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Grammar Revision during Translation: Where to revise? How to revise?

Bahadır Cahit Tosun
Selcuk University, Turkey

Abstract

The concepts of language teaching and teaching grammar have long been exposed to change myriads of times after their first implementation through Latin and its grammar until our present day. Today in the post method era which shapes our world of language teaching, these two concepts are re-acknowledged in different contexts each of which may be designed also by their students under the impact of constructivism. This presentation is based on the views of the third year students at the English Language and Literature Department of Selcuk University (n=40) concerning the simultaneous implementation of grammar revision during translation courses. The data for this study is secured by questionnaires whereby the process of simultaneous grammar revision during translation classes turn out to be welcome as a useful artifact by all the students (f=40).

Keywords: grammar, language teaching, translation

1. INTRODUCTION

Language teaching as one of the most debated subjects was identified with teaching grammar in most cases whether it took part especially in the period following the decline of Latin or the late nineteenth or the early twentieth century. Although the concept of language teaching has been exposed to by far its greatest change especially in the last hundred years in terms of its application or the skills to be focused during teaching, one constant and independent variable as an indispensable part of it, has always been grammar teaching (Richards & Rogers, 2003). Yet, the role of grammar in language teaching still appears to be in need of scientific projection.

Today in a postmodern world, the teaching circles on their share experience the post-method era and try to utilize its ultimate artifact, constructivism, which shapes our learning and teaching strategies far beyond our expectations. Instead of a best method for all, constructivism opens a new avenue for teaching and teaches the educators that no best method for all can be probable let alone valid for teaching (Canstray & Marlow, 2010). To be more precise, knowledge, instead of one channel, is gathered from the previous experiences of individuals taking part in the learning process and the interplay occurring in between these individuals and their environment forming a network for both unification and redefining knowledge (Cannella & Reif, 1994). Consistent with this epistemological view, no book may serve as a unique source for knowledge since each contributor learner plays a role of producer of knowledge when they get in the process of reading,

discussing or brainstorming (Richardson, 1997). By the same token, no teacher could serve as a unique source for knowledge, while the contributors paradoxically reshape the process of learning and the subject to be learnt. Thus, constructivism puts the emphasis more on students instead of teachers as far as the learning process is concerned. In other words, learners define both the subject to be learned and its true nature before learning it (Eley, 2006). It should be students instead of teachers who should have the role of activists in the classroom, which would integrate the students more with learning, or rather, re-defining it (Nikitina, 2009).

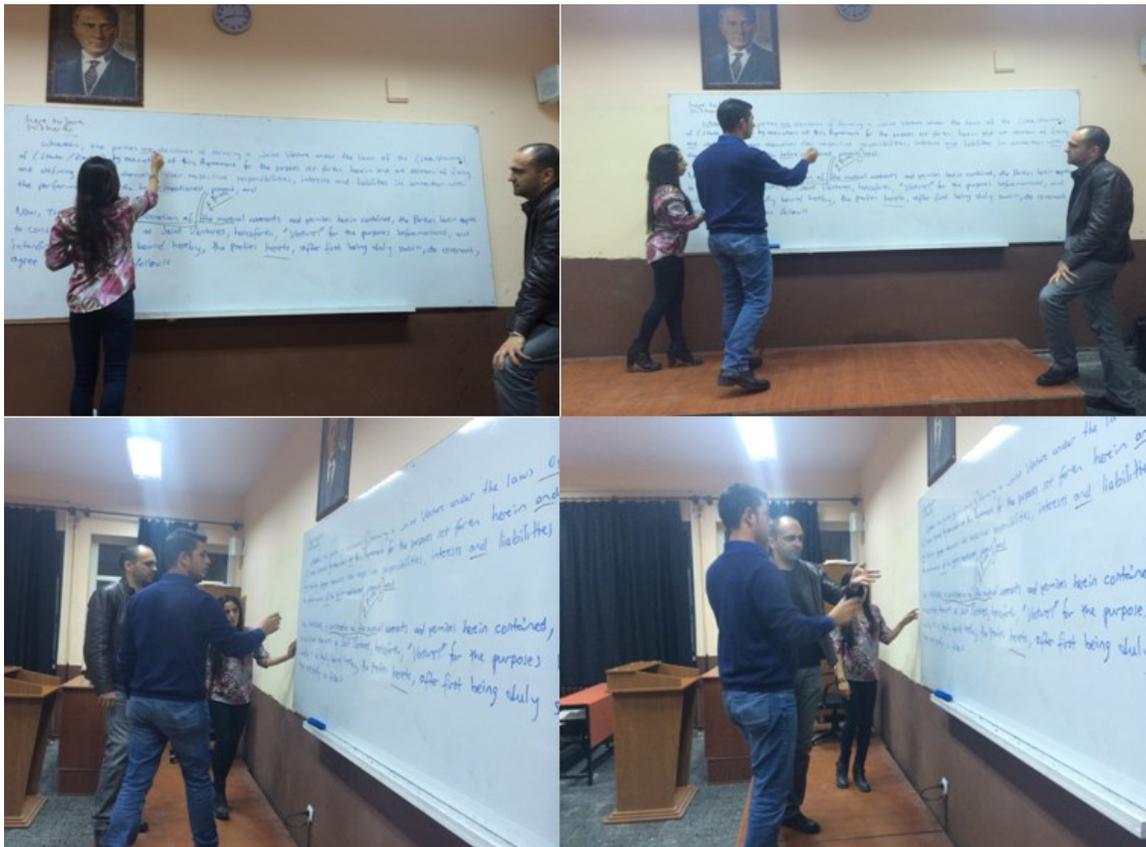
To this end, as far as translation courses are concerned, constructivism and grammar teaching together should throw light on the generic questions “How?” and “Where?” of teaching. The answer for this “How?” and “Where?” although shows diversity from one context to another, would embrace both ease and problem in combining grammar teaching and constructivism in translation courses. Would embrace ease because student participation and creativity would be an amusing part of a translation course, especially when dealing with structural text analysis. Would embrace problem since it is not a valid and favorable way to use course books in translation courses although some researchers such as Laeufer (2006) suggest that using course books in translation courses may reduce students’ linguistic anxiety. Hence, the teacher is compelled to decide the curriculum and therefore, should provide the students with the entailed amount of grammar knowledge. To what extent this grammar support is to be provided and at which point this aid should be given to the students still appear to be a vague subject that should be tackled.

