

Translation and its importance in learning foreign languages at primary schools.

Translation is one of the most demanding and intellectually difficult tasks. It is connected with translation either as an action or as a result of an action. According to Oettinger *“Interlingual translation can be defined as the replacement of elements of one language, the domain of translation, by equivalent elements of another language, the range.”* It is an action of transferring meaning from one language to another taking into account a number of constraints. These constraints should include words, context, grammar rules, culture, writing conventions and words or utterances difficult to translate, e. g idioms.

The 20th century can be characterized as dominated by giving up application translation and explanations in students’ mother tongue to the Direct Method, in which using native language was forbidden. This trend caused that many well-known techniques such as e.g. translation were rejected as faulty. Of course, not all theoreticians agreed with the Direct Method and in the 70s of the century Noam Chomsky introduced the Cognitive Method to language teaching.

This is a modernized Grammar-Translation Method and its main aim is to develop a language ability which would allow one to understand and create a great number of correct sentences.

Using translation on lessons plays an important role in teaching. Helps students to understand the connection between languages and explores the potential of both of them. It is a necessary and natural activity, because in many common places foreign words are met and they need to be decoded. Communication accomplishment is a two-way system. Learners need to be able to communicate both ways: into and from the foreign language. In most materials used on lessons they are pressed mostly on the ability of using a foreign language, but little guidance is given on how to transmit it back into the mother tongue.

Translation develops qualities necessary to all language studying: flexibility, accuracy, and clarity during searching for the most appropriate words to convey what is meant. The students can contribute their own thoughts while focusing on the text and feeling freedom in putting up their ideas.

Before the translating a number of crucial factors ought to be taken into account. The language level of the students, their educational and cultural background, and interests. In the opinion of Harmer it is necessary to consider the four main elements of a plan:

Activities – what students will be doing in the classroom, the way they will be grouped, what kind of activity each of them will solve.

Skills – what language skill the students will develop

Language – what elements of a language will be practised

Content – lesson planners have to select content which has a good chance of provoking interest and involvement.

Equivalence is the central issue in translation. It appears as a main problem among children at primary school. According to Wilss it consists of three components:

- *“ an undesirable initial state*
- *a desirable goal state*
- *a barrier which prevents the transformation of the initial state into the goal state.”*

There are three types of barriers between an initial state and a goal state which constitute a problem. The first of them is a **synthesis problem** which concerns the means for the unknown transformation. The second obstacle deals with an **interpolation problem** that is an abundance of already familiar means and combinations of them for the transformation. The third regards a **dialectical problem** which appears because the goal state is vaguely known or unknown, and initial state is considered to be undesirable. This type of barrier occurs in the production of lyrical work and also in everyday life, e.g. in writing letters.

According to Nord there are four categories of translation problems:

- **Pragmatic translation problems** which arise from the particular situation and represent a specific contrast of SL vs. TL recipients, SL vs. TL medium, SL vs. TL function etc. Those problems can be identified by the extratextual factors of the text-analytical model.
- **Cultural translation problems** are a result of the differences in culture e.g. specific habits, expectations, norms and conventions concerning verbal and other behaviour.
- **Linguistic translation problems** which are connected with the structural differences between languages in lexis, sentence structure and suprasegmental features e.g. ‘false friends.’
- **Text-specific translation problems** are those which may appear in a particular text and cannot be classified as pragmatic, cultural or linguistic ones.

Translation is a demanding and intellectually difficult activity. Apart from knowing the language, it is essential to have general knowledge about the world. The process consists of many complicated tasks that people's mind is able to cope with. Therefore, the main problem is a **feeling of fatigue** and frustration among students. They may go for the easy solutions, e.g. check the answer, or even give up the task. This work is time-consuming, therefore using it during the lesson is not effective. The **working speed** can be also the problem. Some students work faster, the others slower, thus all of them may be frustrated if they are kept waiting, others if they are broken off before they have finished. To avoid these, the teacher is required to find some solutions in a class management, e.g. to join up the groups for discussion in their own time, when they are ready, or setting strict time limits asking the students to do as much as they can in the time.

Language learners are needed to acquire rather communicative than translating skills, thus that is the case that among people who are learning a foreign language a concept of equivalence is a big problem, because they do not understand the difference between **synonymity** and **equipoise**. Many of them have an assumption that a direct one-to-one correspondence of meaning between the word or sentence in the target language and those in the source language exists. Hence, the central problem is concerned with **specifying the nature of equivalence**. Equivalence is doubly understood. It is an agreement between a word or a group of words in a SL with a word or a group of words in a specific context in a TL. An equivalent may be full or partial counterpart for words or words' collocations in the other language. It is crucial to introduce a distinction in the space separating those two kinds of the notion. The grammatical structure connected with semantic equivalence does not have to be the same as pragmatic equivalence in both source and target languages. According to Neubert *"one word of an SL text and a TL text in the translation rarely correspond semantically, and grammatically hardly ever"*.

Common words carry many problems for learners, particular for children. For example, the verb 'to get' in all its versions covers even several columns in a dictionary. To guess the meaning from the context appears as a problem for young people.

On the authority of Weinrich's well known slogan *"Words are untranslatable, texts can always be translated"*, the next problem comes into view. A word whose meaning in the SL cannot be rendered literally and precisely by another word in the TL. '**Untranslatable**' words may be translated by description, e.g. 'living room' is a room when people spend a day, watch TV, have a rest etc. Polish equivalent is 'pokój dzienny', or 'salon', but one word-to one word translation is impossible. Finding an appropriate word for

English 'lunch' in Polish seems to be unrealizable too, because in England it is a light meal or a sandwich usually eaten at people's place of work around one p.m. In Poland there is a 'drugie śniadanie' at about ten a.m. and 'dinner' at about four p.m.

Misconceptions about the true meaning of words that sound similar to Polish words may also happen, e.g. 'sympathy' is often translated into Polish as 'sympatia', whose meaning is completely different.

To sum up, translation needs to be practiced in favourable conditions under the supervision of the teacher. Children should have a possibility to exchange their knowledge and compare their choices of words. In this way, every task will develop their translating skills. Only systematic treatment of translation leads to a success.

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