

## **How can Translation Mechanisms Promote Students' English Language Competence in Saudi Universities**

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### **Abstract**

This study tackles the role of translation in developing and promoting English language competence of the students of translation in the Saudi Universities, with special concentration on writing skill and vocabulary. The researcher started by explaining the definition, history and importance of translation from early decades and how man needed translation for different purposes such as communication between different communities speaking different languages, transferring sciences and knowledge as well as knowing the cultures of different societies. The study also showed the abilities the translator should have such as to be cultured and have wide knowledge of different fields, rich repertoire of vocabulary and specialized terminology in addition to having the senses of conveying the meaning from the source language to the target language without using word for word or literal translation. This study was applied in the Faculty of Science and Arts at Jazan university in Saudi Arabia and the population was the students of the final year. The students concerned in this study learnt different language and translation courses since their first year in the college including reading, writing, speaking and listening in addition to phonetics, phonology, syntax, semantics and other linguistics courses. As to translation they have studied introduction to translation, translation strategies, translation problems in addition to some specialized translations. The study concluded to that, translation learning and language learning reinforce each other as the students can not be professional translators without mastering all language skills of both SL and TL, while they can acquire these skills through learning translation courses and practicing translation of different texts, whereas language and translation teachers play a vital role in solving language problems and linguistics difficulties and weaknesses during translation classes. To achieve the required goals the researcher recommended the inclusion of intensive Arabic and English languages courses as the translator have to master both SL and TL. In addition, translation teachers should teach the students how to avoid literal and word for word translation, also introduction to different specializations such as introduction to medicine, science, law are very important in the academic system of any translation department, as it will enrich the students knowledge and terminologies of any specialization. The researcher also recommended using dictionaries and advance technologies as well as online translation, this will promote the students translation ability and add to their experience. The researcher also recommended the conduction of more studies in this domain in order to promote the translators' competency and experience in translation and language fields.

**Keywords:** language competence, specialized terms, source and target languages, semantics, syntax, phonology.

## 1. Introduction

This study investigates the impact of introducing the translation mechanisms in teaching at the undergraduate level, with the aim of exploring and developing aspects of communicative competence and language awareness. Also this study concerns with translation mechanisms in enhancing the students English language awareness and competence, for undergraduate students.

The main purpose of this research is to investigate how translation mechanisms contribute to promote English language, it intends to explore the correlation that exists between the study of translation mechanisms and improving English language. Certainly, it is a social skill as long as it is the base for understanding the relation between language and translation, so it is a self-evident truth which makes the use of translation teaching as essential.

Students' language awareness and communicative competence have been badly ruined as a result of bad teaching that stresses the use of Arabic at every teaching situation.

Translation in ELT is often described as the fifth language skill, whereas translation is defined as the transference of written or spoken language into another language.

The study of translation history reminds us that translation is a human activity that has been going on since language began to evolve and may be affected by all kinds of external events. It shows us, if we did not already know, that translation principles cannot always be defined and adhered to like scientific formulae, but at times remain as flexible as language itself. Placing translated texts into their historical contexts helps define and account for the policies employed by past translators and so gives at least a point of departure for developing strategies. Looking at the history of translation theory gives bases for comparison and demonstrates whether translators are making progress or simply repeating the same mistakes. It also helps to assess whether modern theorists are saying something new or simply repeating the same ideas in different language.

The importance of translation emerges by the reason that it is one of the most important disciplines that is considered very crucial and useful in many human activities such as business, education, science and languages. The translation profession has been in existence for a long time, whereas translators enabled the works of great writers to be read by wide range of readers of different cultures and linguistic backgrounds. Also, students learn about different scientific discoveries and other specializations through translation. Translation has long played a role in the dissemination of scientific information.

This study addresses the following questions:

1. What is the role of translation in developing students writing skills?
2. How can translation promote and enrich the student vocabulary and specialized terminology?
3. What are the difficulties that face the student during translation process?
4. What are the successful solutions that can be taken to overcome these difficulties?

5. Are the students having the enough competencies to grasp English language skills (specially writing) during translation?
6. How can students improve their weaknesses in writing and understanding?

## 2. Literature review

### **Definition of translation:**

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Translation has been given a number of definitions by different scholars, but no comprehensive and agreed definition has so far been provided. This could be attributed to the fact that theorist differs in their perspective on the nature and process of translation.

Traditionally, translation is considered to be a change of form from a source language (SL) into a target language (TL). Translation is converting one language (SL) into another language (TL), so that the target language could convey the intended message in the source language. The aim is to produce as accurately as possible all grammatical and lexical features of source language by finding equivalent in the target language.

(ibid:11) remarks that a good translation is that in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language, as to as distinctly apprehended and strongly felt by native of the country to which that language belong, as it is by those who speak the language of the original work.