All in all, in accordance with the theoretical perception that the research literature provides, this study tries to determine the students’ views on a technique that redefines the role of grammar teaching as a revision tool for text analysis consistent with constructivism in translation classes. The students taking part in the application of the technique both as the implementers and the audience for a period of 14 weeks were asked to respond to three questions that form the research questions of the current study.

1. What are the positive sides of grammar revision during translation?
2. What are the negative sides of grammar revision during translation?
3. What would be the additional suggestions of students for the improvement of grammar revision during translation?

2. METHODOLOGY

The present study being a descriptive one was applied within the limits of merely one segment of a course entitled “Advanced Translation II” which was instructed in the fall season of 2013-2014 school year. The participants of the study ($n=40$) all comprised the third year students of English Language and Literature Program of SelcukUniversity. Different from a classical translation course in which students are supposed to translate the texts on their desks and then read them aloud for comparison, the students were encouraged to ruminate over the general grammatical structure of the text on the board. Then they were asked to realize a structural deconstruction process of the text under the supervision of the lecturer on the board. This was supposed to provide the students with a better projection towards a sound understanding and internalization of the text. However, in order to enable the students to attain such a skill to deconstruct the text it was necessary to help them recollect some grammar units from time to time. Therefore, during the general pace of a translation course a concise grammar revision was implicated in, whereby the students were due to associate the grammar units with text analysis. Although the students were free to ask any question regarding the grammar units, the role of grammar teaching was downgraded to a fundamental level instead of a detailed grammar class. The purpose of this application was to backup the students with only minimum amount of grammar which would serve them to analyze the text within the limits of structuralism. The technique was also utilized as a tool that facilitates students’ perception of the hermeneutic aspects of the text via juxtaposing both aspects under their lecturer’s guidance on the board. A representative photograph for these course applications is given in the figure below.



After a period of 14 weeks the students were distributed three item open ended questions which asked the positive sides and the negative sides of the technique applied during the course respectively. The third item investigated whether or not they adopted the technique as helpful to be employed in translation courses also taking their suggestions about improving the technique into consideration. The qualitative data was analyzed quantitatively. As an initial step, all of the sentences were read and then categories were constructed. During the evaluation process, each category was determined precisely to have one to one correspondence only to one single decision or statement provided by the student. Ultimately, a total amount of 14 categories appeared for question 1, 3 categories appeared for question 2 , and 2 categories appeared for question 3. Then, having been transformed into numerical categories, the students' views were measured in terms of their frequencies, and thus, they were numerically studied. As a final step, the data analytical procedure was checked by an expert in the field to make sure that each category conveys an accurate amount of frequency. The highest frequencies were explicated in words notwithstanding that the entire categories with their frequencies were given in tables.

3. FINDINGS

Research Question 1. Positive sides of grammar revision during translation.

The results of the research question 1 are submitted in Table 1. The results denote that the majority of the participants (24) evaluate the most effective side of using grammar revision during translation to be the connecting side of it that associates grammar knowledge with text analysis. The second highest frequency is 20 which highlights the practicality and the integrity that the technique provides during teaching when compared to classical translation courses. As for the third highest frequency, it is 19 that reflects both the effectiveness and the compatibility of the technique with text analysis while the closest frequency (18) in the fourth place shows that the students find the technique amusing. Another high frequency 14 shows that the students find the technique as encouraging and useful for developing self-confidence. Students interestingly evaluate the technique in terms of two different categorical items at the same level of frequency (12), the first one of which shows that the technique facilitates learning vocabulary while the second one of which signifies that students learn how to construct knowledge through the present technique. Other 7 frequencies that seem relatively not so important are listed on the table 1.

