CHAPTER V
CHAPTER FIVE

FACTORS AFFECTING COMPREHENSION IN ESL PEDAGOGY:
VOCABULARY, SIMPLIFICATION AND TRANSLATION

5.1.1 Importance of Vocabulary

Vocabulary has been a neglected area for ESL students and has been described as that which "hardly requires formal instruction". The importance of vocabulary in language learning need not be overemphasized but it can safely be asserted that it has an important role to play. A student's thoughts, actions are affected by his/her vocabulary. The chief reason for vocabulary study is learning the meaning of words and using them effectively. The concepts need to be cleared first and it is the concept development that needs to be emphasized, for the greater number of concepts acquired the greater is the idea which can be expressed. Dale (1969) describes vocabulary as a key to concept development and says that "meaningful word-learning...is an excellent example of permanent learning in action." It is this "meaningful word-learning" that needs


to be probed and tasks need to be set up to enhance learning words in a meaningful way. However, a scientific method in vocabulary instruction is seen to be lacking and Dale reminds us that "we do not have basic system for teaching vocabulary development. There is no systematic program which indicates when certain words– their roots, prefixes and suffixes– are to be mastered." Vocabulary development has been confined to rote learning or learning in an unsystematic and unstructured way. The concern has been the mechanics of vocabulary instruction (the how and what), not the principles (why) in vocabulary and language development.

5.1.2 Vocabulary Teaching: A Short History

The history and development of vocabulary teaching is not just of old insights leading to new ones but ideologies or fashions that have succeeded each other.

It was as early as 1880 when Frenchman Francois Gouin offered a new system for learning vocabulary which consisted of arranging words into sets corresponding to sequences of actions and which today is viewed as being similar to present day schema theory.

---

3. Ibid, p.16

It was in the 1940s, 50s and 60s that vocabulary was pushed into the background in the teaching of foreign languages. Fries (1945) stated that learning a new language was not just learning its vocabulary but mastering its sound system and grammatical structure. A learner needs just enough vocabulary to practise the sentence structures. The four different kinds of words which need to be mastered are function words, substitute words, words of negative/affirmative distribution, and content words. It was during the period of 1945-1970 that vocabulary was viewed as an aspect of language teaching in its own right.

In the 1970s discontent spread regarding the position of vocabulary. Wilkins (1972) was bemoaning the neglect of vocabulary in the audio-lingual era and stated that "Without grammar very little can be conveyed, and without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed." His significant contribution was his attempt to bring to vocabulary teaching the insights of lexical semantics.

5. Fries, C.C. 1945 TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE, in Ibid, p.40


It was around 1972-73 that Twaddell argued how vocabulary teaching based on the criterion of frequency was not possible and neither was it possible to teach the learner all the words. He saw the need to teach the learners guessing strategies in order to be self-reliant. Vocabulary was now being viewed as a language skill and the responsibility was shifted to the learner. In the middle 70s, the relationship between vocabulary and learning task was further established and reading was viewed as being important in vocabulary development. Further emphasis was placed on learning words in context. The semantic structure of lexicon was viewed as a challenge to reviving vocabulary teaching. By the mid 70s there was a concern with vocabulary teaching and learning and the need to incorporate insights of lexical semantics.

The last years of 1970s stressed the need for learners interest and subsequently lexicon became attuned to learners' needs. Judd (1978) stressed the need for vocabulary instruction as early as possible and words were taught in rich linguistic environment. By the end of 70s the place of vocabulary in language teaching had been stated.

---


and lexical semantics was viewed as providing powerful insights.

The 80s saw further probe into the question and the need to make a distinction between vocabulary that should be pretaught, that which could be guessed in context and vocabulary which could be studied after using the text. Wallace (1982) emphasized meaningful presentation of vocabulary, inferencing, creation and activation of learner's background. Rivers (1983) views vocabulary teaching as helping learners in analyzing their meanings in relation to their cultural and linguistic background.

Gairns and Redman (1986) stress the need for learner engagement and suggest techniques for self motivation. The recent trend focusses on the learner's active involvement and the need to assist vocabulary learning according to the requirements, purposes and goals.

5.1.2.1 Current Trends in Vocabulary Teaching

Vocabulary acquisition needs to draw a distinction between comprehension and production.


Comprehension entails "strategies that permit one to understand words and store them, to commit them to memory", while production concerns "strategies that activate one's storage by retrieving these words from memory, and by using them in appropriate situations".  

5.1.2.1 (i) According to Nattinger (1988) comprehension performs the following functions:

5.1.2.1 (i.a) Enhances understanding -

The task is helping students in understanding what unfamiliar words mean. It needs to be stressed that a word needs to be experienced in its context and that the dictionary needs to be used only as a last resort. Contextual clues are guided by the topic and it can also be provided by a topic. Certain features of discourse also provide clues for understanding vocabulary along with grammatical structure and intonation. Some of the examples of the contexts which provide the meaning of an unfamiliar word could be in the use of synonyms, cause and effect, description, or through examples. Word meaning is further determined by morphology and this is done by giving the list of roots and affixes to the learner.

5.1.2.1 (i.b) Enhances storage in memory -

In order to enhance storage in memory the emphasis needs to be on content words. Function words are more easily comprehensible because they recur frequently and are few in number. It is the content words like the nouns, adjectives and adverbs which, because of their infrequency of use and abstract concepts, (exceptions being concrete nouns) become more difficult to handle. Secondly, form may be more important than meaning, in remembering a vocabulary item. For comprehension purpose one needs to rely on form to lead us to meaning for by visualizing a shape one could try remembering the word.

Further, it is not just the meaning- sound which helps us link the word but the context under which learning or experiencing the word has taken place is also equally important. So a word needs to be presented in a network of associations for effective comprehension. Some other devices helpful for retention of words are the mnemonic devices, loci and key words. Mnemonic devices enhance storage by encouraging students to use memory techniques in helping retention of words. Loci is a very old device of effective retrieval of a word from memory and familiar sequence of visual images are easily recalled. A visual image is formed and is placed in the loci of one's memory and later retrieved. In paired associates words of similar sounds and
meanings are linked together. A further extension of paired associates is key word technique which facilitates pronunciation and is used for students at the beginning and advanced levels.

5.1.2.1 (i.c) Perception and action -

These are basic processes affecting language acquisition. The subject's interaction with the surrounding is a major factor in language acquisition, for this relationship provides associations and subsequently leads to the recognition of words.

Collocation is another way of associating comprehension where the meaning of a word is viewed as being associated with words with which it commonly associates. The use of collocations further permits one to know what kind of words they can expect to find together.

5.1.2.1 (ii) The functions performed by production are as follows:

5.1.2.1 (ii.a) Vocabulary use -

The use of vocabulary items can begin with the small amount of items learned instead of waiting for precision and accuracy in production. One way of effective use is pidginization where students are encouraged to communicate in the best way they can rather than limiting the use. Content words are found to be more useful here than
abstract words and inflectional affixes should not be insisted upon when the same can be taken care of by invariable nouns and verbs.

Circumlocution also assists in coining a word to fill up the gaps. The devices used here could be derivations, compounding, blending or back formation. Derivation is a method of creating new words by allowing them to expand vocabulary without memorizing new words. Compounding is a common way of forming new words but the problem is in suggesting systematic ways for teaching the rules here for it may vary from one language to another.

