J. Basic. Appl. Sci. Res., 2(7)7024-7029, 2012
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ISSN 2090-4304
Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research
www.textroad.com

On The Effect of Genre–Based Pedagogy on EFL Learners' Translation Ability

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ABSTRACT

Translation is an activity whose main concern is to facilitate the communication process. In an increasingly globalised world and in an increasingly multilingual world, translation plays an important role. Significant signs of a new revival of translation in language teaching have become visible, as shown by recent literature on applied linguistics. In an attempt to show how the use of translation in foreign language classes can help enhance and further improve reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, this study calls for the effect of genre-based pedagogy on English language learners' translation ability. There has been a considerable interest in the genre-based approach to the teaching of language since the mid 1980. Different researchers report the effect of genre instruction on student's comprehension and point to the positive effect of it on the understanding of text structure. To examine the corresponding hypotheses, a sample of 68 BA students attending English classes in the field of English language teaching were selected. After assigning subjects to experimental and control groups on the basis of their GEP and listening comprehension ability, different instructional procedures were followed. The instructional procedures went on six sessions before the post-test was administered. The investigation reveals that genre- based pedagogy has a significant effect on English language learners' translation ability.
KEY WORDS: Genre-based pedagogy, translation, EFL

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation seems to be used as strategy and preferred language practice technique for many students in EFL settings. As such, it undoubtedly has place in the language classroom. However, translation is not a time-saving device. It can be invaluable in provoking discussion and helping us increase our own and our students' awareness of the inevitable interaction between the mother tongue and the target language inevitably occurring in the process of language acquisition. Translation as a method in teaching second/foreign language has a long history. It is a process which consists of the source text, that the translator analyzes it into semantic structure, and reconstructs it into appropriate receptor language forms for creating an equivalent receptor language text. But translation is actually more complicated than it is supposed. Most of the time the translator analyses the text in order to find out appropriate equivalent for translation. He should pay attention to form as well as to the meaning in source language which will be translated into another language. Machida (2011) states "When learners are translating, they can see what makes sense and what doesn't. When their comprehension or production in SL/FL doesn't make sense to them, they can go into details of the language. For example, they may explore not only words, but sub-word level such as morphology, or beyond words and sentences, and their inquiry may extend to non-linguistic, cultural issues" (p.742). Thus as Machida (2011) states comprehending, finding out equivalents as well as synthesizing them are the best tools in transferring the meaning of the original text into another language.

2. DISCUSSION

Translation, as an activity, is a task which has been performed for centuries. This is an activity whose main concern is to facilitate the communication process. The professional of translation reaches this goal by translating the information received in a foreign language into the language of the person who required his services, and vice versa. When this complex process is carried out in a factual communicative situation, then, it is possible to say that translation has reached its ultimate goal.

Some researchers such as Dancette (1997) and Setton (1999) explicitly talk about meaning as a cognitive concept and say, for instance, that translators and interpreters construct or assemble meaning. Since in translation the texts should hold the meaning and it should be justified in terms of lexicological aspect, Machida (2011) refers to this fact and states being aware of the formation of words in source language as well as target language and taking

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into account the lexicological aspect and semantic relations held among these words are important factors that should not be ignored. Sometimes, translators, as linguistic mediators, may face the situation of solving lexical problems, that is, translators are not able to find an appropriate linguistic resource in the target language which properly transmits the message. As Zohrevandi (1992) points out "translation now deals with communicative needs and purposes for stretches of written or oral discourse which is called communicative competence".

In the history of linguistics the analysis of language has undergone two main changes. The first one which concerned with the form of language is register analysis and the second one which is in contrast with formal approach and focused on the analysis of language in use is discourse analysis. Because with the area of register analysis, the researchers have restricted themselves to quantitative selections and presentations of lexical and syntactic features at sentence level, Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) point to its inadequacies and report a new way for language analysis, i.e. 'genre'.

