Exploring the Importance of Competency-Based Approach in Evaluating EFL Students' Translations

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Abstract:

In the context of evaluating the translations of students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), it is important to consider the Competency-Based Approach. This approach involves assessing students' language skills and abilities based on predetermined criteria and standards. By using this approach, teachers can effectively evaluate the quality and accuracy of students' translations while taking into account their overall linguistic competency. Therefore, evaluating EFL students' translations using the Competency-Based Approach allows for a comprehensive and objective assessment that considers the student's language proficiency, communicative competence, and overall language skills. This paper explores the importance of the Competency-Based Approach in evaluating EFL students' translations and emphasizes the significance of translation in foreign language classes.

Keywords: *Communication Competence; Competency-Based Approach; EFL Learners; Language Skills; Translation,*

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Introduction:

The act of translation plays a crucial role in facilitating communication between individuals; its impact on our daily lives cannot be overstated. From the historical use of translation as a means of teaching foreign languages through the Grammatical Translation Method to its current status as a highly-regarded scientific discipline attracting numerous students, translation has evolved significantly over time. It is a nuanced field with its literature, methods, and approaches. Then, producing a good translation requires a translator with a strong command of both vocabulary and grammar. Given the inherent differences between languages, translation students or professionals need to have a comprehensive understanding of these variations to deliver a translation that accurately conveys meaning and content to its intended audience.

To effectively study translation, a combination of theoretical and practical approaches is necessary. Theoretical studies involve an examination of various theories, strategies, and methods of translation, while practical studies involve the application of these theories through actual translation exercises. Translation teachers need to have both a strong theoretical understanding and practical experience in the field, as this allows them to better understand and address the different problems that their students may encounter. Additionally, a student's translation competence is not solely based on their linguistic abilities, but also on their background knowledge and the evaluation of their translation abilities by their teacher. Hatim (1997) suggests that translation competence requires a comprehensive knowledge of both the source and target languages, as well as the ability to integrate these competencies on a higher level of bilingual proficiency.

This research paper aims to explore the practical implementation of the competency-based approach in assessing the quality of EFL students' translations. It highlights the importance of translation in foreign language education and its significance in evaluating students' language skills. The study also sheds light on the effectiveness of incorporating translation exercises into language learning curriculums, improving students' language proficiency and communication abilities.

1. Translation in Foreign Language Classes

The practice of translation is an effective tool for language learners; Experts in the field, including theorists, linguists, and educators, concur that incorporating translation into language classes can yield significant benefits. Translation can aid students in acquiring new vocabulary, honing their cognitive abilities, and improving their overall linguistic proficiency.

Integrating translation into language instruction is highly recommended as it helps learners in accurately employing and understanding figurative language, thereby enhancing their interpretive and creative writing abilities. Furthermore,

the role of translation extends beyond the realm of vocabulary acquisition and encompasses the improvement of language systems, including grammar, syntax, and lexis, in both source and target languages. Through translation, learners recognize the differences between the system of each language, allowing them to refine their understanding and usage of grammar rules, sentence structure, and word choices in both written and spoken forms. Therefore, the practice of translation serves as a valuable tool for language learners, enabling them to develop a comprehensive linguistic competence that encompasses not only the surface-level aspects of language but also the underlying structures and nuances that contribute to effective communication.

Petrocchi (2006) stated that through translation, learners can deepen their understanding of these linguistic components, leading to a more comprehensive and nuanced language proficiency. Hummel (2010) and Laufer & Girsai (2008) consider translation as a useful technique for learning new vocabulary and understanding new words. These studies have confirmed the impact of one's native language on the acquisition of new vocabulary. The authors suggest that translation can be a valuable cognitive strategy when learning foreign language vocabulary.

Translation, as stated by Tekin (2010), holds immense significance in the process of language acquisition as it offers educators an effective method through which they can effectively communicate complex concepts present in poetry and other domains, while simultaneously minimizing the occurrence of errors that may arise due to the interference of a student's native language with the target language they are currently acquiring. Through translation, learners can gain a deeper comprehension of the contrasting elements of language, such as lexical and syntactic variations, as well as similarities and differences at the discourse level. When employed judiciously and with a distinct purpose, translation has the potential to enhance all language skills.

