



The Positive Effect of Pedagogical Translation

Ziyi Chen

School of Foreign Languages, Jiangsu University, Zhenjiang 212013, Jiangsu, China

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Abstract: At present, the most commonly used approach in foreign language teaching is listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, translation, as an effective teaching tool, is often ignored. This phenomenon is mostly attributed to the prejudice of many scholars against traditional grammatical translation methods. As a traditional teaching method, teaching translation plays a positive role in promoting foreign language teaching. This paper analyzes the role of teaching translation in promoting language learning from the micro and macro aspects of foreign language learning and the role of mother tongue transfer. This paper holds that pedagogical translation is scientific and operable in promoting foreign language teaching and learning, no matter from the perspective of vocabulary and grammar learning, or from the cognitive basis of language acquisition.

Keywords: pedagogical translation, foreign language teaching, second language

1. Literature review

Translation is perceived differently by different linguists, methodologists and teachers. Its use in foreign language teaching provokes a great deal of disagreement and criticism. The main reason for this is the fact that throughout the years there have been a number of studies carried out, which have either favored or completely ignored the use of translation as a learning method. On one hand, after the fall of Grammar Translation Method, proponents of the Direct Method at the end of the nineteenth century banned the use of translation activities in the process of L2 learning. As Cook (2001) also believes, translation activities used in the process of L2 teaching can be viewed as a rich resource which, if used judiciously, can assist second language teaching and learning. [1] According to Ross (2000), the rationale against using translation is founded on obliging learners to share their precious L2 use time with the L1, this is not a productive use of the opportunities given by the class.[2]

Many theorists, linguists, and teachers, on the other hand, agree on the importance of using translation in foreign language classes. Atkinson (1987), for example, is one of the first and chief advocates of using translation technique in the communicative classroom.[3] He points out the methodological gap in the literature concerning the use of the translation activities and argues a case in favor of its restricted and principled use, mainly in accuracy-oriented tasks. In his article, Atkinson clearly states that translation from mother language to the target language which emphasizes a recently taught language item is a means to reinforce structural, conceptual and sociolinguistic differences between the native and target languages. In his view, even though this activity is not communicative, it aims at improving accuracy of the newly learned structures.

The proponents of using translation technique in L2 instruction claim that the use of translation activities not only has a positive effect on students' second language learning, but also may help them improve the way they learn the target language. Accordingly, translation in foreign language classes can set a useful ground by which ample opportunities are provided for the students to view language as a holistic system with unique communicative capabilities, no matter what proficiency level they are in. Moreover, translation activities need not be used in isolation, but should be included in an inherent part of the language learning course.

2. Introduction

In the current era of economic globalization, foreign language teaching has become a daily activity because of the frequent exchanges between China and the other countries in the world. Krashen (1985) believed that comprehensible input is a necessary condition for second language acquisition, and sufficient comprehensible input is the only way to acquire knowledge.[4] In the second language acquisition, input refers to the target language material that learners are exposed to. Here, "language material" refers to listening and reading in the foreign language teaching. The background of the Input Hypothesis is not completely consistent with foreign language teaching in China. Krashen's theory about comprehensible input is for the second language acquisition in the target language environment, however, in China, only one single language is

used in the natural language environment. For most of the foreign language learners, being taught in the classroom is the main channel of language input, and under the environment of the target language, second language learners can get a lot of natural language input from outside of the classroom. Being blind with immersion language teaching, while cultivating students' language fluency, often leads their language to be rigid and inaccurate. Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis supplemented Krashen's Input Hypothesis, arguing that comprehensible input is an indispensable part of language acquisition.[5] And as a reaction against what Swain saw as the inefficacy of the use of comprehensible input alone in the development of learners' linguistic competence in the immersion schools. Swain argued that it is only during the production of the second language (in speech or writing), that the learners can notice that they are not able to say what they want to say in the target language. Output would seem to have a potential significant role in the development of syntax and morphology" (Swain 1995:128).

However, the traditional output approach only involves speaking and writing, translating, which is an effective teaching tool, is often ignored. Influenced by traditional grammar-translation methods, many researchers hold a certain prejudice against pedagogical translation, believing that mother tongue should not be used in the classroom. In fact, pedagogical translation plays a positive role in foreign language teaching and is an effective foreign language teaching tool, and it should be widely used in the foreign language teaching and become an essential part of the foreign language class.

3. Pedagogical translation

Delisle (1998) proposed the distinction between the two concepts of translation and pedagogical translation.[6] Delisle (1988) holds that pedagogical translation is a method adopted to learn a certain language, that is, translation as a medium for language teaching (generally referring to foreign language). Using translation in foreign language teaching can help students quickly understand the exact meaning of words and sentences, compare the similarities and differences between different languages, and more accurately test students' understanding of the foreign language.

For the purpose of language teaching, the requirements of pedagogical translation and translation teaching are different, the former one aims to improve foreign language ability, whereas the latter one aims to cultivate students' translation ability. The main feature of pedagogical is that it is close to the language structure of the original text, and the quality of translation is judged according to the purpose of language teaching in the corresponding stage. For example, certain vocabularies or structures must be used to test the effect of language learning. In foreign language teaching, this method belongs to a relatively traditional language teaching method, and it different from the later Audio-lingual Method, Communicative Approach and so on. The disadvantage of pedagogical translation is that it is easy to form students' dependence on their mother tongue, especially easy to make them understand the conversion between languages as mechanical correspondence, but if properly applied, it is still an effective teaching method. The direct purpose of teaching translation is not to improve students' translation ability and communicative ability, but to help students understand and master language knowledge, so as to acquire language ability.

