Original Paper

Teaching Translation Techniques to Second Language Learners

Hafissatou KANE[1*]

[1] Department of English Studies, Cheikh Anta DIOP University of Dakar, Senegal

Abstract

Translation is recognized to be one of the most challenging subjects for learners in second language departments. Knowing that these difficulties can be either dependent to the individual or the translation training, this study presents reasons why a translation teacher should introduce learners to translation techniques for better skills. In this regard, the paper aims at proposing the most frequently used translation techniques to second language learners, more specifically, to French-speaking students in English departments. The research draws on findings present in the existing literature. The translation techniques or procedures collected from previous studies can be presented into two types: direct translation procedures (borrowing, calque and literal translation), and indirect or oblique translation procedures (transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation). Three other techniques (compensation, amplification and omission) are also added to these seven basic procedures. Since languages can have internal characteristics that distinguish one from another, the study ends up inviting learners to pay attention to some particular features that distinguish French and English while translating.

Keywords

translation, teaching, techniques, second language learning

1. Introduction

Translation is broadly defined as the act of conveying meaning from one language to another. To Araki (1964), translation had to do with the conversion of verbal and written expression from one language into another-equivalent in meaning, tone, and idiomatic level and so forth. Vallejo, in (Soku, 2009, p. 1), makes the definition simple and asserts "translation is the finding of appropriate ways of expressing meaning, while using the appropriate forms of each language".

To the question "can translation be taught", Hervey et al. (1995; in Davies, 2004, p. 68) note that positions vary from those who believe a translator is born and those who believe translators are made: students are either "innate" translators or "non-innate" translators. They further explain that:

Ideally, translators should combine their natural talent with acquired skills. The answer to anyone who is sceptical about the formal teaching of translation is twofold: students with a gift for translation invariably find it useful in building their native talent into a fully developed proficiency, students without a gift for translation invariably acquire some degree of proficiency.

For both learners, the acquisition of translation skills can be done in more than one way. To David Nott, (2016) translation can be an object of study or training as an end in itself: for example as a theoretically based course in translation studies, or as professional training course for future translators or interpreters. Translation can also be an element in other courses of study, including cultural and intercultural studies, stylistics, and the foreign language skills course.

This paper is concerned with translation as an element of second language learning, among other courses such as listening, and reading comprehension, grammar, literature etc. The paper specifically proposes some useful techniques of translation that can be adopted by L2 learners in rendering the message in a text from one language into another. To that effect, I will first collect the translation techniques mentioned in the literature. The second objective consists of selecting and proposing the most frequently used types by translation teachers and translation professionals.

2. Translation in Foreign Language Department

Both in Translation Studies and in professional practice, a distinction is often made between "translation" as the exclusively written mode and "interpreting" (or "interpretation") as the spoken mode. However, some scholars in the literature use "translation" as a cover term for both the written and spoken modes. In second language departments "translation" refers to the written activity and is done both from L1 to L2 and from L2 to L1.

Few years ago, a number of classmates left the English department because of weak grades in translation which represents one of the core subjects. I have to admit that most students faced difficulties in translation; some from French to English; or from English to French; and others in both ways. At that time, as Hurtado Albir (1999, p. 18) reminds, instructions to the learners were most of the time limited to the injunction "translate". Nowadays teachers seem to depart from this traditional process and introduce translation techniques in their classrooms.

However, from a brief survey about this issue, the answers collected from students indicate that not all of them are introduced to translation techniques in their translation classes. This raises a question on the teaching methods and gives us reasons to conduct the present research in the hope that any student who carefully goes through it, will be close to doing ideal translation.

3. Literature Review

This literature review first revisits some works against teaching translation to second or foreign language learners and continues with studies supporting the other way around. This section ends up with presenting the translation problems and difficulties that mainly prevent L2 learners to succeed in

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their translation tasks.

3.1 Arguments for and against Translation Teaching in L2 Learning

In Guy Cook' (2010) book review, Navidinia and Izadi (2016, p. 1) note that from the dawn of the "Reform Movement" in the language teaching at the end of the 19th century, the use of translation has been considered a taboo in the field of language pedagogy.

Carreres (2006, p. 1) also notes that the impassioned rejection of the grammar-translation method that accompanied the advent of the audio-lingual and communicative approaches to language learning has given way in recent years to a more balanced examination of the potential and the limitations of the use of translation in language teaching and learning.