This definition suggests there are three laws which should be well adopted in the process of good translation, namely:

Firstly, that translation should give complete transcript of the ideas of the original work; secondly, the style and manner of writing should be the same character as that of the original, thirdly; the translation should have all the ease of the original composition.

Linguistically translation is a branch of applied linguistics, for in the process of translation, the translator consistently makes every attempt to compare and contrast different aspects of two languages to find equivalents.

(ibids (2011: 25) states that “ translation as a pedagogical tool can be successfully employed at any level of proficiency, at school or university, as a valuable and creative teaching aid to support, integrate and further strengthen the four language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

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Some translation theorists have offered some definitions for the term (translating) which has been used to mean the process of translation.

Munday. (2006:15) states that “ translation is not just a process of translating words, sentences or texts; it gives us the opportunities to know more about societies and their cultures”.

Bill (1991:20) defines it as “the replacement of a presentation of equivalent text in a second language”. Whereas Jacobson (1995: 233) states that “ languages, from a grammatical perspective , differs from one another to a greater or lesser degree; which in my opinion could pose translation program” therefore translation could not be separate from language accuracy.

The following is a presentation of some common definitions of translation given by some scholars in the field of translation studies such as Ctaford, Nida, Tabler and Newmark.

Carford (1965:1): defines translation as “ an operation performed on languages: a process substituting a text in one language for a text in another”. According to his definition, translation has been considered as an operation performed on languages. Thus he has described translation as a replacement of textual material in another.

Nida and Taber (1982:12) state in other word, “translation is a transfer of meaning, message and style from one SL to TL”. So, translation literary means rendering the meaning of something (said or written) in another language.

Newmark (1991:27) defines translation as “the act of translating very briefly. It is the act of transferring meaning of a stretch or a unit of language, the whole or part from one language to another”

The other definition of translation proposed by Larson (1984:3) who says “ translation is basically a changing of form”. When speaking of the form of language, has referred to the actual words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs which are spoken or written.

Nevertheless, a definition which is not confined to the mere transference of meaning is furnished by Nida and Taber (1969:12) who postulates: “ Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the sources language message, firstly, in term of meaning and secondly in term of style”.

Among the above Nida and Taber’s may serve as a basis for the concept of translation as a TL product which has been semantically accurate, grammatically correct, stylistically effective and textually coherent as the SL text.

From the above mentioned definitions the researcher has concluded that translation is the process of transferring the meaning or the message from source language into target one.

### **Translating and related studies**

Many people assume that translating requires considerable training in linguistics. But this is not true. Some of the best translators have no training whatsoever in linguistics, although some introduction to linguistics can make translating a much more meaningful activity. The essential skill of translators is being able to understand correctly the meaning of a source text. Knowledge of linguistics is, of course, not a handicap, but a distinct asset in clearly distinguishing between the structures of a text and the understanding of a text. Linguists analyze texts, but translators must understand texts. Daniel Goudec. (2007)

Translators need to know the meanings of words in particular texts, but not necessarily all the meanings that are listed in comprehensive dictionaries. Similarly, translators do not need to analyze all the layers of grammatical structures if they can comprehend accurately the ways in which they relate to one another. The comprehension of a text as a whole is much more important to a translator than outlining the structural levels, although in some cases identification of the literary structures can provide insight for the correct understanding of a text.

Serious attention may also be required for evaluating the capacity of students to use foreign languages, because most students entering programs of translation are usually not adequately prepared to translate, and as a result they often acquire habits that are not easy to break. The real issue is the best use of students' time and energy in learning a foreign language in the most efficient manner. Great advances have been made in the field of language learning, and programs in language learning should be designed to take advantage of such insights and methods.

At some point in all programs of language learning some experience in translating should be introduced, but not on the elementary level of simply trying to make sense, but at more advanced levels in which translating can test the adequacy of vocabulary for certain types of texts. The translation of various types of texts is particularly useful in highlighting the differences of style in different types of discourse.

( Nida 1984 – 10). Claims “Some programs in translation also try to provide students with extensive information about such supplementary fields as computational linguistics and artificial intelligence, but such information is only marginal to the practical concerns of most translators and interpreters. Far more important is the need to appreciate fully the importance of the intended audience. In fact, no translator should begin to work without first knowing who is the intended audience, as determined by the publisher.