Furthermore, Translation serves as a valuable tool to improve students' understanding of written and spoken language. According to Liao (2006), learners frequently rely on their first language to enrich their English vocabulary, grammar, and idiomatic expressions, thereby enhancing their capacity for reading, writing, and speaking. Kern (1994) echoed this sentiment, highlighting how mental translation is integral to the L2 reading comprehension process.

Pan and Pan (2012) emphasized that the utilization of translation as a strategy is highly valuable in minimizing the occurrence of errors that may arise due to the interference of a student's first language (L1) with their foreign language (FL) learning. By employing translation, students can enhance their comprehension of the similarities and differences between the two languages. This approach enables learners to delve deeper into the intricacies of the FL, enabling them to grasp complex linguistic nuances and expand their linguistic

competence. This technique can aid students in avoiding the influence of their native language and further enhance their ability to learn the L2.

According to Garces (1998), when comparing and contrasting L1 and L2, learners progress in their language acquisition, they gradually develop an understanding of the specific grammatical structures that are unique to the language they are learning, such as the passive voice and conditional clauses. In their study, Shiyab and Abdullateef (2001) highlight the significance of translation as a crucial tool for cultural mediation within language learning. They argue that the process of translation enables learners to familiarize themselves with foreign language elements by drawing comparisons with their native language. This approach does not only enhance the learners' understanding of the language but also equips them with the skills to navigate cultural nuances that are inherent in any language.

According to Newmark (1991), translation is "an exercise in accuracy, economy and elegancein manipulating a variety of L2 registers in a first degree" (p. 62). Translation is an invaluable tool for language learners seeking to develop their skills in a foreign language. It enables learners to overcome the linguistic barriers that often hamper their ability to understand the meaning of words and phrases. Translation also plays a pivotal role in developing the communicative competence of learners, particularly when interacting with people from different cultures.

According to Titford (1983), translation is not merely a mechanical process of converting text from one language to another. Rather, it is a problem-solving and cognitive activity that requires learners to draw on their knowledge of both languages. Cook (2007, 2010) emphasizes the growing presence of multilingual societies, wherein the constant need for communication and translation among individuals who speak different languages is evident. Hence, it becomes imperative to integrate translation into language learning processes to equip learners with the necessary skills they will undoubtedly require in various facets of their lives.

By incorporating translation into language learning, especially when applied to real-world topics, learners can find a strong motivational factor that propels their engagement and understanding. According to Cook, teachers who possess proficiency in both languages will naturally resort to employing translation as a teaching technique, unless they are instructed otherwise (Cook, 2007, p. 397). The significance of this observation lies in the acknowledgement that translation can serve as an effective pedagogical tool that aids in bridging linguistic and cultural gaps, facilitating enhanced communication and comprehension among learners. This finding implies that educators should recognize the inherent value of translation in language learning and actively incorporate it into their teaching practices to optimize the learning outcomes and

overall language proficiency of their students. Carreres (2014) further recognizes the applicability of translation as a valuable aptitude for practical communication in the real world. Nonetheless, Carreres underscores the imperative of undertaking a supplementary comprehensive investigation to delve into the effectiveness of translation as a pedagogical and language-acquisition tool.

Butzkamm's (2003; 2011) investigation suggests that the utilization of translation can be regarded as a valuable instrument in enhancing the comprehension of a foreign language and augmenting one's reading and writing proficiencies. He also emphasizes that the first language should not be considered simply as a fallback option for language acquisition. Instead, it should be regarded as the primary resource for learning the new language. This is because the learner's first language provides them with a framework for understanding the new language's grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. Furthermore, the teacher should use the learner's first language to help explain the new language's concepts, as this will help the learner to comprehend them more quickly.