However, translation is not to be confused with the grammar-translation method, whose goal was to learn a language in order to read its literature (Richards & Rodgers, 2008). Nowadays approaches to translation should have a communicative purpose and resemble real life activities rather than focus solely on reading and writing texts out of context. Yet, even with this new orientation of translation the necessity of teaching translation to second language learners still sparks discussions.

Carreres (n.d., p. 5) summarizes some of the arguments mentioned in the literature against the teaching of translation into L2 as a language teaching device. As he noted, some of the objections are shared with translation into L1 while others are specific to inverse translation:

1.   Translation is an artificial, stilted exercise that has no place in a communicative methodology. Also, it is restrictive in that it confines language practice to two skills only (e.g., reading and writing).

2.   Translation into L2 is counterproductive in that it forces learners to view the foreign language always through the prism of their mother tongue; this causes interferences and a dependence on L1 that inhibits free expression in L2.

3.   Translation into L2 is a wholly purposeless exercise that has no application in the real world, since translators normally operate into and not out of their mother tongue (L1).

4.   Translation and translation into L2 in particular are frustrating and de-motivating exercises 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 an exercise designated to elicit mistakes, rather than accurate use of language.

5.   Translation is a method that may well work with literacy-oriented learners who enjoy probing the intricacies of grammar and lexis, but it is unsuited to the average learner.

From an opposite perspective, Andrzej (in Shiyab et al., 2001, p. 4) believes that translation is extremely important for foreign language teaching simply because it allows conscious learning and control of the foreign language, and as a result, it reduces native language interference. Worthy of note here is that conscious learning does not preclude automatic habits. Car-driving and tying a tie can be thought of as an example. Using translation can make learning meaningful because the learner is an active participant in the process. Learning a foreign language is not like acquiring the native language.

In learning a native language, the learner is there to fall back on prior knowledge. Such knowledge is extremely important in learning a new language. Here one has to assume that the learner makes use of

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the prior knowledge that exists within him and that there is a process of mental translation going on throughout the process of language learning. It could be, in this respect, that the use of translation is helpful even more for advanced learners. For beginners, of course, it is useful simply because it expounds grammar and teaches vocabularies (Shiyab et al., n.d.).

In the same perspectives, while investigating the role of translation in the teaching of languages in the European Union (Pym et al., 2013, p. 2), note that the common European Framework of Reference for languages concerns not just the acquisition of the four basic language skills, but it also envisages what learners will do with their skills in a multilingual world: "learners are also enabled to mediate, through interpretation and translation, between speakers of the two languages concerned who cannot communicate directly". If it is believed that learning languages (by whatever method) enables learner to undertake these mediation activities, then one might also imagine that explicit teaching of translation and interpretation would lead to enhanced abilities in these as in other areas of language use.

On the question of how translation could be related to language learning, (Pym et al., n.d.) list three abstract models among which the last one interests us in this study. For them, translation is inherent in language learning: In this kind of relationship, translation would be considered a fifth skill to be practised within the language classroom, alongside reading, listening, speaking and writing in the two languages independently. This view assumes that translation is somehow inherent in the language-learning process itself; that it is fundamental to the bilingual mind as each of the other skills is to monolingual and bilingual minds alike. On this view, translation is a way (or set of ways) of learning a second or foreign language, and not just a way of training professional translators and interpreters. Yet, even if it is important to recognize the importance of teaching translation and its role as means of learning a language, one must point out that it constitutes a very challenging task for learners.

3.2 Translation Problems and Difficulties

Translation is often described as the act of problem solving. Translational problems are referred to the aspects of the source text that do not have automated or internalized solutions and which require creativity. In Linguistic approach to translation, translation problems are defined as the differences in language (lexical, syntactic, and stylistic) between the source and target texts, but in the communicative approach to translation, the translation problem arises when the equivalence in functions between the source and target language cannot be easily established and the problematic elements are related to cognitive considerations in transformation process (Palumbo, 2009, p. 129).

Nord (1977; in Karimzadeh et al., 2015, p. 164) have distinguished "translation problem" concept from "translation difficulty". According to him, the problems of translation are objective and identifiable and of linguistic, cultural, cognitive and textual nature which does not result from the translator's lack of knowledge. On the other hand, the difficulties of translation are mental phenomena that are dependent on the individual translator (or translation trainee) and which result from the lack of competence in culture, language and translation. In other words, a particular text which seems difficult for novice

translators can be quite easy for professional translators (Palumbo, 2009, p. 36). For example, a novice translator may be concerned with finding "lexical equivalents", while the main concern for a professional translator is to find "functional equivalents".