5.1.2.1 (ii.b) Vocabulary retrieval-

Ways to increase the probability of retrieving words are needed and techniques enhancing production need to be centred on meanings of words not just on the forms.

Words related to particular situation may help in effecting relationship among them. A situation dealing with bank may lead to the production of words like credit, cheque, change, account, bank draft, deposit, saving.

Semantic sets contain words linked by inferential relationships and are, therefore, ways of bringing words together so that these inferential associations become clearer. Words can be grouped as: synonyms which may be
formal and informal (woman and female), poetic and non-poetic (bough, branch), positive and negative (strict and cruel) core and intensifier words (helpful and philanthrope); or antonyms (above, below); or coordinates (orange, apple); or superordinate (ice, snow); or subordinates (animal, fox). Semantic sets are also illustrated by groups of verbs which have variations in meaning and "illustrate how semantically similar verbs can have different syntactic, semantic and pragmatic restrictions." 14

The importance of metaphor as exerting a powerful influence on how we think and act has been stated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) 15. These metaphors can make us understand something which is abstract or mysterious in concrete terms. For example, metaphors arising from control as being associated with exerting influence on the other person as in:

She is out of control

She is out of one's reach.

14. McKay, S. "Teaching the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic dimensions of verbs," TESOL QUARTERLY 14, 1, 1980: 19

Collocations are useful in production as well. They illustrate the importance of using certain items instead of reconstructing it every time, e.g. approachable person, friendly disposition, etc.

5.1.3 Programme for Vocabulary Development

A planned vocabulary programme influences students reading skills at various levels. Vocabulary need not mean rote memorization of unknown items but should be viewed as an organic part of general language development. An effective vocabulary programme would mean dealing with word analysis and the study of roots and affixes. However, Deighton (1959) in his analysis of vocabulary instructional programme pointed out that often programmes dealing with affixes are inadequate and often misleading. He points out that in certain suffixes like -ance, -ence, -ation, -tude the part of speech (a noun) can be guessed but not the meaning. Further, one prefix can have more than one meaning, as de- in derail (to run off) and decry (to belittle). Thus determining which one gives the right meaning in a particular unfamiliar word is a problem. The solution here

could be by pointing out the key prefixes for the understanding of meaning. By learning a key prefix such as pro-(forward) the students can transfer this knowledge to many words such as proceed, propel, proposal etc. Rourke (1974)\(^{17}\) suggests a taxonomy of generative combining forms in which roots and affixes are hierarchically arranged according to the principle of complexity— from easy to hard. A list of roots and affixes would help in familiarizing the students with the easier ones in the early stages of learning. The learning process here may involve learning easier items like un-, pre-, semi, pro-, and roots like tacit, tetra, hyper or prefixes like dys-, pseudo-, mega- could come later.

For learning vocabulary, the study of morphological features is not a desirable end in itself, but is the knowledge of learning basic affixes which helps in decoding words and arriving at meaning. Students are taught to recognize basic word forms and the way they combine certain affixes. Latin and Greek affixes commonly occur as compound words with bound bases, and are, therefore, handled differently from roots with derivational affixes. The first is taught by list definitions for example, telephone.

---

17. O’Rourke op cit 1974: 108
photograph etc. and the second, for example, electro-
encephalograph etc. is usually not taught at all since it
consists of rarely occurring scientific registers. 18

An effective and systematic approach here means
teaching key words as part of the vocabulary program and
fitting this into the system. This transfer involves moving
from familiar to unfamiliar words. If the place of
vocabulary is to be viewed in the curriculum design it
ranges from needs to evaluation. The objectives would
include short and long term goals. The teacher is
instrumental in mapping the field for the student, framing
the learning strategies, identifying the learning obstacles.
An effective program teaches the student to think
critically. Students learn to compare, classify, hypothesize
and be creative to use their imagination in retrieving
concepts.

A systematic structured approach to vocabulary
development involves learning the following items among
many- the use of contextual clues, use of compounds,
structure words, etymology, inflections, derivations,
denotation and connotation, semantic difference, figures of
speech, etc. In general a systematic approach to vocabulary
study would provide wider experiences in three major aspects

18. Nattinger, op cit 1988: 68
of language structures, namely, phonological, morphological and syntactic, which are to be mastered. However, of the three, it is the morphological aspects of language that are particularly important as they affect vocabulary instructions. Under the morphological aspects, it is the word analysis that forms the nucleus of a systematic programme of vocabulary study.

5.1.3.1 Word Analysis

Word analysis entails breaking words into components with roots and affixes. Teaching roots fixes the meaning and makes it transferable to other items in the learning process. Knowing the root meaning of a word helps the students mnemonically. It helps him develop memory patterns that educe concepts with wide applicability. For example, knowledge of the root psyche would help one to understand words like psychiatry, psychic, psychoanalysis, psychologist and psychopath.

O’Rourke (1974) suggests that systematic word study influences the higher mental process such as the creativity of the student. This means combining meaningful roots into meaningful word-forms e.g. autovision (seeing one self electronically), telewaves (far off waves), etc.

Conceptual understanding is related to the ability of establishing relationships between concepts. The
The development of vocabulary is suggestive of the development of concepts and of building new ones. One root can lead to a whole array of words and its meaning. The following example illustrates this in case of the root being *mal-* or *bene-*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mal-</th>
<th>malefactor</th>
<th>malevolent</th>
<th>malicious</th>
<th>malign</th>
<th>malignant</th>
<th>mali-</th>
<th>maligner</th>
<th>maladjusted</th>
<th>malady</th>
<th>malcontent</th>
<th>malediction</th>
<th>malnutrition</th>
<th>malpractice</th>
<th>malfunction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bene-</td>
<td>benefactor</td>
<td>beneficial</td>
<td>beneficiary</td>
<td>benefit</td>
<td>benevolent</td>
<td>benign</td>
<td>benediction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The transferability and fixation of meaning becomes more effective if the decomposed roots and affixes are of Latin origin. Latin affixes and roots are useful in two ways. They help the learning of unfamiliar words by relating them to known words or roots and affixes and also in checking whether an unfamiliar word has been correctly guessed from the context. Some Latin prefixes occur in many different words. Taking Thorndike's word list, Stauffer "found that 15 prefixes accounted for 82 percent of the total number of occurrences of prefixes used in words in the list". To make use of affixes and roots effectively,

learners require certain skills. They require to break new words into parts to reveal the affixes and roots. They need to know the meanings of the parts and they also need to be able to relate the meaning of the parts, and the dictionary meaning of the new word. Inasmuch as meaning remains crucial here, one of the most effective ways of learning the meanings of affixes and roots would be to use "master words" technique of Thompson (1958) in which few words are used to remember several affixes and roots, as given below:

The fourteen words (keys to the Meanings of Over 14,000 words):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefix</th>
<th>Common Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pre-</td>
<td>before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de-</td>
<td>away, down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inter-</td>
<td>between, among</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ob-</td>
<td>against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in-</td>
<td>into</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mono-</td>
<td>alone, one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>epi-</td>
<td>upon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ad-</td>
<td>to, toward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>un-; com</td>
<td>not; together, with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the word analysis has been carried out, then the task is to connect meanings of analyzed roots and affixes to the meanings of particular words.

