INTRODUCTION

Translation has begun to be recognized in SLA literature as a "preferred strategy" (Atkinson 1987) of language learning, yet, its role remains a controversial one to date, which is probably because of its association with the much-despised Grammar/Translation method of the bygone days. The defect of the Grammar/Translation method lay more in that it taught "bad grammar and bad translation", as Catford (1965) remarks, rather than in the use of grammar and translation per se (p.viii).¹ This has been realized of late by many language teaching professionals who have recommended a limited and judicious use of L1 in the teaching of ESL.

Rationale

The researcher has particularly been interested in the exploitation of the resources of the mother tongue and the granting of its due place chiefly in a second language situations like ours, where the L1 exposure is insufficient and scanty. Many researchers have proposed that L1 acquisition is similar to L2 acquisition, but the conditions of L1 learning can not be made practically available to the L2 learner, especially in the Indian context. While a child is virtually immersed in his mother tongue, an L2 learner hardly gets an hour or two of daily exposure of the L2, that too, from a teacher who can hardly ever match native-speaker
Another important fact to be considered is that the L2 learner is not a tabula rasa, and is already equipped with the ability to use one language. The first language can both facilitate and obstruct the process of learning an L2 as a result of either positive or negative transfer. It has been observed by many SLA theorists (e.g. Widdowson 1978, 1979b; Titford 1983, 1985) that comparison of L1 and L2 provides greater insight into the subtle distinctions between the two languages, and can eliminate rather than cause many interference errors.²

It has been pointed out by the proponents of the communicative approach that there are two levels of meaning in language: "usage" and "use", referring to the grammatical and the functional aspects of language. The structural syllabuses ignored the functional aspect of language, which the communicative syllabus claims to have incorporated. However, Swan (1985) argues that the L2 learners bring with them the knowledge of the "use" of utterances in proper contexts through their mother tongue. He remarks, "the precise value of an utterance is given by the interaction of its structural and lexical meaning with the situation in which it is used" (p.5).³ Most utterances retain their meaning across language boundaries and problems will arise only in limited cases. Where they do, contrastive information on the particular point should be provided to
the learner, and it is here that the use of translation in giving concrete examples of differences and contrasts can be of great value. Hence, similarities in "use" can be brought home more easily and more effectively by recourse to the mother tongue than through a monolingual method.

It has been further pointed out by Swan that by employing L1 and translation, not only one builds upon the previous linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge of the learners, but also activates and consolidates their paralinguistic knowledge of skills and strategies such as guessing, predicting, inferencing and summarising, which they inherit from their mother tongue. Yet another important advantage of translation activities in production tasks is that the learners are compelled to express themselves more precisely, and in a more complex manner when L1 stimulus materials are used as models. Recourse to the L1 model before them can encourage them to stretch their linguistic resources in order to reach their desired goal, viz., the equivalent L2 text. It is worth noting that since in the case of adult L2 learners, their linguistic equipment does not match their conceptual maturity, recourse to L1 models for production can be particularly useful.

Apart from being a naturally preferred strategy of learning, which is a very strong reason in itself, showing innate tendencies of the human mind, there are some other justifications for exploiting the learners' first language.
These reasons belong to the socio-cultural and the psychological dimensions of language learning. A bilingual approach to the teaching of the second language not only gives the native language its right place by restoring its prestige, and helps in retaining the identity and ethnicity of a community, but is also a far-sighted step towards the actual progress of the nation. It is a well-recognized fact that while English is necessary for the scientific and technological progress of the country, for which its use is to be continued and strengthened; the uplift and the welfare of the masses is always tied to the native language.

Lastly, the use of L1 in the ESL Classroom also serves a psychological purpose by allaying the fear and distrust among students of a hundred percent English speaking teacher, and instils confidence and assurance in them. Hence, it indirectly addresses the affective demands involved in L2 learning. Considerations of economy of time, energy, and money also recommend the use of the learners' mother tongue. It is seen that in India even twelve to fourteen years of the teaching of English as a second language does not make the students proficient enough in it to meet their needs adequately, which implies that something is basically wrong with the teaching methodology. Translation and other activities involving the use of L1 seek to build on what has already been acquired by the learner, instead of teaching them everything anew. In the
words of Widdowson (1979a) "the process of learning a foreign language should be presented not as the acquisition of new knowledge and experience but as an extension or alternative realization of what the learner already knows" (p.111).

The above were some of the salient reasons advocating the use of translation and other L1-based strategies in L2 teaching. However, some important facts need to be considered regarding the nature of translation in the ESL context. They can be envisaged as the following:

i) Before associations of the Grammar/Translation method are evoked, it must be pointed out very clearly and vehemently that the comeback of translation in ESL is not to be considered as a methodology of teaching but simply as a technique, within a broader communicative methodology. This approach does not plead for an extensive use of L1 in the L2 classroom, but strictly advocates a judicious and limited use of the mother tongue, as pointed out already.

ii) It does not justify or imply limited English proficiency on the part of the teachers, so that they can compensate for their lack of competence through the use of L1. In the classroom, L1 use has to be strictly guarded and limited, and it should be used not for the convenience of the teacher, but for the benefit of the students. It is evident that only a fully proficient teacher can do justice
to the approach.

iii) It is presented as a learning strategy within a mentalistic framework which assigns learners with the ability to construct language on a creative basis.

iv) By translation is meant not the conventional word-for-word translation of a text from L1 to L2 or vice-versa, but a very practical sort of translation which does not require the professional competence of a translator, and is chiefly pedagogical in orientation.