Furthermore, Butzkamm (2010) suggests that translation can be seen as the basis of the grammar of a language. This means that by understanding the grammar of their first language, learners can then use it as a foundation for learning the grammar of the new language. By doing so, learners can gain a deeper understanding of the new language's structures and use them more effectively. Although this perspective may seem unconventional, it provides a simple and intuitive way of understanding the structure of languages by relating them to languages that are already familiar. This method can be especially beneficial for people who are learning a non-native language in an environment with limited practice opportunities.

Moreover, the act of translating plays a significant role in the process of acquiring a language. Through translation, students can expand their vocabulary and teachers can effectively explain complex concepts found in poetry and other subjects. In addition, translation helps to prevent errors that arise due to interference between a student's native language and the language being learned. Furthermore, translation allows learners to gain a deeper understanding of the contrasting elements within a language, such as variations in vocabulary and sentence structure, as well as the similarities and differences in communication at a higher level. When utilized critically and with a clear objective, translation can greatly enhance all other language skills.

Schaffner (1998) argues that translation can be an effective tool to aid foreign language learning. It provides several benefits such as enhancing verbal agility, which helps learners to quickly and accurately respond to language cues. It also expands students' vocabulary in the second language (L2) by exposing them to new words and phrases. In addition, translation provides an opportunity for learners to develop their writing style in the L2. By translating texts, learners can

practice using the language in a way that is natural and idiomatic. This helps learners to not only use the language correctly but also to use it creatively and expressively. Translation also improves learners' understanding of how languages work.

Therefore, Through the translation process, learners gain insight into the grammar, syntax, and structure of the L2. This deeper understanding of language helps learners to use the language more effectively and accurately. Finally, translation consolidates L2 structures for active use. Through translating texts, learners can reinforce their knowledge of the L2 structures and apply them to their writing and speaking. This helps learners to become more confident and proficient in using the L2.

2. Basic Translation Skills

Translation is commonly used in foreign language classes as a pedagogical tool, which is highly regarded for its effectiveness in developing students' ability to communicate in the target language. This practice of translating is not only acknowledged as a language skill but also seen as equally important as writing, reading, speaking, and listening (as stated by Researcher Ross in 2000) due to its positive impact on interpretation, comprehension, and communication. During the translation process, students engage in an active comparison and analysis of the language systems of their native tongue and the foreign language, with a specific emphasis on identifying nuanced differences in grammar and vocabulary. By employing specific strategies, they strive to uncover the full potential of both languages.

The process of translating text between languages involves multiple well-defined steps. According to Nida and Taber (1974), the translation procedure is composed of three sequential stages: analysis, transfer, and restructuration. Each of these stages serves an essential function in the comprehensive process of translation, facilitating the effective conveyance of meaning and purpose from the source language to the target language. The initial phase entails examining the grammatical relationship, the semantic content of words, and the combination of words in the target language. The subsequent stage entails the transference of meaning from the source language to the target language. Lastly, the final stage entails the reconstruction of the grammatical structure from the source language to the appropriate grammatical structure in the target language.

a. Analysis stage

During the Analysis Stage of the translation process, the translator examines the linguistic aspects of the source text. This includes a thorough evaluation of both grammatical and semantic components, taking into account the referential meanings of the text. To accomplish this, the translator must possess a deep understanding of the socio-cultural nuances of both the source and target

languages. Beginning with a comprehensive reading of the source text, the translator then proceeds to analyze it meticulously, to fully comprehend the message in terms of its structural composition, language style, semantics, and idiomatic expressions, as employed in the original language.

b. Transfer stage

During the process of language translation, the transfer of meaning relies solely on the translator's ability to effectively convey the intended message. This requires the translator to accurately identify and select the most appropriate equivalent words and phrases from the source language, and then convey them without any loss of meaning in the target language. Skilful translation necessitates the creation of effective equivalents for each word, phrase and sentence from the original language into the intended language.

c. Restructuring stage

The process of text restructuring is crucial in ensuring that the intended message is effectively and appropriately conveyed in the target language. It requires the translator to thoroughly analyze various aspects such as the appropriate use of vocabulary, grammar, language style, and cultural context of the given text. The ultimate goal of restructuring is to enhance the accuracy, clarity, and overall effectiveness of the text in the target language. By doing so, the message can be conveyed with precision and consistency, while also considering the cultural nuances of the two languages.