In Hurtado (1999, pp. 18-20) some of the problems that have been identified in relation to the pedagogy of translation as an end in itself, also apply to its use in language teaching. He mentioned the following:

1. Lack of clear criteria in the selection of texts for translation, which tend to be literary. Where the criteria are made explicit, these are thematic or grammatical.

2. Lack of procedural guidance. Instructions to the learners were often limited to the injunction "Translate". Learners are not presented with a method to avoid falling into the same pitfalls.

3. Lack of differentiation between direct and inverse translation, assuming that the objectives and methodology are the same in both cases.

4. Lack of integration in many textbooks of the theory and the practice of translation. They seem to assume that operative knowledge (how to translate) will derive mechanistically from declarative knowledge.

For Ordudari (2007, p. 1) whose work mainly concentrated on the translation of culture-specific concepts, thinks that if language were just a classification for a set of general or universal concepts, it would be easy to translate from an SL to a TL; furthermore, under the circumstances the process of learning an L2 would be much easier than it actually is.

In this regard, Culler (1976, pp. 21-22) believes that languages are not nomenclatures and the concepts of one language may differ radically from those of another, since each language articulates or organizes the world differently, and languages do not simply name categories; they articulate their own. The conclusion likely to be drawn from what Culler writes is that one of the troublesome problems of translation is the disparity among languages. The bigger the gap between the SL and the TL, the more difficult the transfer of message from the former to the latter will be. The difference between an SL and a TL and the variation in their cultures make the process of translating a real challenge with problematic factors including form, meaning, style, proverbs, idioms, etc.

Similarly, in her edited volume "*Translation and Language Teaching*", Malmkjaer (1998, p. 6) mentions that many of the objections to the use of translation in language teaching would be addressed by bringing the work done in the classroom closer to the actual practice of translation. She further argues that translation, if taught in a way that resembles the real life activity of translating, can bring into the four basic languages skills and yield benefits in L2 acquisition. In addition to this view, I also agree with Carreres and do believe that it may not be possible to teach creativity and inspiration but there exist strategies, methods, techniques, etc. that should be introduced to L2 learners. This, contrary to the traditional instructions consisted of the only injunction "translate", can improve the global quality of their translation tasks.

4. Methodology

The nature of this research is qualitative. To revisit the literature on translation pedagogy, I used practice-oriented works providing concrete techniques of translation to teachers and learners in both translation programs and second language departments. These mainly include Newmark (1988b)'s *Approaches to Translation* and Schjoldager (2008)'s *Understanding Translation.*

To Nida (1964, p. 241-245) the translation techniques, or technical procedures are as follows:

✓   Analysis of the source language and target languages;

✓   A through study of the source language text before making attempts translate it;

✓   Making judgements of the semantic and syntactic approximations.

As for Newmark (1988b, p. 81) there is a difference between translation methods and translation procedures. He writes that "while translation methods relate to the whole texts, translation procedures are used for sentences and the smaller units of language. In this study, translation techniques, methods and procedures are interchangeably used.

5. Findings and Discussions

Looking at the recent literature on translation training, the question of whether translation can and should be taught at all has largely been replaced by the question of *how we can best teach it*. This is the reason why, as already mentioned, the present study proposes some techniques to use in a translation task. Based on Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/2000)'s taxonomy of *translation procedures* we propose the following: direct translation techniques and oblique (indirect) translation techniques or procedures.

5.1 Direct Translation Procedures

A direct translation generally resembles *word by word* quotation of the original message in the target language. It includes *borrowing*, *calque* and *literal translation*

Borrowing: reproduces or, where necessary, transliterates the original term. It transfers an SL word to a TL either because the TL does not have a lexicalized correspondence, or stylistic or rhetorical reasons. If the term is formally transparent or is explained in the context, it may be used alone. In other cases, particularly where no knowledge of the SL by the reader is presumed, transcription is accompanied by an explanation 'a translator's note'. The English word *bull-dozer* has been incorporated directly into other languages. English also borrows numerous words; *abattoir*, *café*, *résumé* etc. from French; *hamburger* and *kindergarten* from German etc.