Genre analysis which also grows from perceived shortcomings of earlier discourse studies, particularly through their lack of a socio-rhetorical dimension defined in terms of the use of language in conventionalized communicative settings. Within the last two decades genre has been considered in ESP as a tool for developing L1 and L2 instruction by a number of researchers such as Swales (1985, 1995, 1990), Hammond (1987), Cheng, A. (2006 and 2008), and Bhatia (1993). In studies of ESL translating development, Hewings and Henderson (1987) and Hyon (1996) point to the effect of genre instruction on students' comprehension and state that it has positive effect on the understanding of text structure and translating ability. Holmes (1997) points to the application of genre analysis to language teaching and suggests that "content material is important in that it alters the students' approach to what they read, causing the students to relate new idea to existing schema, i.e. students apply ideas in the reading to formal situation" (p.324). Hyons (1996) states that "Genre-based pedagogy, in all its form, involves some kind of classroom consideration of genres and the contexts in which they are found" (p.697). Hammond (1987) states that "genre-based instruction involves classroom discussion of text of how to best begin and end a text, what to put in the middle and of how best to organize information" (p.173). Thus it seems the essence of the concept of genre, as now used in applied linguistics, ESP and rhetoric, is an emphasis on the primacy of communicative purposes and the way in which communicative needs shape or influence both surface form and deeper rhetorical structures.

In the analysis of texts, many scholars have paid particular attention to explaining the formal characteristics of genre, while focusing less on the specialized functions of texts. A number of researchers, for example, have used structural move analysis to describe global organizational patterns in genre such as experimental research articles (Swales, 1985, 1990), master of science dissertation (Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988), business letters (Bhatia, 1993), and university lectures (Tompson, 1993). Other researchers such as Hanania and Akhtar 1985; Swales 1990; Salager-Meyer 1994, have looked at sentence level grammatical features, such as verb tense, hedges and passive voice, in these text types.

It seems, the main aim of the researchers in the application of genre, is to help students gain awareness of the communicative purposes and linguistic features of texts that they read and translate in their professions. For example, Swales (1990) discusses classroom tasks used in his article in order to develop the ability of EFL students in writing of the genre of request letters to academics. He states that 'Research Articles Introduction' is the best means of representing the writers' social purposes.

Although much research particularly in ESP has discussed how genre can be used as pedagogical tool, little work has actually investigated the impact of genre-based pedagogy on translation ability in the classroom context. So this study may be considered one of the first attempts made to examine the effect of genre-based pedagogy on learners' ability in translating the texts.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Subjects

From BA students, who were attending translating classes in the field of English language teaching at Azad University in Ardabil-Iran and Azad university in Karaj-Iran, a sample of 68 students on the basis of their GEP were selected. The rationale behind selecting subjects suitable for this study was to select homogeneous subjects regarding their language proficiency. On the basis of the subjects' scores on a Michigan test, they were divided into two experimental and control levels. In order to determine the homogeneity of subjects in the above mentioned groups a one-way ANOVA was run.

3.2. Instrumentation

In order to conduct this study, three sets of tests (i.e. a proficiency test, and translating pre and post tests) and set of articles for translating were used.

In order to ensure the homogeneity of the groups before the treatment, and in order to determine the level of the students in terms of their proficiency, a conventional standard GEP test (i.e. a 1961 version of Michigan test) was administered to all the subjects.

The second test used as pre-test was translating text test. This test, which was validated against a standardized ESP test (i.e. IELTS) conducted before the treatment of experiment to see whether there is any difference between control and experimental groups of each level on the basis of their translating ability. The last test was translating post-test based on genre-based translating instruction. This test was based on two computer articles: 'A Software Engineering Curriculum Model' and 'Software Technology for Scientific and Engineering Applications' taken from journals and written by 'Thomas B. Hilburn and Donald J.Bagert' and ' Mark A , Holthouse and Stuart G. Greenberg' respectively, in 1999 and 1978. The criterion for these articles, which were chosen, was their readability grades.