3. Translation Competence

Translation competence is a key concept in the field of translation studies, which has been widely discussed by scholars. This term refers to a set of abilities that are necessary to convey the message of the source text to the target language. According to Waddington (2001), translation competence involves a translator's capacity to comprehend and convey the meaning of the source text efficiently and effectively. Additionally, Nord (2005: 146) outlines the various skills that are involved in translation competence, including understanding the meaning of the text, interpreting the source language text, producing a new text based on the source language, ensuring the quality of the produced text, and having knowledge of cultural studies.

Beeby (2000 and 1996) presents a comprehensive framework for examining the various aspects that constitute translation competence. According to Beeby's model, the translation process encompasses four primary competencies, namely transfer competence, contrastive linguistic competence, contrastive discourse competence, and extra-linguistic competence. These competencies collectively contribute to the translator's ability to effectively and accurately transfer meaning and convey the intended message from one language to another. By mastering these competencies, translators can navigate the complexities of translation,

addressing potential challenges related to language differences, discourse structures, and non-linguistic factors. This model provides a valuable foundation for analyzing and evaluating the translation competence, and offering insights into the various skills and knowledge required for successful translation.

a. Transfer Competence

Transfer competence refers to the ability to effectively transfer knowledge and skills from one language to another. This involves various aspects, such as having advanced reading skills in the source language, which enables the translator to fully comprehend the content of the original text. Additionally, the translator should have strong reformulation and composition skills in the target language. This means being able to accurately and fluently convey the meaning of the source text in the target language, while also considering the appropriate style and tone. The translator must also be aware of the multiple contexts involved. This includes understanding the intentions and perspectives of the author of the source text, as well as the intended audience and purpose of the translation.

b. Contrastive Linguistic Competence

Knowledge of the typographical differences between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) plays a crucial role in contrastive linguistic competence. Understanding these differences allows language learners to effectively recognise the different writing systems of the two languages. Furthermore, developing an awareness of lexical differences between the SL and the TL is essential. This includes recognizing how semantic fields and lexical sets may not always coincide, leading to potential challenges in translation and interpretation. Moreover, learners must acknowledge the limitations of dictionaries in capturing the full range of lexical polysemy, and instead learn how to resolve such issues through careful analysis of textual context. Lastly, possessing knowledge of syntactic differences between the SL and the TL is paramount. By understanding the nuances of syntax, learners can successfully navigate syntactic polysemy and resolve any potential ambiguities through context.

c. Contrastive Discourse Competence

Knowledge of the differences in text types and genres between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) is essential for effective translation. Translators must be aware of the variations in both languages. Another crucial aspect of translation competence is the ability to understand the relationship between context and register. Context refers to the specific situation in which a text is produced. At the same time, the register encompasses the field (subject matter), mode (medium of communication), and tenor (social roles and relationships of the participants). Translators need to grasp how the priorities and constraints of each translation situation are influenced by these contextual factors.

d. Extra-linguistic Competence

Understanding extra-linguistic competence involves acquiring a deep understanding of the pragmatic and semiotic variances that exist between the source language (SL) culture and the target language (TL) culture. This encompasses not only linguistic knowledge but also a broader awareness of cultural nuances, customs, and social norms. To develop this competence, individuals must possess documentation skills, such as effective utilization of dictionaries, encyclopaedias, databases, parallel texts, and consultation with subject matter experts. These resources enable individuals to explore and analyze the complexities of language and culture, facilitating accurate and nuanced translation and interpretation.

3. Evaluation of Translation Through Competency-Based Approach

One of the primary concerns when it comes to evaluating translation is the notion of Translation Competence, which refers to the precise abilities and sub-abilities that comprise a translator's professional aptitude (Angelelli, 2009, p.23). Translation Competence can be described as a specific combination of expertise, knowledge, and skills (EKS) that are necessary for a professional translator to deliver satisfactory translation services (Porshneva, 2002, as cited in Aubakirova, 2016). It is crucial to understand the significance of Translation Competence in the field of translation assessment as it serves as a benchmark for evaluating the proficiency and effectiveness of translators in providing accurate and appropriate translations.