Calque: is a special kind of borrowing in which the TL borrows an expression from the SL by translating literally each of the original elements. The result creates either, *a lexical calque*, which preserves the syntactic structure of the TL, but at the same time introduces a new mode of expression; or *a structural calque*, which introduces a new construction into the language (Walinski, 2015, p. 60). Calques generally occur with common collocations, names of organizations etc. *Borrowing* and *calque* are strongly related, that is the reason why it is sometimes difficult to draw an absolute border between these two translation procedures.

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-       French: assurance qualité   English: Quality assurance

        Marriage de convenance   marriage of convenience

Literal translation or *word for word translation,* relies on the direct transfer of a text from SL into a grammatical and meaningful text in TL. Using this procedure, the translator focuses predominantly on adhering to the linguistic rules of the target language (Walinski, n.d.).

-       French: faire un discours   English: make a speech

        Il travaille dans la maison maintenant.   He works in the house now.

If after applying the first three procedures, the resulting translation is still unacceptable, i.e., the target text has no meaning, gives another meaning, or skews the original message in any other way, the procedures of *oblique translation* can be employed to achieve a better result.

5.2 Oblique / Indirect Translation Procedures

Oblique or indirect translation occurs when the word for word translation of the conceptual or structural elements of the source language is not possible without altering meaning or upsetting the grammar of the elements of the TL. In Oblique translation, the translator interprets, i.e. elaborates or summarizes, the explicit contents of the original. Oblique translation embraces *transposition*, *modulation*, *equivalence* and *adaptation* translation procedures.

Transposition: involves replacing one word class with another without changing the meaning of the text. It can be applied intra-linguistically, i.e. within a particular language. For instance, "*She announced she would resign*" can be transposed to "*She announced her resignation*". It can also be applied inter-linguistically with a change in the grammar from SL to TL. For instance, change from singular to plural, change required when a specific SL structure does not exist in the TL, change of an SL verb to a TL noun, change of an SL noun group to a TL noun and so forth (Newmark, 1988b, p. 86). The table below presents some examples of transposition translations based on Ngom's (2015) translation course.

Table 1. Examples of Transposition Translation Procedures

Source Language/ French	Target Language/ English
Noun	**Verb**
Elle n'a pas appelé depuis **son départ**	She hasn't called since she **left**
Verb	**Adverb**
Elle **a réussi** à faire face à la situation du moment	She **successfully** coped with the new situation
Noun	**Adverb**:
Il caressa le visage du garçon **avec douceur**	He **gently** stroked the child's face
Noun	**Adjective**
Cela s'est passé au **début** du vingtième siècle	That occurred in the **early** twentieth century.
Verb	**Adjective**

Les gens se *méfient*.	People are *suspicious*.
Verb	**Preposition**
Il *baissa* les yeux avant de répondre.	He *looked down* before answering the question.

Modulation: it occurs when the translator reproduces the message of the original text in the TL text in conformity with the current norms of the perspective (Newmark, 1988, p. 90). There are two types of modulation: metonymical modulation and grammatical modulation.

Metonymical modulation:

In metonymical modulation the translator changes the part for the whole, the cause for the effect or the container for the content etc.

- French: du début à la fin.   English: from cover to cover

    Gilet de sauvetage   Life jacket

Grammatical modulation

In grammatical modulation, the translator changes affirmative to negative, passive voice into active etc. and vice versa.

Table 2. Examples of Modulation Translation Procedures

Source language/French	Target language/English
Positive	**Negative**
Adama *est différente* de sa sœur jumelle Awa.	Ada *is not like* her twin sister Awa.
Negative	**Positive**
Il *n'a cessé d'être* une source de problèmes depuis.	He *has been* a source of disturbance ever since.
Active	**Passive**
On *n'avait pas* encore *annoncé* le vol.	The flight *was not yet being called*
Subject	**Object**
Je fis les frais de la plaisanterie	The joke was on *me*.

Equivalence: also known as *reformulation*, produces an equivalent text in the target language by using completely different stylistic and structural methods. This technique is often used when translating interjections, onomatopoeia, idioms or proverbs. Translators use a completely different expression to transmit the same reality. The process is creative, but not always easy.

- French: Je vous en prie.   English: You're welcome.

    Il pleut des cordes.   It is raining cats and dogs.

    C'est dans le besoin que l'on reconnait ses amis.   A friend of need is a friend indeed.

Adaptation: In Vinay and Darbelnet's *translation procedures*, adaptation occurs when something

specific to one language culture is expressed in a totally different way that is familiar or appropriate to another language culture. It is a shift in cultural environment and involves changing the cultural reference when a situation in the source culture does not exist in the target culture (i.e., *France has Belgian jokes* and *England has Irish Jokes*).