Table 1. Students' views on positive sides of grammar revision during translation.

Categories	f
1. Relates grammar knowledge to text analysis.	24
2. More practical and provides integrity when compared to classical translation courses.	20
3. Helps us understand the components of the text better while making it easy to analyze even long and complex paragraphs through simple grammar applications.	19
4. Amusing.	18
5. Encouraging and develops self-confidence	14
6. Facilitates learning vocabulary.	12
7. Enables to learn how to construct knowledge with student participation.	12
8. Makes it hard to forget both grammar and vocabulary.	8
9. Enables us to make contextual inference where it is necessary consistent with the hermeneutic aspects of the text.	7
10. Makes us concentrate on the lesson more readily.	6
11. Since it develops productive skills, it may contribute to my speaking skill as well as my writing skill.	4
12. Increases curiosity.	4
13. Ads to creativity.	4
14. Creates consciousness about both the proximity and the distance of the two languages via juxtaposing their syntax and grammar rules.	3

Research Question 2. Negative sides of grammar revision during translation.

Table 2 submits the results of the research question 2. As it is clearly noticed in table 2, in terms of item 1 (Since the technique concentrates more on text analyses and grammar revision, students are provided with limited number of translation samples.) students regard the most problematic side of grammar revision during translation (f=3) as the limited number of samples analyzed during the application of the technique. Successively, item 2 and item 3 stand out to be the next highest problematic sides of the technique with their arguments that the technique embraces inadequate number of technological artifacts such as PowerPoint, internet or mass media communication, and it takes too much time (f=3).

Table 2. Students' views on negative sides of grammar revision during translation.

Categories	f
1. Since the technique concentrates more on text analyses and grammar revision, students are provided with limited number of translation samples.	3
2. Inadequacy of technological artifacts such as PowerPoint, Internet, etc, or mass media communication.	2
3. Takes too much time.	2

Research Question 3. Students' suggestions for improving grammar revision during translation.

All of the students (f=40) evaluate the grammar revision during translation beneficial for translation courses. All the same, the majority of the students (f=4) suggest that visuals be incorporated into the presentation of the texts in order to enhance the level of student concentration and impart the texts relatively a more reminding feature. Likewise, during the presentation of the texts, some additional tools or materials such as projector or smart board are suggested to be used (f=1).

The data gathered from the third year English Language and Literature Department students indicate that all the students highlight the importance of grammar revision during translation courses. Among these is given relatively the most striking evaluation representing the rest of the respondents below.

The students unanimously point to the transformational power of grammar revision during translation in that the technique both transforms the boring aspect of translation process into an entertaining role play via simplifying the complexity of long paragraphs into intelligible chunks and providing encouragement and self-esteem by letting students deconstruct the texts on the board on a discussion platform under lecturer guidance:

“On the subject that some texts appear to be too complex, this technique with lecturer guidance facilitated the analysis of the text reminding me of simple grammar units and teaching me how to use my emotional quantity for carrying the sense of foreign words over to my native language.” (Senem)

Clearly, the students, who are used to customary teaching techniques, are both open to and eager for such practical techniques providing opportunity for self realization and empowering vision as regards text analysis while enabling them to achieve permanent learning through entertainment:

“When compared to classical translation processes this technique turns out to be much more practical. It furthers translation process with basic information that provides vision as to where to start and where to pay attention during translation. With this technique even longer texts are probable to translate from now on. Therefore, it is more enjoyable and adds to curiosity.” (Rumeysa)

One important issue that the data gathered from the students highlights is the sample limitation. Although the students give access to the use of this technique in translation courses, the majority of them have complaint about the few quantity of sample texts brought to the classroom:

“In this way translation courses are more amusing and therefore, it facilitates our understanding and interpretation ability about the text. Nevertheless, in classical

translation courses we could receive more samples when compared to this new one.”
(Ceyda)

Inasmuch as it is their first experience in realizing text analysis through deconstructing texts on the board on a discussion platform, it is not surprising they feel in need of previous preparation for subjects to be translated:

“It would make this technique easier to implement if the materials that are expected to be used is given before the course.” (Ayşegül)

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The data attained from the respondents signify that without any doubt students point to the importance of the application of grammar revision process during translation courses. However, while the technique is welcome by all the respondents to be used in translation courses, it is uttered to have minor negative sides such as time and sample limitation. Although the students have right on their sides with the time and sample limiting aspect of the technique, in fact, it is the criticized aspect of the technique that shows how to analyze a text intended to be translated and the connections between two languages. At this point, in order to attain a sound ground for the present and other various aspects of the technique, future applications should consider the suggestions proposed by the students as is the case in the current study.

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