An effective vocabulary instruction was viewed as being able to provide a conducive environment for student involvement, i.e. a learner-centred explanation, instead of rote memorization. The learner-centred perspective may be related to a model of memory called "depth of processing" which suggests that one's retention is improved by working hard to process stimuli. It was observed that giving background information or semantic orientation tasks produced better memorization tasks. Haggard (1980) in his significant study revealed that words retained and learned easily were words which were a key to understanding other words like common roots and affixes. Students need to be exposed to programs by providing repeated exposure.

22. Ibid, p.878
5.1.4 Vocabulary and Reading

The relationship of vocabulary to reading seems to be dialectical in nature. The effects of vocabulary knowledge may be seen on reading, and reading, in turn, increases vocabulary knowledge.

The readability vocabulary of a text is to a large extent bound up with vocabulary difficulty. It is the word frequency and the sentence length which affect the readability of a text. There are obviously a number of other reasons for the difficulty level but one needs to pay attention to the vocabulary level over here. Davis' (1988, 1972) investigation into identifying subskills within the ability to read pointed to four factors, namely, recalling word meaning, determining meaning from context, finding answers to explicit questions, and drawing inference. Of all it was vocabulary which was the strongest subcomponent of the ability to read.

Although research indicates that low frequency vocabulary has a negative effect on comprehension, what is the optimal ratio of unknown to known words in a text is not

23. Carter and McCarthy (eds) op. cit. 1988: 97
24. Ibid, p.98
known. It is argued that good readers have a good command over language so words are recognized sooner whereas poor readers do not have enough vocabulary to take advantage of the context in understanding the text. Successful ESL instruction, therefore, needs to take into account the vocabulary knowledge.

Anderson & Freebody (1981) have described two ways of looking at the relationship between vocabulary and reading. The first one is called the 'instrumentalist position' which suggests that reading comprehension depends upon access to word meanings. Automaticity training is an important component of this model, relating it to the models of reading that emphasize rapid lexical access, and models of memory that emphasize associational links between words and their defining characteristics. These models involve rote learning of words and their synonyms or definition. The second one is 'knowledge position' which suggests that improvement in vocabulary level is because of the conceptual knowledge. It reflects models of memory, stressing semantic networking. The question remains about how in semantic

networking associative networks are acquired. Meara (1982) suggests that "Given the right sort of coaxing, words from the second language do end up by becoming fully integrated into the learner's personal lexicon". Coaxing of the right kind "effectively incorporate words into appropriate semantic networks so that these words begin to have the same meaningfulness as for native speakers". When learners encounter new words, they begin to consider them not as separate items but as elements belonging to semantic networks, which can only be understood within the context of such networks. This makes the study of context important.

5.1.5 Context

Context is related in terms of linguistic features like morphological, syntactic, and discourse, as well as a background knowledge of the subject matter of a given text possessed by the reader. Adams' (1982) study revealed that facilitating background knowledge resulted in a significant increase in guessing word meanings. Studies in getting the

26. Meara, P. "Vocabulary acquisition: A neglected aspect of language learning", in V. Kinsella (ed) SURVEYS, I, 1982: 118


meaning of a word focus attention on the clues available and its effect on the learner and learning words from context focus attention on what has been retained in recollection of a context.

Studies on contextual guessing showed that high proficiency learners guessed between 85-100% of the unknown words (Liu & Nation 1984). Learners can be expected to guess between 80 - 80% words if the density of the unknown to known words is not too high. Density here is the ratio of unknown words in a text. Other variables are the frequency of occurrence of word in a text, the closeness of contextual information to the unknown word, and the use of prior knowledge. This calls for looking into a strategy for guessing from context.

The strategy used in effectively guessing from the context presupposes that learners have a sufficient command over vocabulary, grammar and reading skill and that they bring some relevant background knowledge to the text. The strategy consists of five steps which are as follows:

29. Liu, W. and I.S.P. Nation 1985 "Factors affecting guessing vocabulary in context" in Ibid. p.103
1. Finding the part of speech of the unknown word.
2. Looking at the immediate context of the unknown word and simplifying it.
3. Focussing on the wider context of the unknown word which would mean looking at the clause containing the unknown word and the surrounding clauses.
4. Guessing the meaning of unknown word.
5. Checking to see if the guess is correct.

Both first and second steps focus on the word itself and the pattern it fits into with the words close to it. Learners may often be lead to incorrect guessing by being misled by the form of the unknown word. Step 2 in the strategy could be sorted out by listing information that learners can look for, like trying to answer the question "what does what" in relation to the unknown word, making use of related phrases and relative clauses and interpreting punctuation marks, etc.

The third step in the strategy focusses on clauses and sentences which include cause and effect, contrast, explanation, arrangement etc. Researchers have developed lists of clues to help in deriving the meaning of an unknown word. The list can be divided into two main types—those based on semantics and those based on sources of clues. Guessing strategies aim towards teaching students the range of available information provided from the context.
The fourth step deals with the guesses made by the learner in L₁ or in L₂.

The last step deals with strategies used for checking guesses like checking the part of speech of the unknown word, breaking the unknown word into parts to see if the meaning relates to the guess. One of the common sources of error with untrained learners lies in guessing using the form of word instead of the context (for example, habitat was guessed as habit, offspring as the end of spring etc.). Therefore, teaching vocabulary in context becomes essential.

5.1.8 Vocabulary in Context

Vocabulary instruction half the time did not include context and the difficult words were treated in isolation. It was as early as in 1904 when W.G. Chambers wrote that "...the commonest way and perhaps the best way to promote growth of content in words is to allow the child to infer the meaning from context". 31 In fact, of the three ways as suggested by Marckwardt 32 for coping with the problem of vocabulary, namely, memorizing, dictionary consultation,


and derivation of word-meaning from the context, it is the derivation of word-meaning from context which seems to be the most appropriate.

Words, therefore, need to be taught in context for they are easier to arrive at meaning and it also provides practice in the four cueing systems, namely, syntactic, semantic, graphonic, and schematic cueing. Of the two methods, namely, direct and indirect, which form the two ends of a continuum of vocabulary teaching, Stahl preferred to choose the direct one. He talks about three principles in teaching vocabulary directly. One is giving both context and definition, for providing only definition does not always lead to improved comprehension. Better comprehension is achieved by providing examples of words in context. The second principle believes that memory and comprehension are improved when information is processed at a deep level. Giving multiple exposure to the word by using repetitions of the same material or different context each time is also effective in comprehension is the third principle of Stahl.

33. May, F.B. READING AS COMMUNICATION: AN INTERACTIVE APPROACH. 1990: 182
34. Ibid, p.202
Some context clues prior to reading are the following:

(a) Place clues—students here are made to notice syntactic cues instead of getting involved in a formal discussion of syntax.

(b) Memory clues—help in noticing semantic cues that trigger schematic cues. Asking questions related to the word and raking up memory is suggested here. Questions like ‘what does this word remind you of?’

(c) Definition clues—usually do not require much explanation.

(d) Mood clues—these may require explanation on part of the teacher.

(e) Building-block clues—by adding suffixes to the original words.

(f) Interpreter clues—these are derived from interpretations or inferences drawn by the reader and, therefore, may be the most difficult to demonstrate. e.g. His face was pale and he walked slowly.

Reading skills fall into the following categories, namely, mechanics, syntax, vocabulary and comprehension. The skill of interpreting words and encountering new ones is one which the ESL student faces after he has completed the initial stages of reading. The new vocabulary can be approached in different ways and various suggestions have
been given by researchers. A student can take the help of a
dictionary in guessing the meaning of a word but it leads to
time being involved in just turning pages and it may even
break up the thought of a student.