Proficiency and competence (Hager & Gonczi 1996) are two important concepts that are often used interchangeably but hold distinct meanings. Proficiency refers to a set of interconnected components such as knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can be utilized to solve a problem proficiently. Competence refers to the ability to effectively choose and apply a coherent blend of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to accomplish a task in a particular environment, while also taking into account personal traits such as determination, self-assurance, and drive.

Competency-Based Education (CBE) is an inventive methodology for the pedagogical process. It revolves around the acquisition of highly specific and targeted proficiencies that encompass a vast array of skills. According to Richard and Rodgers (2001), The primary aim of the CBLT, as outlined by is to enable learners to become self-sufficient individuals capable of navigating the complexities of the world. Essentially, this entails learners assuming ownership of their learning and engaging as active participants in the learning experience, rather than mere bystanders who play no role in the process.

Norland and Pruett-Said (2006) stated that competency-based approach is a progressive approach to education that emphasizes the acquisition of specific competencies, tailored instruction, and a comprehensive assessment of learners' performance. By focusing on measuring learning instead of time, this approach

ensures that learners have the time and resources they need to fully develop their skills and knowledge.

According to De Ketele (1996), The teacher should put the student in situations of interaction where he demonstrates his capacity and makes the student more active. In this approach, Students are evaluated on their ability to perform the designated task or competency as it is based on assessments that measure subject mastery, rather than "time put in.

In the field of translation, competency-based approach focuses on developing the necessary skills and abilities required for professional translation. It emphasizes the acquisition of interlingual skills and the ability to mediate between different languages and cultures. The translation competency-based approach concentrates on the development of the essential skills necessary for professional translation through the acquisition of skills in multiple languages.

Sakwe, G.M. (2017) notes that translation studies is an area that has yet to receive the recognition it deserves. Few systematic analyses have been conducted on this subject, highlighting the need for more research and bibliographical data to be gathered. Despite this, Translation Competence Models exist, which are based on the skills taught and learned in the translation process. However, the creation of these models is still in its early stages (Göpferich, 2011), and many lack a concrete representation of the specific task to be carried out. Defining the sub-components of translation behaviorally is also crucial, as it is an integral part of the broader framework for developing translation courses (Abdellah, 2010).

According to Reid & Barrington (1994), competency frameworks are a valuable tool determining learning requirements and aligning them with business objectives. To enhance the education of translators, a comprehensive translation competency framework should encompass more than just specialized subject knowledge. It should also incorporate proficiency in IT mediation and analytical skills.

Conclusion

Translation is widely recognized as a highly effective and practical technique that can greatly contribute to the process of language learning and instruction Wolfgang Butzkamm (2003; 2011). Scholars and educators alike perceive it as a valuable tool that can significantly enhance students' language abilities and proficiency. Through the act of translation, learners can actively engage with the target language, gaining a deeper understanding of its structure, vocabulary, and cultural nuances Cook (2007; 2009; 2010). Furthermore, translation allows students to develop their critical thinking skills, as they must navigate the intricacies of language and make informed decisions about word choices and sentence structure. Overall, translation serves as a valuable resource in language education,

empowering students to become more proficient and confident in their linguistic abilities. Carreres (2006; 2014) and Gonzales (2014).

Furthermore, Competency-Based Education is an approach that is grounded in the principles of practice and encompasses various components such as progression through demonstration of mastery, personalization, flexible assessment, and the development of specific skills and dispositions (Torres, S. et al., 2015). To ensure a solid foundation of knowledge and understanding, students must showcase their mastery of the material before moving on to the next level of learning. This is accomplished through the implementation of flexible assessment methods, which allow students to demonstrate their competency in a manner that aligns with their individual learning needs and preferences. By employing this approach, educators can effectively tailor their instruction and support to meet the diverse needs of their students, fostering a learning environment that is both engaging and conducive to growth and development.

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