4. The positive role of translation in foreign language teaching

Pedagogical translation plays an important role in promoting foreign language vocabulary teaching. Translation is the comprehension of the meaning of the text. It can be understood that translation is a process of finding out and comprehend the meaning of certain words. It aims to increase and improve communication skills in English. Dealing with vocabulary, translation closely related to be a strategy to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Language is a symbol, which corresponds to many concepts in the mind. Some words correspond to only one meaning, while others correspond to multiple meanings, that is, polysemy. People who speak different languages form basically the same concepts in their minds, but the difference is that these concepts correspond to different words in different languages, and the same word may correspond to multiple different concepts. Therefore, teaching translation can help to accurately understand the meaning of words and avoid semantic ambiguity.

Pedagogical translation can promote the teaching of foreign language grammar. Translation, as a form of language output, also has three functions of language output, which can not only improve learners' second language fluency, but also improve their accuracy. Different from reading and writing, pedagogical translation can provide a standard reference translation. In the process of translation, learners can realize the shortcomings of their own interlanguage, find the gap between what they want to express and what they can express, and then turn their attention to the knowledge of the target language they need to learn, thus promoting the acquisition of language form. By reading the reference translation, learners are exposed to a large number of target language materials with correct form and standard language. That is to say, in pedagogical translation, learners can not only output, but also get a certain amount of input. The translation here is not to find a word from the foreign language correspond with the mother tongue, but to combine the language phenomenon being taught,

ask students to express in another language, and find the mistakes or improper language use from their translation. Reading reference provides a comparative analysis of the translation study thinking, learners will make a comparison between their own translation and reference translation, the comparison of the interlanguage and the target language, to find errors in the interlanguage. Systematic analysis and research on learners' mistakes can determine the source of their mistakes and provide a basis for eliminating these mistakes in the teaching process.

The proponents of using translation technique in second language instruction claim that the use of translation activities not only has a positive effect on students' second language learning, but also may help them improve the way they learn the target language.

5. Pedagogical translation contributes to the positive transfer of mother tongue

Influenced by behaviorist linguistics, many scholars tend to think that mother tongue hinders second language acquisition, but this view is not comprehensive. Mother tongue also plays a positive role in foreign language learning. When there are more similarities between mother tongue and target language, it will be easier to master the target language. Most second language learners have been immersed in the environment of their mother tongue for too long. Even if there is no input of their mother tongue in class, they use the processing mechanism of their mother tongue to process and output the target language in their brain. The influence of one's mother tongue on one's way of thinking is so deeply rooted that there is no way to establish a completely independent mode of thinking outside of one's mother tongue. Many times the influence of our mother tongue is subconscious. Relevant studies show that adults' second language acquisition is based on their mother tongue thinking. In consideration of the use of native language in the classroom, I argue that all second language learners access their native language while processing the second language. The second language learners does not effectively switch off the native language while processing the second language, but has it constantly available. When teaching students, teachers must not treat the second language in isolation from the native language. In fact, one can not do so because native language is present in the second language learners' minds, whether the teacher wants it to be there or not. The second language knowledge, being created in them, is connected in all sorts of ways with their native language knowledge. Thus one might suppose that using their native language, more specifically translation activities, in second language instruction will lead to negative transfer.

The psychological benefits that the use of students' mother tongues and translation activities in the classroom bring about. By using and valuing the learners' native languages and, as a consequence, translation activities in the class, their learning process will also be supported and enhanced by virtue of the fact that they themselves are indirectly valued. Finally, many researchers support the idea that translation is a motivating activity. Carreres (2006) added that translation, by its very nature, is an activity that invites discussion and students are only too happy to contribute to it, often defending their version with remarkable passion and persuasiveness.[7] The use of mother tongue in the process of second language acquisition would be of great help for foreign language learners and it is helpful for their language learning. Accordingly, teachers should take make use of students' mother tongue into consideration as a pedagogical tool in the process of teaching. It does not seem reasonable to deprive learners from deploying this recourse at the expense of exercising an English-only atmosphere in the classrooms, by virtue of the fact that mother tongue is truly a very rich resource of linguistic knowledge.

6. Conclusion

From the above analysis, the translation for learning any language is an indispensable part of translation methods in the teaching, not only can consolidate the knowledge content of language learning, but also can promote language use, but the written output is often mistaken for is the result of language acquisition, a great number of researchers hold an opinion that translation only contribute to language acquisition factors (Williams, 2012), and is often used to test language level or as a form of exercise to consolidate learned knowledge.[8] By analyzing the positive effects of instructional translation on foreign language teaching and the transfer of mother tongue, this paper aims to eliminate prejudice and reveal that pedagogical translation, as one of foreign language teaching methods, has a certain effect on language learning. Pedagogical translation can be used as a teaching method to effectively improve the effect of foreign language teaching.

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