For the native speaker of English it is guessing
from the context which provides an answer to some extent.
Inferring meaning from the context provides for meaningful
learning and as suggested by Twaddell (1972) "as the learner
moves from the protection of rigorously controlled
vocabulary into something like a real use of the foreign
language, the skill of sensible guessing becomes a major
teaching objective." 35

Rivers (1968) 36 also suggests introducing
vocabulary items in a way which would help students to infer
the meaning from the context. Norris (1971) 37 suggests
exercises in word formation, using the context for word
recognition, and in using context clues for meaningful
learning. Kruse 38 has developed a list of various types of

35. Twaddell, W.F. 1972, "Linguistics and Language
teachers" in John Honeyfield, "Word frequency and
Importance of Context in vocabulary learning", 1987:
319

36. Rivers, W.M. 1968. TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS, in
Anna Fisher Kruse, "Vocabulary in context" 1987:313

37. Ibid, p.313

38. Ibid, pp.313-314
contextual aids in vocabulary development which are as follows:

(a) The study of prefixes, suffixes and roots
(b) Clues of definition
   (i) physical characteristics
   (ii) synonyms and antonyms
(c) Inference clues from discourse
   (i) example clues
   (ii) summary clues
   (iii) experience clues.

Exercises suggested by Honeyfield (1987)\(^\text{39}\) have proved useful in developing the skill for inferring meaning from context. The exercises are Cloze Exercises, Words-in-Context Exercises, and Context Enrichment Exercises.

(a) Cloze Exercises-

One common way of preparing this is deleting every 5th item. Many functional words may be deleted here and these can be inferred from the context. So the simplest way is to delete every fifth content word. One way of making this easier is to get students to discuss the different information available from a passage. This can be divided

\(^{39}\) Honeyfield op cit 1987: 319
into syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and factual. Syntactic information gives information about a missing word's position in a sentence and the part of speech of the missing word. Semantic information is concerned with the content of the passage and a reader's ability to guess is helped by the word which precedes or follows the blank. Pragmatic information is concerned with ways in which writers use the language in communication as in expanding, detailing or contrasting information. Factual information too can help in deriving meaning by providing some relevant information and this can be part of classroom discussion.

(b) Words in Context Exercises-

After having located the difficult words the classroom discussion can concentrate on how to guess its meaning.

(c) Context Enrichment Exercises-

By taking the context into account students can infer the meaning of a word faster. Exercises of this kind help in drawing attention to how context helps in comprehension skills.

Once learners have acquired a minimum vocabulary of two or three thousand words they can use the reading skills to further augment their vocabulary stock. This makes
vocabulary learning and reading as complementary to each other.

5.2.1 Simplification: An Introduction

The need to use simple texts for the ESL learner is increasingly felt because of the limited vocabulary and cultural inaccessibility of the student. The desire to include great works of literature may be doomed to failure for it may mean shifting the burden to the teacher leading to word glossing, syntactical interpretations and the filling up of cultural gap. The student's inability to participate meaningfully may result in a loss of interest and the desire to take active part in the class.

An attempt to teach some delightful prose passage of classical worth may mean encountering similar problems of sentence length and Latinate diction as in the following passage taken from of Charles Lamb's "In Praise of Chimney Sweepers": "Him shouldest thou happily encounter; with his dim visage pendent over the grateful steam, regale him with a sumptuous basin...so may thy culinary fires, eased of the o'er charged secretions from thy worse-placed hospitalities, curl up a lighter volume to the welkin..." If these are dismissed as being archaic how effective are the passages taken from the twentieth century writings? This attempt may also not necessarily lead to lessening the burden in many cases. A prose passage by Aldous Huxley, G.K. Chesterton or
Herbert Read would be impenetrable at the level of ideas. The title may be misleadingly simple as Huxley's *Pleasures* or Chesterton's *On the Pleasures of no longer being very young*, but the semantic density and interpretation here would demand once again a lot from the teacher's side leaving very little for the learner. The need for the use of simple texts is felt increasingly at this stage. Simple texts would mean texts written especially for the ESL learners keeping in view their vocabulary in mind and comprehensibility. In a situation where readers have difficulties with classroom texts, there was a tendency\(^40\) to prepare the reader to cope with more difficult texts and to eschew simplification of texts. This was, according to Nuttall (1985) motivated partly by the claimed superiority of "authentic text" as a model of language in communicative use. There are signs, however, that the claims for 'authenticity' are not taken as literally as they once were\(^41\) and majority of the reading course books make a case for simple texts.

---

40. Nuttall, C. 1985 "Survey review: Recent materials for the teaching of reading", ELT JOURNAL, 39, 3

41. Moran, C. and E. Williams "Survey review: Recent materials for the teaching of reading at intermediate level and above", ELT JOURNAL, 47, 1, 1993: 66
Thus the process of simplification becomes one of the ways of solving the problem of incomprehensibility of the ESL learner. Simplification has been defined as "the selection of a restricted study of features from the full range of language resources...".

5.2.2 Characteristics of Simplification

Widdowson (1978) makes a distinction between simplified versions and simple texts. Simplified versions are "passages derived from genuine instances of discourse by a process of lexical and syntactic substitution," while simple texts present a "different discourse altogether".

Further, a simplified version, according to Widdowson, "uses its source as a script, whereas a simple text uses its source (where one can be specified) as a prompt." The other distinction between the two can be observed in terms of medium, secondary writers' stance and secondary writers' starting point. Thus, while the simplified text would be narrated within the same medium or genre (drama, prose, fiction, etc.) as the original, the simple texts may be in different medium from the original. Further, the secondary

44. Ibid, p.89
writer in simplified version keeps to the framework of the original text, whereas changes may be there in a simple text. Also, the secondary writer of a simple text starts writing by restricting his thought processes to simple terms, a writer of a simplified version, on the other hand, starts with a complex code like that of the original text and then translates into another code which is simpler.

5.2.3 Types and Processes of Simplification

Simplification may be identified as being related to five main types (Lucas)45:
lexico-semantic,
cultural,
dialectal and ideolectal,
grammatical, and
textual.

Simplification46 can be either of the language or the content. Linguistic simplification takes into account the vocabulary and structure lists of learners at different

45. Lucas, op cit 1991: 243-244
levels. It may entail both the structural simplification as well as paraphrasing. In the former, the complex sentences are broken up into simple or compound sentences, while the latter may lead to expansion. The content simplification may involve either complete rewriting or abridgment.

Simplification involves three processes, namely, replacement, omission and addition. Secondary writers make these changes in accordance with the purpose of explaining or clarifying certain difficult lexical or grammatical structures in the text. This may also lead to the lengthening of the text but the purpose of simplification, which may be of making the text comprehensible, is achieved. Depending upon what the motive is, the act of simplification may either entail the process of adaptation or abridgement. If the motive is to make the text understandable for a child or for a non-native speaker then it invokes the process of adaptation. This motive may mean varying the length of the narrative from either shortening it or lengthening it. In the case of abridgement, the length of the literary piece is reduced and it is generally applied in those classes where translation is predominant. It involves reorganizing the narrative to create a linearity where linking passages may also be used for the purpose of clarifying certain notions. Marckwardt (1978) while talking about abridgement says that specific details and non-standard language spoken by the
characters are lost and "one seems to have the bones of skelton rather than a fleshed-out body". Thus, despite the claim that the process of adaptation leads to the erosion of the original text structure, adaptations do maintain a high degree of sameness to the original.