### **Teaching undergraduates**

Those of us who teach undergraduates can see some of the most traditional views of the non-specialist in their opinions and approach to translation, especially, of course, in their first year. That is why, when setting up an undergraduate program, two questions are crucial: what do we expect from an undergraduate student? and, what do they expect of us? Students with little experience of translation have specific needs that do not correspond to those of postgraduate students who are usually older, more mature and have professional experience. On the other hand, we have observed that students who enroll for a postgraduate course who have not

followed a degree in translation lack skills – such as resourcing or more cognitive skills such as the application of translation strategies – which are familiar to translation graduates. Students with a translation degree have received training in knowledge management of different disciplines and in problem-spotting and problem-solving skills which they can apply to most text types and disciplines, an advantage in a professional world where translation is considered more as a business than an art and where multidisciplinary translators are in high demand. Beeby, A. (2002). Students with a degree who later follow a postgraduate course in translation have a greater command of the terminology and concepts of a given field but lack the flexibility and translating skills of someone who has been practicing and reflecting on the subject for four years.

An added difficulty for teachers of translation and interpreting as academic subjects is that, owing to the scant tradition in translation training, there are very few publications directed at the undergraduate. Most articles and books on training are addressed to teachers of postgraduate courses or to experienced translators. (Kiraly 1995, 2000; González Davies 2004).

Finally, we are still looking for answers to the questions of what translation competence consists in? what basic tools our students need to cope reasonably with a translation? what the characteristics of undergraduate translation students are? which activities will:

- motivate them
- make them more autonomous problem solvers
- help them with problem-spotting and solving
- encourage them to identify and respect text types, conventions of presentation and styles
- make them understand the full importance of the translation assignment and reader and to the still much debated question of the amount of translation theory a program should include. For instance, recent research seems to point to the fact that students who follow a course on Translation Theories in their first year perform better sooner than those who do not do the course until later (Orozco 2000).

María González Davies (2004 – 72) quoted “The aims of an undergraduate degree in translation studies published by most universities are close to the following:

- a. To produce translators and interpreters in, at least, two foreign languages and prepare them to become part of a competitive market with high intellectual, professional and technical skills.
- b. To produce native language editors and style correctors who can work in publishing.
- c. To create the basis for graduates to work in journalism, television and cinema, radio, public relations, tourism, companies with international relations, etc.
- d. To prepare students for teaching jobs in the foreign and native languages.

e. To prepare students for postgraduate studies and research.

### **Vocabulary**

Mastery of words and specialized terminologies is an essential factor in translating different topics in foreign language. Students with wide and varied vocabulary are able to have mastery of language in different situations. Vocabulary is an essential factor in translation from English into Arabic and vice versa. Vocabulary is considered the main serious issue for student in translation process.

### **Words in the context**

All the same, we do translate words. But we do not translate isolated words, bound by their syntactic, collocational, situational, cultural and individual idiomatic contexts. That is one way of looking at translation, But since the grammar is expressed only in words, we have to get the words right. The words must stretch and give only if the thought is threatened.

That is to say, context is essential to get the right meaning of words and to translate any text properly and accurately.

## **3. Methodology**

### **Tools of data collection**

The researcher used two tools in conducting the study . firstly, a test which include three questions which are as follows: question one included two sections translating an English text into Arabic , translating Arabic text into English, question two also consisted of two parts which are translating English sentences , which consist of a certain words that changes its meaning according to the context, translating Arabic sentences into English and the last question is the translation of English vocabulary, expressions and terminologies into Arabic. A posttest which was conducted at the end of the semester to identify if any improvements have occurred after studying translation courses. Secondly, a questionnaire was conducted to identify the opinion of English and translation teachers who have long experience, to support the hypotheses of the study and whether learning English reinforce the learning of translation and vice versa.

## **4. Findings and recommendations**

### **4.1 findings**

The final results of this research have shown that , the students of the Faculty of science and arts at Jazan university encountered problems and difficulties in translation from Arabic into English and vice versa. In addition, the researcher concluded to that the students suffered from obvious

weaknesses in both languages Arabic and English, which indicated the weak level and quality of education they had in their basic and secondary schools.

Moreover, the findings have shown that the pretest, posttest and the questionnaire were well prepared and administered properly, which proves the validity and reliability of the results of this study and its utility for students.

The results of this study can also be useful to those who are interested in the fields of translation and language teaching.

The findings of the study also proved the hypothesis stated in chapter one in which the researcher assumes that translation learning develops and improves English language competence and awareness, and that the students suffer from some linguistic problem which appeared during translation process.

#### **Suggestions for further studies:**

- This study can be as start point for further studies and researches in the same direction, as more researches can tackle other linguistic and translation problems and difficulties that face the students of English language and translation. Furthermore it is expected to be of great value to translators and teachers so as to follow up the recommendation stated in this chapter.
- A study is suggested to generalize translation courses in across the faculties of the university because each specialization has its own references and terminologies that need specialist in that field to translate them.
- Further studies are also suggested in the fields of specialized translation, and how can the student of translation master this type by learning introduction to these specializations and enrich their terminology.
- A study is also suggested in the field of consecutive and simultaneous interpretation to show the differences between interpretation and translation, as interpretation is a totally different type of translation

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