

Chapter Four

Conclusion and Recommendations

As we go to the homepage of the domestic website, we are frequently required to choose the model of Chinese or English language. Unconsciously, we are crossing the bilingual bridge leading to the 21st century. Activities of translation are going around the world. Western literature and cultures are widely introduced into our country through translation. Meanwhile the formulation of Taiwan consciousness begins to open the gate to translate Taiwan literature into English. Within knowledge there is no boundary, over which translation is the sharp weapon to cross and attain the goals of transmitting culture.

For Chomsky (1972), the reason to study language is that language is a mirror of mind, that is, we might hope to reach a better understanding of how the human mind produces and processes language by detailed study of language. Translation as an exemplary model for language learning undoubtedly unveils the cognitive process of mind to do translation from L1 to L2. In the process of translation, the translator should rely on his grammatical competence to understand the deep structure of language and transform it into the surface structure. The learner must develop skills in manipulating the linguistic system, to the point where he can use it spontaneously in order to convey the intended messages of the source language. What is more important, in the process of translation, the learner should incorporate language structures with language functions, cultural factors, or even "worldviews" to establish

communication between L1 and L2. In other words, translation makes it possible for language teaching to go through the processes of mechanical and meaningful drills. Translation also can be integrated into a communicative activity to expect the success of communicative drills. In this way, linguistic competence and communicative competence would be well balanced for the performance of accuracy and fluency work. Translation is a bilingual approach to help learners to acquiring the four skills of the foreign languages.

Although a lot of criticism about Grammar-Translation method spreads over Taiwan in English teaching, many teachers and learners still feel comfortable and secure in using it in the foreign language classroom. Professor Lin's insights about translation and language teaching may renovate the traditional Grammar-Translation method. His emphasis of "communicative competence" injects it with a cognitive and communicative sense, in which communicative language approach should incorporate it into language teaching to help the learners achieve a balance of accuracy and fluency in learning English rather than seek only fluency at the expense of accuracy. As Jones R. D. points out, translation as a communicative language skill is viewed as "a complex communicative act, where a text is interpreted, reshaped, and then used to create another" (1995, p.499). For the practice of translation activities in CLT, we attempt to summarize three recommendations as follows:

First, in the process of translation, semantic notions should be expressed by consideration of language function (Lin, 1999). For a translation to be acceptable, it is not only enough to be semantically expressed. Communicative language teaching

claims that grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation have to be joined by speech act “functions”, discourse, culture, and specific training in the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Jones, 1995). Semantic rules, idiomatic expression, logical thinking, cultural connotations, and problems of authenticity are equally important factors for consideration. As a usual, “the closer the language and the culture, the closer the translation and the original” (Newmark, 1988a, p.8). In translating Chinese into English, language function naturally cannot exclude the super-structure that reflects different perspectives of the universe between east and west (Lin, 1999).

Second, in the last phase of translation, "testing" approaches to the art of editing, which needs to polish the translating text for achieving the level of syntactic maturity. The way to achieve syntactic maturity relies on the increase of T-units and variation of sentence structures. The flexible use of appositive, adjective, prepositional phrases, adverbial clauses, gerund, and noun clauses is potential for syntactic variation or longer T-units (Lin, 1999). For Chomsky, a grammar is "a model (=systematic description) of those linguistic abilities of the native speaker of a language which enable him to speak and understand his language fluently" (Radford, 1981, p.3). Knowledge of grammar, indeed, lays a good foundation of translation and bridges the gap between Chinese and English. In translation, Newmark (1988b, p.123-124) energetically encourages the use of componential analysis (e.g. boy→[+human] [+male] [−adult]) to prevent the loss of meaning because he sees this analysis as a “flexible but orderly methods of bridging the numerous lexical gaps, both linguistic and cultural, between on language and another.” Also, as Duff (1989, p.6) indicates, “translation helps us to

understand better the influence of the one language on the other, and to correct errors of habits that creep in unnoticed (such as the misuse of particular words or structures).” In this sense, translation, a conscious process of thinking, may help one prevent from being fossilized because of completely unaware of mistakes.

Third, translation is a natural and necessary activity applied to CLT. Outside the classroom, translation is going on in daily life. Why not inside? Rather than ‘made up’ language, the materials of translation should be authentic to reality and wide-ranging in scope so that the learner can keep in touch with the whole language, not just those parts isolated by the textbook. As a language learning activity, it develops three qualities essential to all language learning: accuracy, clarity, and flexibility. In the process of translation, the learner has to search (flexibility) for the most appropriate words (accuracy) to convey what it meant (clarity) (Duff, 1989). On the other hand, one purpose of communicative activity is to provide ‘whole-task’ practice for the learners (Littlewood, 1981). CLT encourages work in-groups and in pairs; therefore, students can work in oral groups for oral discussion of translation. Other techniques such as role-playing, information gap, problem solving, and simulation can be designed as the communicative activities and used to explore different real-life uses of translation. Jones (1995) gives us a example of role-play: a sketch where two students play a Chinese customs officer and a Briton suspected of smuggling, with a third student having to “interpret” their attempts at communication. In real life situations, there is no lack of examples involving the translation activities, which can be put into practice in the foreign language classroom.

To sum up, in the “Post-Communicative” approach to language learning, translation is not seen as a handicap, but as a useful resource for the learner (Jones 1995). Professor Lin’s illustration of the process of translation from the perspective of thinking in English constitutes a valuable contribution to the study of teaching translation as communicative skills in language learning. It goes without saying that the model of translation built by Lin inspires the learners a lot and in the future we may make a further experimental study of this model. What is more important, during the period of advocating CLT in language learning, the importance of grammar cannot be thus de-emphasized under such a current trend. By translation, the learner must learn to incorporate language structures with language functions to maintain an effective communication. Therefore, translation, as the process of conveying messages across linguistic and cultural barriers, is an eminently communicative activity, which can be naturally integrated with CLT. Translation won’t be confined to the mechanical practice of reading and writing and it will involve oral interaction and small-group work. Then we cannot help but whisper, “Wonderful! Wonderful! Translation is alive with communicative skills!”