Many simplified texts for second language learners are adaptations of fuller texts which are often well known stories by writers like Dickens or Brontes. More recent classics have been added to the traditional ones, as that there is a range of simplified adapted texts to choose from. The advice of Hedge (1988), the editor of 'Oxford Bookworms', to authors adapting published novels is: "It is a good idea...to try out an adaptation by creating an intuitive re-telling and then to see what level this fits. You can then work on it further to bring it within the language controls of the most appropriate level." 

5.2.4 Criticism

Simplification has not been without criticism. It is bemoaned that it tends to produce a homogenized product and reduces readability and communication. While talking too

47. Harkwardt, *op cit* 1978: 59
much about reliance on simplified notes, paying thereby very little attention to the teacher or the text. T.S. Eliot warned that 'the multiplication of critical books and essays may create... a vicious taste for reading about works of art instead of reading the works themselves, it may supply opinion instead of educating taste.' It has been seen that in the recent years there has been a spurt of booklets "of potted critical judgements which students can use as an effective prevention against any personal contact with the actual texts. These booklets thus become part of the study of literature and enable students to make critical comments as if they had read the original."

It has been observed that the process of simplification rubs away the emotional and aesthetic appeal and might lead to complacency among students. Nelson Brooks (1960) states that simplification is an "act that does unwonted violence to the author's intent and lulls the


reader into a false sense of security". \(^{51}\) Marckwardt too says that the process detracts attention from the larger meaning and their significance may be hard to isolate. The complaint that the appeal is lost has been pointed out by Vincent (1987) too, who refers to simplification as "...pale imitations of original writing, in thin, stilted language, lacking all the linguistic, emotional, and aesthetic qualities that characterise real literature." \(^{52}\) Widdowson is also critical of simplification. He claims that it can often result in distortion \(^{53}\), and this he substantiates by giving as an example the simplification of the noun phrase *the loosely compacted upper layer of porous rock*.

No doubt, there is an ample evidence of distortion to be found by comparing original literary works with simple ones, but this does not necessarily condemn the process of simplification itself. Distortions can, by and large, be minimised and whatever is unavoidable is surely a small price to pay for the access to literary works that simplification allows to the ESL learners.

---


53. Widdowson *op cit* 1978: 83-84
The purpose, therefore, behind simplification could be motivational. West (1950) puts it in the following words: "Few things are more encouraging to a child who knows some (say) 1,500 words of English than to pick up a book written within that vocabulary and find that he is actually able to read it and enjoy a story which is (atleast) an enthralling approximation of the original". Another reason could be pragmatic for it would provide an easy story line from the great masters.

5.2.5 Simple Texts and Reading Programme

Inasmuch as the simplification reduces incomprehensibility and facilitates readability of a text, the case of inclusion of simple text in a reading programme becomes strong. The Longman Simplified English Series, which has undertaken the simplification of certain works, expressed its aim in the following words: 'to enable thousands of readers to enjoy without great difficulty some of the best books written in the English language, and in doing so, to equip themselves in the pleasantest possible

way, to understand and appreciate any work written in English."  

A number of factors account for the inclusion of simple text for the learner. One of the reasons given is the intellectual and aesthetic concerns for the learner from the different background (Mackay 1982). This may further lead to the second consideration where the difference in the learner's L2 competence and the syllabus or examination requirements may lead to the teacher to resort to adaptations. The most important reason for adaptations, however, is that lexical and syntactical simplification allows learners to understand the text, thereby lessening the ordeal of facing difficult vocabulary. However, it needs to be seen whether simplification of linguistic items would lead to better comprehensibility of the text or not. Prahlad (1986) makes a pertinent point here when he states that "reducing the linguistic complexity of a text is not the same as increasing the comprehensibility of a text". What renders the text comprehensible is the match in the textual structure and the reader's background.

55. LONGMAN SIMPLIFIED ENGLISH SERIES, cited in Vincent op cit, 1987: 211

56. Mackay, S. 1987 "Literature in the ESL classroom", TESOL QUARTERLY, 16

Nancy Campbell's (1987)\textsuperscript{58}, with regard to simple text suggests that the use of texts which rely heavily on subplots and linguistic differences between its characters should be avoided. The proposed text should first be scrutinized carefully to find out the unfamiliar lexical items. It needs to be seen how much support the reader would require in terms of lexical items, for a text with too many unfamiliar words would obstruct an easy reading.

Bransford (1984)\textsuperscript{59} goes on to say that the arbitrariness of a text is likely to continue in spite of simple words and syntax. This problem can be resolved upto a certain extent by providing additional relevant information (Bransford, Stein, Shelton and Owings 1980).\textsuperscript{60} Bransford links what he calls "precise elaborations" to the simplification of texts where he says: "An emphasis on the degree of precision necessary to help people understand the significance of facts is important for analyzing the issue of what it means to 'simplify' text".\textsuperscript{61} The attempts at

\begin{multicols}{1}


59. Prahlad, op cit 1986: 521

60. Ibid, p.521

61. Ibid, p.525
\end{multicols}
simplification would be self defeating if these tasks were not kept while indulging in the process.

What is important to bear in mind ultimately is that there can be several versions of a same text in this process and the requirement would be a "culturally sensitive" and transparent text. However, inspite of the best attempts by the 'pseudowriters', not all elaborations and changes may be explicable to the learner, for the meaning intended by the author remains unknowable. What can be attempted is the majority opinion of a particular interpretation of the text which may be considered useful.

Looking at the arguments for the simplification and the doubts that exists, it remains pertinent to make a detailed assessment of the needs of the learner and to anticipate the problems likely to be faced when presented with the simple text. Prahlad talks of 'trying out' samples of some simple versions on the learners before embarking on the plan of introduction. This would be a pointer towards the success of the entire process. The argument about introducing simplification needs to be applied thoughtfully. As Michael West, who was in favour of simple texts for non native learners, pointed out that simplification needed to be handled with "sensitivity and professionalism." 62 His

62. Vincent, op cit 1987: 212
opinion was that for the different stages in the learning process the appropriate simple texts needed to be chosen as a stepping stone to the original works of literature. This should be aimed at helping to develop the confidence in the learner in being able to deal with the authentic text later on.

As Vincent has aptly pointed out: "Whether selected or constructed, simple texts may be the most appropriate means to the desired end of reading a wide range of more advanced material." Some simple text for the learners can be prose pieces from different writers as in Modern Short Stories (published by Oxford University Press). ESL students facing a text cannot be expected to have interpretative skills of the same degree as that of a native learner. They, therefore, need to go through a face of introduction involving texts which are simple and which promote classroom activities.

5.3.1 Translation: Use of L₁

Translation has been viewed differently during different periods, depending on the prevailing teaching objectives. In the Grammar-Translation Method, it was an indispensable feature. During the Direct Method it was

63. Vincent op. cit. 1987: 215
excluded from the early stages of learning and introduced in the later stages. In the Audio-lingual Method, the use of native language was restricted. The Cognitive-code learning theory which in German is also called 'insight method/Einsichtsmethode') favoured translation as a tool of conscious learning process. As Wolfram Wilss has pointed out: "The emergence of the 'cognitive-code learning theory' has entailed... reappraisal of the function of translation..." The Communicative Approach to language teaching appeared to regard translation as rather absurd except if tackled rightly and for a particular group of learners.

