



## Creative Translation Tasks for ELT (English Language Teaching)

Dr Sonu Gohil

### ABSTRACT

This article looks at the function of creative translation tasks for learners in the ELT classroom. It does not advocate the use of L1 (Language 1, first language, mother tongue) as a teaching tool, for classroom management, setting up activities, or for explaining new vocabulary but encourages the use of innovative translation tasks for developing language competence. The article starts by looking at benefits of creative translation as an aid to language learning. It then briefly reviews the current education system. It concludes with some creative translation tasks and observations on how to utilize them in the best possible ways. This paper advocates the effectiveness of using creative translation to develop the communicative competence of a language among the students at tertiary level. English dominates the world as no other language ever has in the world. There is a need to emphasize the conscious acquisition of English as a meaningful system and a creative process. When there is a need there is an urge of finding various mediums to satisfy that need, now this medium should be such as it not only helps in learning a language but also develops competency of the learner. Thus, one of the effective and fairly possible fundamentals of learning a new language is translation. Translation is desirable as it does not undermine the adult learners' confidence. This paper thus, aims at the development of communicative competence, enabling the learners to discuss the cultures they encounter while translating and eventually helps the learners in deepening their sensitivity to language through heightening their critical ability and creative power. The tasks on translation helps learners make use of the English language while communicating with each other in more realistic situations than what generally happens in the classrooms. They get aware of different cultures while discussing different languages. Thus, translation becomes an intellectually challenging process.

**Keywords:** Creative Translation; communicative competence; discuss cultures; developing sensibility to language

### Introduction

A focus on teaching and learning English in terms of language functions, rather than in terms of grammar and vocabulary alone, can go a long way as far as tertiary level is concerned. The medium to cater to these needs should be such that it not only helps in learning a language but also develops communicative competence of the learner. Thus, one of the effective and fairly possible fundamentals of learning a new language is translation. As Alan Duff (1989) says, "Teachers and students now use translation to learn, rather than learning translation." As a discipline, translation is only recently being introduced in various universities and institutions. However, translation practice is almost as old as the birth of language, which means that it dates back many thousands of years; but the importance of translation has increased truly in today's fast-changing world. Modern translation activities usually move from L1 to L2, have clear communicative aims and real cognitive depth, show high motivation levels, and can produce impressive communicative results.

### Looking out for translation materials

As far as translation materials are concerned, they must be interesting and varied, covering a full range of styles and registers. The students should be led to consider the expressive possibilities of the target language and to discover that it is not always possible to attain exact equivalence. In this way, they will learn to evaluate possible versions to see which most fully captures all the implications of the original and will find out that they need to look beyond single words, chunks of sentences, or even complete sentences to whole stretches of text as they make their decisions. Ultimately, they will learn to translate ideas, not words.

### Preparing a course on translation tasks

A course can be prepared consisting of translation exercises and tasks related to receptive and productive skills. Instructional materials can be based on all the four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – along with language forms such as vocabulary.

For preparing materials and in developing and selecting activities, the following principles can be kept in view by the course designer:

1. Use of interesting activities to hold learners' attention in the classroom.
2. Use of known works of translation.
3. Learner-centred activities.
4. Participation and co-operation.

If the learners come across an activity they have already done numerous times, they will not be motivated to do it. Thus, the prime motto of the course should be to keep them interested, thereby involved, till the end. It can be assumed that most of the learners have not come across an opportunity to try translation before as it has never been a part of their syllabus or formal study. Thus, it becomes necessary to show them the importance of translation and benefits of the course and that they should be encouraged to communicate in English while carrying out the activities in a group as well as with the teacher.

To learn something it is important to use it practically through a task. Thus, learners' need for expression should be given adequate importance. There are two benefits of a learner-centred activity: 1) Learners gain optimally when they are involved completely in an activity and 2) Effectiveness of the course can be measured through the level of learners' engagement in the activity.

### Some Ideas for classroom activities

- Learners' groups / pairs work on a text and then come together and compare their translations.
- Learners translate jokes / SMS and try to maintain the humour in them.
- The order of tasks to be carried out on the learners can be designed in such a way that the learners could move systematically in the process of translation to eventually develop their proficiency in English.

### Comparison and recognition

- Learners compare excerpts from an original novel and its translation and identify the differences.
- Learners work in groups on short texts then regroup and compare their versions before producing a final text. This can then be compared with an original version.
- Learners compare a proverb used in two different languages; they discuss the use of words and phrases in them which reflects the culture they belong to.

### Actual original translation

- Learners translate ambiguous sentences to resolve the ambiguities.
- Learners look for the exact equivalents of idiomatic phrases in another language and make meaningful sentences using them.
- Learners translate a dialogue and write their own dialogues based on a given topic by the teacher.
- Learners translate recipes. This enables them to understand culinary vocabulary and also encourages them to look for equivalents.

### Conclusion

Creative translation may work as an effective tool in language learning as it helps to cultivate higher order thinking among students at tertiary level. The process of translation lends itself to exploring and experimenting with a language, which develops students' creative and critical thinking. Translation activities comprising innovative techniques such as brainstorming, problem solving, group discussion, and group assignments help students to move from lower order thinking to higher order thinking. The acceptance and usage of innovative translation activities will assist the teachers and trainers to make the process of language learning worthwhile. Preparation of more translation teaching materials for various levels of proficiency needs to be undertaken. The above mentioned ideas for classroom activities can be replicated in different courses such as Bachelors of commerce/science/business administration, not only in the last year of college but in the first and second year as well.