the technology and encouraged to share the news with their peers and friends through SMS and/or WhatsApp messenger services. Those with smart phones were also given additional developmental games from the world wide web (www).

VIII.   Difficulties and Strategies To Overcome

The case study pertains to a public-funded, co-educational, arts and science college located in tier-III center. The 'plus-2' pass-outs mostly from Government-funded schools with English marks ranging between 70 and 107 were found in the selected group. The median mark in English is 81 [out of 200] and readability is very limited and constrained. Most of them had got through inflated marking given to ensure rosy pass percentage at their school-terminal stage. With this back-drop, the difficulties in inculcating linguistic skills are insurmountable. Initial inhibition, a sense of senseless and goal-less attitude, aversion to grammar, lack of opportunity to practice are only a few hurdles that can be viewed as tip of the iceberg. Still large chunks that are invisible also need to be addressed and thwarted to ensure positive outcome to the developmental agenda on hand. Some strategies to overcome that were to be adopted: affordable fee need to be charged, group cohesiveness need to be maintained for the learning span of two-semesters, often outcomes need to be rewarded, lifting out of the social-taboo of '*petering*' and teachers appealing as a facilitator rather than as an instructor[6].

IX. Conclusion

Though the efforts we have ploughed in did not bear complete fruition in the limited short-run, there is a strong cause for optimism. This case study, thus, examined the theory and practice of translation from a variety of linguistic angles, including semantics, equivalence, functional and cognitive linguistics. In this study, the focus of translation studies shifted away from linguistics and increasingly to forms of business and economical studies. There has also been a shift towards studies that have incorporated models from functional linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis.

The business management students, in this case study, had the opportunity of taking current news-based translated materials from the dailies and acquired linguistic skills sans grammar and grammar teacher. Grammar aspects had been dissembled and the participants were free to use sans the rules of the grammar, which hitherto hindered their L2 development. Translation replete with pertinent commentary used by the participants with the help of daily newspapers had given an impetus to the development of linguistic skills and communicative competence. The interventional strategies in unconventional areas of the curriculum need to be studied among various settings before giving policy directions. This kind of translation exercise can also be taken individually and qualitative improvements can be attained both in the base as well as target languages.

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