Translation in modern times has been looked with suspicion and has been made responsible for a number of problems which have led to the breakdown in teaching. The problems associated with translation relate to interference errors, lack of communicative competence, lack of student interaction and above all, to the loss of exposure of learners of L2 language and learning opportunities. The use of translation has also been criticised on the ground that any introduction of L1 into the L2 classroom leads to a loss in the learning ability of the student.

64. Wilss, W. "Function of Translation in Foreign Language Teaching" cited in Franz Eppert (ed) TRANSFER AND TRANSLATION IN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING, 1983: 245
There is some justification in these points because of the over use of translation and also because this could lead to ignoring the student's interest and motivation factor. However, a lot of thought has been given over thin and after considerable debates translation has ceased to be viewed as an alarmist tendency. The second coming of translation has made efforts to do away with the tedious, grammatically structured learning of the earlier years and has focussed attention on stimulating language learning by its presence. However, the question that needs to be asked is "whether the use of translation can enhance the linguistic and communicative dynamism of language learning activities in a sufficient manner to compensate the loss of L2 exposure resulting from the use of L1 materials". 65

5.3.2 Usefulness of L1

For the purpose of finding out whether the use of translation can enhance the motivation of learners and improve their language learning abilities, it is necessary to clarify the category of language learning activity in which translation may play a role. To do this it would be helpful to use at this stage the concept of the learning unit contained within a larger learning programme

65. Tudor, I. "The role of L1 stimulus materials in L2 communicative activity", BJLT, 27, 1, 1989: 41
which starts from "the presentation and contextualization of a new learning point and moves through various stages of practice in the use of this learning point".66 The learning units here are divided into two main components, namely, input component and activation component. The input component provides the L2 data which contain the target learning points and the activation component provides learners with practice in active use and manipulation of the target element. The two important considerations involved in practice are based on accuracy of expression and fluency.67 Frequently, of course, the two are combined. Therefore, at the input stage there is no role of translation, and any intrusion of it would be misleading, for it would distract learners from the value of target elements in L2. It is at the activation stage that translation may be used to provide a stimulus to the active use of the target learning elements. This stimulus function of translation is generally seen as activating or developing the accuracy of expression.

In a situation where translation has a role to play in language learning, what remains to be seen is how communicative interaction between L1 and L2 will lead to

66. Tudor, op cit 1989:41
bilingual proficiency and the justifications for the usefulness of \( L_1 \) in ESL class. The first justification of the usefulness of \( L_1 \) in ESL class is from the field of psycholinguistics of bilingualism, and the second from the linguistic studies of bilingual code switching. \(^{68}\) Mohanty's research (n.d.)\(^ {69}\) on the psychology of bilingualism endorses that the effect of bilingualism may vary from one culture to another. In the Indian situation with its multilingual tradition, the acquisition of bilingual competence helps in the development of cognition of the bilingual child. He further established that bilinguals are better able to perceive syntactic complexities compared to monolinguals. There is a development of metalinguistic awareness among bilinguals which is only due to the interaction between the codes in the bilingual's repertoire. Under culturally favourable circumstances, the bilingual may have developed as part of his metalinguistic skills a kind of 'translation bridge' to mediate between his codes. This translation bridge not only facilitates but accelerates the learning

\(^{68}\) Desai, B.T. "Rehabilitating \( L_1 \) in the ESL class" in S. Ramadevi et al (eds.) THE ELT CURRICULUM: EMERGING ISSUES, 1992: 90

process. With regard to the linguistic studies of bilingual code switching, Desai's study (1982) of Kannada-English code switching clearly shows that "the facility with which a bilingual code-switches is one of the hallmarks of bilingual competence". 70

In L₁ environment where English is used sparingly the introduction of L₁ in the L₂ courses would have further consequences. If the L₁ is the language in which the learner formulates and conceptualizes his thoughts then it would help to create a link between his thought processes and that of L₂. It would facilitate the learning process where the learning of L₂ is presented "not as the acquisition of new knowledge and experience, but as an extension or alternative realization of what the learner already knows" (Widdowson 1979) 71.

The setting up of communicative targets in terms of learner's L₁ also provides an opportunity for locating the weaknesses in the L₂ register. It is suitable for groups of learners who will need to talk in their L₂ and communicate in it at times. Translation at such times, helps to improve

70. Desai, op cit 1992: 3

the communicative potential in the L₂ and also helps in assessing the differences in L₁ and L₂.

Translation, therefore, can be of assistance in case of homogenous group of learners who have the same L₁. The learning of L₂ in such cases would be bound to be mixed up with L₁ and therefore, teaching would need to take a serious look at this factor. The 'bridge' function of translation would help to relate the form and function of L₁ to that of L₂ and "where the content of what is being expressed in the L₂ becomes both formally and functionally more complicated or sophisticated (as it does at an advanced level), the bridging function of translation exercises...makes them a useful and important resource". ²⁷²

Pal Heltai (1989)⁷³ makes a similar plea by saying that cognitively oriented learners value translation because it helps them equip themselves with linguistic competence before acquiring strategic competence. Students, therefore, benefit from an approach that has incorporated both communicative and traditional methods and not just communicative. To ignore translation in the teaching process

---

⁷². Titford, C. "Translation for Advanced Learners", ELT JOURNAL, 37,1, 1983: 53

leads to certain important items of grammar and lexis being missed while teaching.

The use of L₁ stimulus materials as opposed to materials in the L₂ has a bearing on the communicative strategies which learners are likely to adopt. In accuracy-based type of translation, the presence of stimulus materials in L₁ helps learners to adopt achievement strategies rather than message reduction strategies. In fluency based type of translation, however, this function is less apparent. The principle applied has some difference in the degree of intensity. The communicative target being defined in L₁ and the knowledge that they cannot borrow items directly from stimulus materials (as when they are in L₂) makes learners aware of the communicative strategies they are using. This helps to develop learners' strategic competence in the L₂ in pursuance of their targets. 74

Translation, therefore, involves the learners in expressing possibilities in their own language while also being able to view the implications of semantic and syntactic options. This leads to the widening of potential expressions in the target language.

74. Tudor, op. cit. 1989: 43
Inasmuch as there exists a communicative interaction between $L_1$ and $L_2$ and usefulness of $L_1$ in learning situation, the need is to look into interactive relationship between two cultures and to see how translation can be viewed as a way of establishing the relation between the two cultures.

5.3.3 Translation and Culture

The encounter with an alien culture leads to an encounter between two different worlds governed by their own intrinsic value system and beliefs. This may lead to resistance in experiencing the other culture, for "An individual develops, on the basis of his being born and grown up in a certain cultural group, an intransitive attitude of unconditional identification with different cultural objectives of his cultural group in different degrees of priority". The encounter with an alien culture challenges the value system and traditions and leads to an awareness of the other culture. It is this difference between the two cultures which needs to be bridged through translation studies.

75. Talgeri, P. "The Perspective of Literary Translation" in P. Talgeri and S.B. Varma (eds) LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION: FROM CULTURAL TRANSFERENCE TO METONYMIC AND DISPLACEMENT, 1988: 1
The integration of culture is achieved only when the linguistic aspect has been integrated with the language of the other culture. Translators here face gaps in the process and find ways to fill these up. The translation process, therefore, becomes possible due to the commonalities between the different cultures, for the universal as well as local elements are to be formed in both cultures.