- French: Quelle est votre pointure? Du 43 English: What size are you? Size 9.

These seven basic techniques are completed by several other translation procedures. Yet, due to the limitations of this paper, three types: *compensation*, *amplification* and *omission* are added.

Compensation: In general terms, compensation occurs when something cannot be translated, and the meaning that is lost is expressed somewhere else in the translated text. Peter Fawcett (1997) defines compensation as "…making good in one part of the text something that could not be translated in another". One example given by Fawcett is the problem of translating nuances of formality from languages that use forms such as Spanish informal "*tú*" and formal "*usted*"; French "*tu*" and "*vous*"… into English which only has "you", and expresses degrees of formality in different ways (Gabriela Bosco from www.interproinc.com/blog/translation-techniques).

Amplification: is when the translator uses more words in the target text in order to re-express an idea or to reinforce the sense of a word because its correspondence in the TL cannot be expressed as concisely. It is mainly expressed through prepositions, postpositions, pronouns or adverbs. In the examples below, using the French equivalent preposition *dans* to translate "in", would make the sentence awkward and incomprehensible. On the other hand, the amplified forms <u>vêtue</u> and <u>coiffée</u> fully express the English right meaning.

- English: She says she met a woman ***<u>in</u>*** a blue dress and red hat.

- French: Elle dit qu'ellle a rencontré une dame ***<u>vêtue</u>*** d'une robe bleue et ***<u>coiffée</u>*** d'un chapeau rouge (Ngom, 2015).

Omission: occurs when the translator concentrates or supresses elements in the target language text. Sometimes omission is compulsory.

- French: L'homme <u>que</u> j'ai rencontré.   English: The man I saw

- English: Come <u>and</u> see me.   French: Viens me voir.

- English: He stood next to the door, <u>with</u> a stick in his hand.

- French: Il se tenait près de la porte, un bâton à la main.

5.3 Some Specific Features of French and English

➢   It is important to recognize that English tends to use the standard form of the sentence while French is freer to place elements before a specific noun (person) or to invert sentence elements.

- French: <u>Récemment élu au poste de président</u>, Trump a pris ces nouvelles mesures.

- English: Trump, <u>who was recently elected president</u>, has taken these new measures.

- English: 'Sorry', he said.   French: Désolé, <u>répondit-il</u> (inversion).

➢   English tends to start with the new information:

- French: On construit <u>un nouvel hôpital</u> dans la ville.

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- English: <u>A new hospital</u> is being built in the city.

➢ English tends to use verbal structures more than French (see transposition).

- French: à son retour   English: When he came back

  Avant la rentrée   Before school started

➢ Contrary to French, English tends to avoid dependent clauses.

- French: Beaucoup de ceux <u>qui tentent</u> de traverser la frontière se font prendre par les patrouilles.

- English: Many of those <u>trying</u> to cross the border get caught by the patrols.

6. Conclusion

Translation is known to be a very challenging task for bilingual learners both in translation programs and second language departments. Being conscious of these difficulties, researchers have developed a number of techniques and methods for translation teachers and learners. However, it is important to recognize that teaching translation as an end itself (professional translator training) tends to be differentiated from teaching translation in second language learning. In my view, as far as the use of translation techniques and methods as mental activities is concerned, there should not be any distinction between the two teaching programs. This is because while translation learners need skills to become competent professionals in their future career, those in second language departments also need the same skills for several reasons. They need good skills to succeed their translation tasks in order to get good grades and pass the subject. A second language learner can also be interested in translation activities during or at the end of his / her studies, which requires a certain level of translation proficiency.

For that, the present study, mainly concentrated on teaching translation in second language learning, has collected and proposed a number of translation techniques or procedures. These are mainly classified into two major types: *direct translation procedures* (borrowing, calque and literal translation); and *indirect or oblique translation procedures* (transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation). Three additional techniques namely, *compensation*, *amplification* and *omission* are also added to these basic types.

Since any language has some particular characteristics that distinguish it from others, the study also invites learners to pay attention to a number of features that differentiate French and English while translating from one language into another.

I must admit that, this study does not present a comprehensive list of all the useful translation techniques but, as mentioned earlier, I hope that any learner who carefully goes through this paper, will be close to doing ideal translation. However, more empirical research is needed. In particular I need to know whether, after being introduced to all these translation techniques, learners effectively use them while translating.

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