The emphasis of the work is to study the use of mother tongue or translation in the learning of the L2; hence, the orientation of the study is chiefly psycholinguistic. However, since learning and teaching are interrelated especially in an L2 context, discussion of teaching methodology is evident. Also, the ultimate purpose of investigating a particular process of SLA especially for a teacher, is its application to classroom teaching. A separate chapter has, therefore, been devoted to pedagogical considerations regarding the use of L1 and translation in ESL.

It should also be mentioned that in this study translation has been considered in a broad sense, enveloping all L1 use in the L2 classroom, since it replaces equivalent L2 input in a theoretical sense.
The purpose of this work is to study the role of translation in ESL within a learning strategy framework, and it seeks to find and provide both theoretical and empirical evidence for it. And, since translation had to be studied within a learning strategy framework, it was considered necessary to deal with the background of learning strategy literature. Learning strategies are well-known in cognitive psychology and SLA literature as "operations or steps used by a learner to facilitate the acquisition, storage or retrieval of information" (Rigney 1978). These facilitative behaviours are generally related to the receptive side of language use. But, since learning of language involves both reception and production, the definition has been broadened in this work to include the production of language too. Therefore, strategies of language learning are proposed here as those particular thoughts or behaviours which help in acquisition, storage, retrieval and production of language.

With the inclusion of "production" within the domain of learning strategy, learning strategies can be regarded as the same as communication strategies. As learning a language consists of learning of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, so does communication in its broadest sense encompass them all. A need was felt subsequently, to reconsider the definition and classification of communication strategies as well. It was
found before long, that the criteria on which the identification of communication strategies rest have become obsolete, as they chiefly represent an error-analysis view of language learning, in which learning chiefly consists in avoiding errors. It was further found, that all the strategies mentioned in communication strategy taxonomy are accountable within a language learning strategy taxonomy, and ultimately language learning strategies and communication strategies were found to be one and the same, at least for all practical purposes; although one might retain a theoretical distinction between language reception and language production.

Learning strategy research had already developed to a great extent much before it became a full-fledged area of inquiry in SLA. However, even when it did begin in SLA, there was little flow of information from cognitive psychology to SLA literature; and it developed largely in isolation, much to its own detriment. In the present researchers' view, most of the confusion and fuzziness which exist in strategy research could be dissipated to a great extent with a mutual give and take of concepts between the two fields: SLA and cognitive psychology; and surely SLA would be more at the receiving end. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) have in fact demonstrated that not only learning strategies, but many other constructs can be accounted for more comprehensively with the help of information gained
The researcher chose to build a revised classification scheme based on O'Malley and Chamot's (1988, 1990) work, which draws upon cognitive psychology literature and views learning strategies chiefly as mental mechanisms, and strictly distinguishes them from outward physical behaviours. This gives their classification a clarity of perception in categorizing the strategies and wards off the dangers of mixing the criteria of outward behaviours with inner cognitive mechanisms. However, it was found that their classification could be made more hierarchically rigorous and systematic, and thus, an attempt was made to do so in the second chapter of the work.

Overview of the Work

The first chapter starts with a consideration of the available theoretical background for language learning strategies in SLA literature. A complete and satisfactory explanation of language learning strategies in a theoretical model of language learning is found to be absent from the literature as yet. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) have tried to account for language learning strategies in an information processing model of language learning, but with partial success. Learning strategies research has afterwards been considered in the chapter under the rubrics of definitional, classification, variable, validation and instructional
studies. The chapter ends with a consideration of some important issues in strategy instruction.

As mentioned before, the second chapter is an attempt at presenting a revised taxonomy of language learning strategies, which also incorporates communication strategies taxonomy within itself. The third chapter considers the role of L1 within different models and theories of second language learning. It seems that L1 has had a ubiquitous presence all along in second language acquisition; and the difference was only a matter of emphasis. Chapter four discusses the role that L1 plays in ESL pedagogy and records a recent revival of interest in the use of translation as a technique within a communicative paradigm. Several interesting L1-based activities suggested by practitioners have been briefly described in this chapter.

The work ends with an empirical study validating the effectiveness of translation in ESL. The study was conducted with fifty-two class twelve students of science stream, who happened to be regular students of the present researcher. Half of the students belonged to a control group and half to the treatment group. While the control group was imparted instruction in selected vocabulary, tenses and phrases, the treatment group was taught the same items through the employment of some L1-based strategies in combination with the regular L2-based strategies. The results demonstrated that by the use of L1 strategies lower level and
intermediate level students made conspicuous gains in general, and in vocabulary and phrases in particular. However, the higher level students showed no gain in any of the target items through the use of translation strategy. Another finding was that no gain was shown at any proficiency level on the grammar test. A related and interesting finding was that as a result of increasing the attainment level of low level students and not affecting that of the higher level students, translation strategies result in reducing the heterogeneity of a mixed proficiency classroom.

At last, the researcher would like to mention that the theoretical work presented in chapter two, concerned with a revised classification of learning strategies, and their merger with communication strategies, is considered by the researcher an original contribution to the field in a way, and is expected to influence the field in a significant manner. Further, the empirical findings reported in the fifth chapter are also original and important in their own right, as few studies have been carried out to validate the effectiveness of translation-based strategies in an ESL classroom.
REFERENCES