Culture as defined by Peter Newmark (1988) is a "way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression". He makes a distinction between cultural specific terms and cultural non-specific terms, where the latter imbibes more universal features. The cultural specific words need to be bridged in order to make the source text understandable. Dialect words, however, may not necessarily be culture specific if they designate universals. Culture words may be easy to detect on account of their association with that particular language and may pose problems in literal translation. This may often lead to a distortion of meaning so the suggestion here is to use a descriptive functional equivalent.

Some considerations guiding the translation of cultural words are transference and componential analysis. Transference, usually in literary text helps to identify the referent in the other text but in the process blocks comprehension and in its emphasis on culture excludes the message. Componential analysis, on the other hand, excludes culture and highlights the message. It is based on a component which is common to SL and TL to which some extra context related features may be added. The task of a translator increases, for he needs to keep in view the motivation of the level of the text in hand and also the linguistic level of the reader.

In a culturally bound material the translator needs to pay attention to the function and frequency of those terms in the text. If the term, inspite of denoting culture, functions universally, the equivalent in a target language can be used. If the cultural bound term is used very infrequently the translator may retain the original form in the TL text. The translator, therefore, has a difficult task for he has to be faithful to the original and at the same time clarify difficulties for his readers.

While viewing the problems which are likely to confront a translator, Brewer (1988) makes a few comments on the role of 'culture' in successful translation. Brewer, J.T. 1988 "The Role of 'Culture' in Successful Translation" in Talgeri and Verma (eds) op.cit 1988: 23
pertinent suggestions. He talks about culture as being inclusive of history, social structure, religion, customs and inter-relationships in a society. It is these cultural differentiations and the special marks of the different groups which the translator needs to transmit in his own language. A number of problems confront the translator here.

In order to translate an unfamiliar culture the translator needs to be apprised of its history. This would help in reducing the lapses in the translation process. The translator further, needs to be sensitive to the requirements of the target language to be able to put it down effectively. It is not just word to word translation which brings out the required effect, rather it is being able to evoke the finer nuances in the target language. Thirdly, in cases where the situation faced by the TL readers is something which has been experienced differently, the translator will be faced with a choice of leaving the passage untranslated or changing it to suit the TL readers. The translator's task, therefore, becomes very demanding for he has to use his skills in bringing forth the best without distorting the original. It is not just a display of word manipulation but of the translator's familiarity and sensitivity to the target culture.

This leads to the question of the approach of the translator. According to Jain (1988) a translator can
approach it either from inside which would mean assimilating that culture in his writing or he can write it as an outsider treating it reverentially. "The viewpoint of the author, the theme of the work, and the lingual and extralingual methods used thus form a threefold base on which the creative act stands."78 He further says that "cultural transference thus requires a manifold approach: it is not merely a matter of language. It is primarily concerned with the authorial relationship to his subject matter: narrative technique, metaphorical dimensions, point of view...the author’s relationship to his reader; how far the author can succeed in provoking the reader to make the necessary effort."79

The translator, therefore, needs to render the SL text while viewing culture as an important factor to be transmitted. The translator has a number of choice before him. The choice may be of not giving any hints or supplying cultural equivalent terms, or giving a few hints of a full explanation.

79. Ibid, p.19
The close relationship between language and culture has made Casagrande (1954) say that "In effect, one does not translate languages, one translates culture." The gaps which the translator needs to fill up are those due to differences in extra-linguistic reality and those which are language specific mapping of the same reality. The former comprises cultural gaps which includes extra-linguistic reality but excludes language, while the latter views culture as including language, but linguistic difficulties as cultural difficulties.

Faced with these differences in the extra-linguistic realities the translator seeks to bridge the gap by applying certain strategies. The proposals put forth by Vladimir Ivir (1991) in this regard aim at serving the purpose of communication. However, they do not claim to bridge the cultural gaps completely, e.g. the substitution and omission do not help the TL text readers in making them aware that their culture lacks certain equivalent expressions. Further, an effective cultural transference strategy would require the combination of these procedures rather than any single procedure.


81. Ibid, pp. 51-60
Not only are the cultural components important in translation, they also have a strong bearing on the aspect of comprehension. Studies have suggested that the prerequisite of cultural concern seemed to outweigh the structural complexities. Thus, corollary to the issue of culture and translation is the question of localized literature.

5.3.4 Localized Literature

In a situation where, despite differing linguistic structures involving vocabulary and syntax, the students with similar cultural background perform equally well, Brock (1990) suggested the use of localized literature for the purpose of re-enforcing the cultural background. "Localized literature is that literature which contains contents, settings, cultural assumptions, situations, characters, language and historical references that are familiar to second language reader." The three types of localized literature suggested are:

1. English translations of L₁ literary texts,
2. Literature with a local setting, and

This has its advantages for it offers literature with a local setting, a common cultural schema and provides relevant materials.

In the first type of localized literature i.e. English translations of $L_1$ literary texts, the examples would be English translations of folk tales, myths, short stories, poetry etc.

The second kind of localized literature provides reference that are culturally similar to the reader. The language setting references would be familiar to the student. Examples given of such literature with a local Asian setting includes the works of Pearl Buck, James Clavell, John Hersey and others.

The third type entails literature written by nonnative speakers of English i.e. where English is not spoken as a first language by the majority.

The resistance to localized literature has come from ESL specialists who view the non-native Englishes in ESL countries as defective, rather than different, varieties of English (Kachru 1982; Sridhar 1982). This bias against non-native English literature is not true. The fact that

83. Ibid. p.24
Wole Soyinka, a Nigerian and the first non-native writer of English, was honoured with 1986 Nobel Prize for literature seems lost on many ESL specialists. The other false assumptions which sustain the bias against the use of localised literature are that the aim of ESL learner is to learn the British and American culture and to appear native-like when using English (Kachru 1988). Both these assumptions are premised on fallacious belief. The Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, explains the plight of non-native writers correctly when he says "If you ask 'Can he ever learn to use it (English) like a native speaker?' I should say, 'I hope not. It is neither necessary, nor desirable for him to be able to do so.' I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings." (qtd in Kachru 1988: 11).

Inasmuch as translation and culture remain an important factor in ESL pedagogy and comprehension, the need is to look into the techniques of translations.

5.3.5 Translation as a Classroom Technique

A number of techniques can be employed to teach translation at the advanced level. Translation, at this stage, when introduced in the curriculum would naturally be one amongst many other techniques required for the purpose of L2 learning. One effective way of introducing translation at this stage has been done in terms of grading (Costa 1988)\(^5\). Her suggestion is the ordering of material according to the levels of difficulty. These can be categorized into lexical difficulty level where the learner would need to resort to a bilingual dictionary. The terminological difficulty could be clarified by researching the terms used in the target language; content difficulty could be overcome by the teacher delivering background lectures in the mother tongue as a pre-lesson plan.

Another proposal, on somewhat similar lines, has been of placing emphasis on the different, difficult levels in different semesters (Mauriello 1991)\(^6\). This can be worked out by the individual teachers themselves while figuring out

---

\(^5\) Costa, Silvia, B.A. Becher, 1988. "Adding Variety in Translation Courses", FORUM, 26, 1

the textual difficulties and anticipating the problems. This would mean categorizing the difficulty level and taking it up in different semester while teaching.

