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COMMUNICTIVE & EDUCATIVE VALUE OF TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT

Communication and Translation are interrelated skills. It is translation that makes cross-cultural, cross-national and cross-lingual communication possible. It is not an exaggeration to state that the need for Translation often follows the need to communicate. Given the range of foreign and native language skills available around the globe, communicating in any language can present a challenge, and that is exactly where the need for translation steps in. Translation converts content from one language to another and make it accessible. Poor translation often results in destroying the quality of a thought and in the worst case, ends up in conveying a completely wrong message to the end receiver. Whether it is about sharing or giving access to information and knowledge, learning from others or offering them equal opportunities, building bridges across social structure or unlinked communities, translation forms an essential element. In fact no organizations, communities and nations can sustain without the ability to translate. But translation has limited role in learning any other language. Communicative value of translation is immense but its educative value is restricted.

Key Words: Source Language, Target Language, Communicative Translation, Educative translation

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According to Samuel Johnson "Language is the dress of thought" and thoughts lead on to a need for Communication. How to express oneself and how best to convey a thought, a slogan, or a new idea all become matters of concern during communication. We use communication to establish relations and contacts with people. Communication involves reading, writing, speaking and listening. Each activity is important and has a vital role to play in the complex global environment of the present time. Although non-verbal communication, like common gestures and facial expressions, play important roles in simple communication, they usually help to improve its effectiveness but are insufficient by themselves for communicating subtle nuances that make communicating with others a pleasure. Language therefore becomes the prime component for effective communication. Since thousands of languages exist in our so-called 'global village', the need to cut across language barriers arises; this is where translation becomes essential. Translation and Communication are thus interdependent with the former providing a major advantage in its communicative value.

Translation is a significant vehicle that moves cross-cultural, it crosses-lingual and national boundaries. It is because of translations that a man is understood all over the world despite the limitations of language, culture or nationality. Gurudev Ravindranath Tagore received the Nobel Prize in Literature for his

work "Gitanjali" only after he had transcreated the original work from Bengali to English. The world has benefitted from the works of great writers on account of their writings being translated into various languages. Communication stems from the Latin word "commūnicāre" means "to share" and according to Webster's Dictionary, it involves "sending, giving, or exchanging information and ideas," "In other words, Communication is a human process; an art and craft of transmitting information. It is indeed an activity, consisting of some basic techniques and models, which help in getting information for directing, co-coordinating and unifying the efforts of people in any organization for accomplishment of a common goal. It can be expressed non-verbally and verbally. Non-verbal communication is the act of speaking without using words. Examples of this include facial gestures, body language and the impression you give to others with your appearance, and the tone of your voice. Verbal communication by contrast is the act of speaking or writing words, with each word having a specific meaning. Both non-verbal and verbal communications are used on a daily basis. In that regard, it's important to use communication carefully and with love. Communication can either hurt or heal.

Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the message in the source language while maintaining both the meaning and the style. The 'closest natural equivalent' is explained by Nida as follows:

1. equivalent, which points toward the source language message
2. Natural, which points toward the receptor language
3. Closest, which binds the two orientations together on the basis of the highest degree of approximation. Nida cites his examples from Bible translation, where the phrase 'Lamb of God' would be rendered into 'Seal of God' for the Eskimos because the lamb doesn't symbolize innocence in their culture. In this case, a literal translation (formal equivalence) doesn't mean anything in a different culture, so the dynamic equivalence is necessary (Nida).

The translation process is very much similar to driving a car that needs a good driver to control the steering wheel in the right direction. Thus a good translator is one who not only knows both languages, but also aware of both cultures, i.e., he is not only bi-lingual, but also bi-cultural. As checking oil by a driver before driving is necessary, analyzing cultural elements before translating is vital. Road signs are translation strategies used in this process which saves the translator from straying away from the original content. Basically, in the translation process, the translators first comprehend the original text; absorb the crux of the text, search for the equivalent expression and finally revises it to purify the text of any unnaturalness from the point of view of target language. It is indeed a task full of responsibility; a minor mistake on the part of translator can be fatal. There are numerous examples where the speech of a foreign leader can be translated to convey a wrong impression and suit the ideals and policies of a local/national leader. In such cases translation can be used to misinform and mislead deliberately. In many languages, while speaking, the accent on a particular syllable can completely alter the meaning of the word. It is extremely important for a translator to be aware of the nuances, the subtleties of a language including the actual context, placement in a sentence structure and double meanings of words.