3.3. Procedures

To accomplish the purpose of this study, the following procedures were followed. After determining the homogeneity of subjects on the basis of their GEP, different instructional procedures were employed to examine the research questions.

Subjects of the experimental groups in each level were supplied by the two mentioned articles. These articles, which were prepared in systematically-organized structures, were taught on the basis of genre–based pedagogy. It means, at first teachers activated students' background knowledge about the main idea of the articles, then by identifying their different sections (i.e. Abstract, Introduction–Background, Method, Result and Discussion) the teachers helped students to get the conceptual knowledge of the texts. Having introduced these articles without any distortions or manipulations, at the end of each article, the teachers again referred back to the moves and then discussed about the whole idea of the article.

But for the control groups, the usual method of translating texts used in universities was practiced. For this purpose, the mentioned articles were presented without any highlighting the hierarchical and generic structure of the text. These articles were introduced in separate independent sections. Each of them divided into three parts. Then, in each session each part was introduced to the students without any special links between the previous or forward moves. These activities were followed by teaching the meaning of words without any attempting to establish coherence between different parts of the articles.

3.4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regarding the distribution of raw scores in each group, it was for the researcher to determine the descriptive statistics for the translating pre and post tests.(Table 1)

Then, in order to examine the mentioned hypothesis, i.e. the effect of genre-based pedagogy on learners' translating ability again one way ANOVA was run(Table 2). The F observed value for the effect of grouping variable, is 434.55. This amount of F at 1 and 146 degrees of freedom is greater than the critical value of F, i.e. 3.92. This indicates that the experimental group performed better than the control group on the post-test.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Translating Pre and Post Test

Tests	Groups	Mean	SD	V	Maximum	Minimum	N
Pre – test	Exp.	19.92	4.863	24.63	9.00	23.00	31
	Cont.	19.72	4.734	21.48	9.00	23.00	37
Post-test	Exp.	22.78	4.551	20.71	14.00	29.00	31
	Cont.	16.13	2.083	4.342	4.00	14.00	37

Table 2: One way ANOVA for the post-test

Source of variation	Sum of squares	D.F	Mean square	F observed	P	F critical
Group	427201	1	437201	434.55	.000	3.92
Residual	1467.88	146	10.06			
Total	7837.89	146	51.26			

By rejecting the mentioned null-hypotheses, it seems clarifying the purpose of the translating text is the essential factor in developing second or foreign language contexts. Not all problems in translating are related to unfamiliar vocabulary or syntactic forms. Students may need help in following the lines of argument and in relating different parts of discourse to each other. Students who have problems at discourse level, rather than word or sentence level might benefit from instruction on how the topic is developed in discourse. Marshall (1991) and

Mirador (2000) point to this fact and state that teaching the formal aspects of genre such as a research report provides students with a schema not only for making sense of the text they translate but also for organizing their own texts. Holmes (1997) states that research articles consist of a standard patterns of organization such as 'Introduction-Background, Method, Result and Discussion, with a number of Hypotheses sections between the background and the method sections' which will help translators to recreate their intended meaning. To sum up, translating is a process that involves the application of elements such as context and purpose along with knowledge of grammar, context, vocabulary, discourse conventions, graphemic knowledge and metacognitive awareness in order to develop an appropriate meaning.

4. Conclusion and Implication

This study intended to investigate the effect of genre-based pedagogy on learners' translating ability. The finding of this research paved the way for acceptance of the belief that giving background knowledge of a text through introducing the generic structure of a research article has a significant impact on learners' translating ability in a foreign or second language. Most writers conclude that we really know little about the translating process and perhaps less about what should be done in foreign or second language study to facilitate it. In order to develop this process this study served implications for translating course-designers, text-book writer, teachers and students.

To overcome, the teachers also by asserting the main points of the text and giving directionality to the learners' perception and ideas by introducing different moves of articles before instruction can lead, to a great extend, to success in their translating ability.

And at last learners should know how to get the general idea of a text by attending to its different moves in order to reach to the communicative purposes during a text.

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