The theory and practice of translation distinguishes oral and written translation. Oral translation has been further divided by Zbigniew Nadstoga (1988) in the following way:

```
Consecutive Interpreting
Oral translation/
\ Simultaneous Interpreting / translation
Extempore
Whispering
```

The text to be selected needs to be done keeping in view the level of the learners. If the emphasis is on teaching vocabulary, the objective should be to consolidate vocabulary and to understand the sense relations of words in meaningful context. Translation work could be introduced by a short discussion of the topic at hand. This will reactivate many items that may need to be translated later. The exercises could begin with communicative activities pertaining to the topic at hand. The communicative teaching procedures can be used to enhance interest. Edge (1980) rightly points out that there is no reason why "a

translation class should not benefit from a communicative and interactive approach." 88

Quite a few suggestions have been proposed by different researchers in this field. In keeping with what has been stated in the previous paragraph about familiarizing the topic Rivers and Temperley (1978) 89 stress on acquainting the students with certain basic stylistic factors and noting down the difficulty before the actual translation process. This will involve the following items:

a. The mode of discourse of the passage and the possibility of it being rendered in native language.

b. The tone of the passage.

c. Lexical items and its meaning content—the effect of equivalent effects retaining or losing the essence of words.

d. Referential and emotive meanings and attempts at equivalence.

e. Culture items and the possibilities of translation.

88. Edge, J. "'Acquisition disappears in adultery': Interaction in the translation class" ELT JOURNAL, 40,2, 1986: 121

The next stage could again be done through group work or pair work. The consecutive interpreting work could be accomplished by turning it into a dialogue form or a conversation. The questions and answers could be done in both $L_1$ and $L_2$. The teacher would need to resort to the students' native language (which may also be his own) and question, and the student may answer in the target language. This can be reversed. This can be followed by a discussion on the problems being faced by the student and the teacher's help can be given to solve difficulties faced by them.

The class could then be divided into the roles of an expert, journalist and an interpreter and an activity in viewing all three could be done with the teacher monitoring the entire game. The question could be in English, interpreted in the native language, answer read in the native language and interpreted in English again.

Yet another activity would be of reading aloud the text in $L_1$ and asking the learners to provide a summary in $L_2$. The different summaries could be compared and group work could be organized to reproduce a whole. This could then be compared and evaluated with the original in $L_2$.

A similar activity here is of giving the text to the students and asking them to mark the difficulties there. These could be marked item wise and omitted from the text.
Instead it could be substituted by simpler items at first. The next stage could be the translation stage where the omitted items be translated and incorporated in the text thereby giving two options to the text.

Some variation activities have been suggested by Costa (1988)^ which can be undertaken individually or in group work. They are as follows:

1. Studying published translations -

The students here analyze and criticize a published translation and focus on the weaknesses. Students can in similar way be their own critics by evaluating their translated work.

2. Translating a translated text -

In the Indian context there would be a slight change in the translation undertaken. The English translation of any Hindi/Urdu text could be used to translate into English without resorting to the original. This would mean that the translation undertaken is being accomplished on the translated text. After it has been done, it can be compared with the original to see the points of departure and variations.

90. Costa op cit 1988
3. Assessment of the given text -

Instead of actually translating a text the students could focus on the problematic areas and other related conceptual difficulties. This would help the student in gathering background information and in researching into other such areas.

4. Translating parts of text -

Instead of indulging in full length translation work, it can be limited to certain problematic areas specific to the text. This could be related to terms and terminologies, noun-phrases with their modifiers, verb phrases (including tenses, models passive voice, causative constructions), connectors etc.

5. Comparative Activity -

This can be undertaken only if the student is acquainted with one or two other languages. A text which has been translated in English/Hindi/Urdu could be used here where the three different translations could be compared and the differences noted. This would be a useful technique of trying to understand the translator's choice of words and ideas taken to accomplish it.
6. Background material -

Students reading in the target language concerning the subject which is to be translated would find themselves better equipped for the task.

7. Using Notes -

The translation activity is undertaken here with giving the text to the student only for a limited period in which they take down notes. It is from these notes that the text is rewritten in the target language.

8. Rewriting -

One version of the student's translation may already have been approved. The rewriting process here concentrates on alternative forms in the target language to have more practice in evolving different ways of writing the same piece.

9. Translating proverbs and metaphors -

Some procedures discussed by Newmark (1990) adopted here are reproducing the same image in the target language, replacing the image, translation by simile and sense, deletion or using neologisms.

91. Newmark, P. APPROACHES TO TRANSLATION, 1990: 88-90
Translation, as can be viewed from what has been said uptil now, can best be taught as a skill. It can be used as a supplementary exercise to practice certain items at the advanced level. Oral translation as an innovative exercise and a flexible skill can be used to practice communicative strategies consciously. It can also help in excluding the possibility of short cuts by devoting attention to the contextual problems and practising the weaknesses in those areas.

Oral translation instills the students with a sense of confidence for it helps them in their speaking abilities. Apart from allowing students to function in informal situation, practice could also be given with regard to formal dialogues and situations.

As a next step to the oral presentation of translation, the written exercises further help in establishing translation as a technique in learning activities. Many suggestions have been given here for using translation in the classroom activities.

Classroom activities could be employed using L1 materials for the production of L2 sentences. An oral presentation of any short story based on L1 folklore or any other feature could be presented to the class by the student. This would be in the target language and the
student would need to carry out the work individually. The use of $L_1$ would affect the student directly in the preparation stage. The teacher could act as a consultant to the student, assisting him in viewing the appropriateness of the chosen material, its relevance to the classroom teaching and discussion which would follow and help the student in summarizing the task.

Christopher Titford (1983)\textsuperscript{92} talks about using translation for advanced learners with 8-10 years of English education behind them. He talks about the 'bridge function' of translation and says that techniques should be employed to provoke students into doing some mental activity. One of the techniques referred here is the word-for-word 'spoof translation' which uses an incorrect translation as a factor to draw the student's attention to the error and challenge them into making the necessary changes. A word-for-word translation here could point out the glaring mistakes in the clauses or sentence constructions or collocations. This can be corrected at word-to-word equivalence which brings collocational problems. The student would notice these incongruities and try to substantiate it with a correct translation. This act of learners' involvement in figuring out the mistake and in translating it correctly would motivate them in the classroom lessons.

\textsuperscript{92} Titford, \textit{op. cit.} 1983
The second technique, referred to as back translation, also calls for students involvement. The teacher assists the students once more into provoking him to do the necessary mental exercise. This technique can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Student: } & L_1 \rightarrow L_2 \\
\text{Teacher: } & L_2 \rightarrow L_1 \text{ (Back translation)} \\
\text{Student: } & L_1 \rightarrow L_2
\end{align*}
\]

The teacher listens to the student's translation from L₁ to L₂ and then translates it back to L₁. The teacher's back translation gives the student the clues of the weaknesses in his version of translation and the need to make appropriate changes. The student can be in a position to identify the errors and can become aware of the shortcomings which may be due to overtranslation or under-translation.

The strength of back translation technique lies in the domain of control and consolidation which are part of post communicative activities of Titford. Extending the two-staged Littlewood’s scheme of activities (pre-communicative
and communicative), Titford (1985)^93 added post communicative activities for consolidatory and facilitative functions. He believed that as a post communicative activity the role of translation is "anchoring, or consolidation, of those communicative skills that have already been taught". 94

---


94. Ibid p.74