Broadly a translator and a communicator move through the following three phases during the whole process:

S No.	COMMUNICATION	TRANSLATION
1 st Stage	conception/encoding	comprehension/analysis
2 nd Stage	Transmission	Transfer
3 rd Stage	comprehension/decoding	revision

Language is not constant. It is always changing and the more experience a translator has with a language in the context in which it is commonly used, the more valuable his/her abilities will be. Also, the more educated (formal and informal) and exposed to the arts, sports, religion, sciences, etc. the more confident one will be in one's ability to translate naturally. Translation, in fact, is a very complicated process which has to consider many factors such as the genre and the style of the original text, the translator's competence, and the timeline allocated to the project.

After establishing the importance of translation in communication, I now come to the second part of my paper that deals with the 'Educative value of translation' or the 'Use of translation in learning a Second language'.

(I will take the example of English as a Second Language for an aspirant from the Hindi speaking belt of India)

Basically in teaching a language an aspirant can be taught five skills.

- (i) The ability to understand spoken English (Listening & Comprehension Skills)
- (ii) The ability to speak English in a way that others can understand. (Speaking Skill)
- (iii) The ability to read English rapidly and understand it. (Reading skill)
- (iv) The ability to write English in such a way that other people can understand it (Writing Skill)
- (v) The ability to translate from and into English. (Communication Skill)

Teaching English & Communication Skills to the students from a Hindi medium background is in fact a challenge for almost all the faculty dealing with this subject. Before teaching English, we should be very clear about our aim –that is, what level of proficiency do we expect our students to acquire. For example if we consider the students from the Engineering college; for them, all the above mentioned skills are required, or at least, the first four out of those five skills. Undue emphasis on the teaching of Grammar does not help the development of language skill of the students. The translation method –popularly known as The Translation Grammar Method which is used commonly by most of the experts in this area gives the students information about the ways in which the English language is constructed. In this pursuit one is not teaching a skill but providing a mass of information. To provide an analogy, this is similar to teaching to drive a car by providing information about the construction of car and its parts without actually making the person sit behind the steering wheel.

Use of Translation in teaching any second language is based on the assumption that all words, be they nouns or verbal units, have corresponding terms in another language. Thus the best way to interpret them is in the mother tongue phraseology. However, this method is not always reliable as very often it fails to create a direct link between thought and expression. Students begin the process of thinking in their mother tongue and then try to translate their ideas into the English language. Grammatical bias associated with one language but not the other, frequently creates a major barrier for them. Consequently language learning becomes a difficult and tedious task and the entire activity turns out to be quite strenuous and fearsome. This method completely neglects speech practice as the necessary preliminary to learning a new language. Reading and writing come before speaking and therefore such an approach is in an unnatural order. On account of lack of training in speech students find it quite difficult to learn an unfamiliar language.

On the contrary, teaching English directly without the habitual intervention of the native language helps in establishing an immediate association between experience and expression. An essential condition for success in the 'direct method' lessons is that each lesson should be created according to a definite plan.

The key points of this method are:

- Translation in any shape or form is banished from the classroom, including the use of mother tongue and of the bilingual dictionary.
- Grammar, when it is taught, is taught inductively.
- Oral teaching precedes any form of reading and writing.
- The use of disconnected sentences is replaced by the use of connected texts.
- Pronunciation is taught, systematically on more or less phonetic basis.
- The meanings of words and forms are taught by means of object lessons or by natural contexts.
- The vocabulary and structure of the language are inculcated to a large extent through question and answer sessions.
- The sentence is used as the unit of speech.
- Theoretical grammar has no place at all in this method of learning.

This is the quickest way of getting started in English. In a very short time, a sound foundation of 500 words can be laid with this method. Through its stress on oral work the direct method creates both fluency and good pronunciation; important attributes for any second language and a major problem in teaching English.

It helps the student to think in English and as such develops his power of self-expression. A major limitation of this method is that small classes of homogeneous type and individual practice are required. Both these requirements are difficult under our existing, standard class scenario.

While emphasising on the communicative value of translation, it is evident that the traditional overemphasis on grammar, translation and vocabulary in English classes where students receive intensive but separate practice in reading, writing, and listening, with no speaking involved does not really work in learning English as second language . Even speaking classes do not provide chances for oral interaction, as most of the teachers talk on and on throughout the lesson without giving the students any opportunity to speak, thus turning the class into a listening exercise. It is important that speaking is added to reading and writing lessons to ensure that students receive essential practice in oral communication.

Since the listening skill is already a natural complement to any true speaking activity, adding speaking opportunities to a reading or writing lesson automatically allows students to integrate at least three skills. To institute such a change, I have introduced an oral language component into my classes for the 1st & 2nd year engineering students. Very often when students present and express in English they normally notice a gap between what they wish to say and what they actually say, leading them to recognize those language structures or elements that they do not know, or know only partially. The three most common ways that I have adopted in this regard are making students read to speak or enact , debate and interview. These activities are indeed presenting better results than traditional way of translation –Grammar method.

Reference

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