



THE PROBLEM OF OVERUSING TRANSLATION-BASED ACTIVITIES IN ENRICHING LEARNERS' PASSIVE AND ACTIVE VOCABULARY

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Abstract:

Though initially beneficial, the overuse of translation-based exercises in vocabulary education presents serious problems for language learners. Although translation makes learning new words faster, it frequently removes terminology from its native context and favours passive recognition over active application. Additionally, by reinforcing native language thinking, this dependence hinders intuitive language processing and slows the acquisition of fluency. Moreover, the cultural and pragmatic subtleties that are necessary for successful communication are overlooked in translation. Teachers must use a well-rounded strategy that includes contextual and active learning techniques including output-driven activities, lexical chunking, and immersive tasks in order to solve these problems. These techniques not only help students expand their vocabulary but also provide them the ability to speak smoothly and creatively in everyday contexts.

Keywords: English proficiency, receptive vocabulary, productive vocabulary, translation -based activity.

One aspect of the language that is crucial to developing English proficiency is vocabulary. Learners will find it challenging to understand and comprehend words once they listen, speak, read, and write in English if they lack a strong and adequate vocabulary. One of the most important skills that students must acquire is vocabulary knowledge. Siyanova-Chanturia & Webb (2016:227) noted that "teaching vocabulary is challenging because incidental vocabulary learning is limited due to a lack of second language (L2) input." This makes teaching vocabulary in an EFL context difficult. Learners who possess a strong and adequate vocabulary will find it simple to convey and understand information in English. They can so read magazines, newspapers, journals, and articles written in English with ease. They are



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able to understand what they hear and speak English fluently. They are automatically able to convey their ideas clearly in written assignments. Many students, particularly those in high school, find it difficult to retain lengthy lists of terms and their definitions, particularly those who are not majoring in English and frequently lack enthusiasm to learn. In addition to creating a severe lack of input for mastering the target language, this also leaves students feeling confused, bored, and discouraged in both their language learning and real-world communication (Pham Ngoc Truong Linh, 2017).

Teachers have long argued over the over use of translation-based language learning exercises. Since translation adheres to the typical GTM patterns, which have been criticised for turning learning into a memorisation and imitation exercise, it is to blame in this situation (Huang & Wang, 2011). Unquestionably, translation has benefits, such as making new terms quickly and easily understandable, but if it is used excessively, it can prevent students from interacting completely with the target language. In this paper, I contend that excessive use of translation-based techniques stunts the growth of both active and passive vocabulary, which in turn hinders language learning.

Fundamentally, translation is a useful method for introducing new words. It enables students to connect their native language with the target language right away. For example, learning the direct counterparts of new words gives beginners a sense of accomplishment and is sometimes comforting. Additionally, abstract or culturally particular phrases that are otherwise hard to understand through contextual explanation alone might be clarified by translation. This is why translation-based exercises can serve as a springboard, connecting learners' prior language skills with new terminology.

Nonetheless, this dependence on translation poses difficulties that are frequently overlooked. Nation (2001, pp. 24–25) also highlights the need for both receptive and productive knowledge in order to understand the three components of a word. According to some definitions, receptive vocabulary use is the ability to perceive a word's form while reading or listening and then retrieve its meaning; productive vocabulary use is the desire to convey a meaning through writing or speaking and the ability to retrieve and produce the appropriate word form to fit the context. For



starters, it frequently favours passive vocabulary acquisition over active vocabulary development. When they come across words in reading or listening environments, learners may be able to identify and comprehend them, but they find it difficult to utilise those words correctly and naturally when speaking or writing. According to Dagilienė (2012: 126), "Translation may offer guided reading practice, followed by careful text analysis that enhances students' reading comprehension and fosters vocabulary growth." This disparity results from the fact that translation frequently separates words from their original context, presenting them as separate entities rather than as constituents of a dynamic language system.

The fact that translation perpetuates the native language way of thinking is another significant problem. Learning to process and generate words fluently in real-time communication may be slowed down as a result. A student may struggle to follow conversations if, for example, they mentally translate every sentence from their first language to the target language. Instead of internalising the target language's rhythm and structure, they get caught up in a cycle of literal equivalencies, which can result in grammatical errors or odd wording. In addition, translation frequently misses the subtleties and cultural meanings that are present in the original language. Words have cultural significance, emotional weight, and context-dependent meanings; they are more than just instruments for communication.

By depending too much on translation, students run the risk of gaining a cursory knowledge of language that may be correct according to a dictionary but is shallow and unadaptable in everyday situations. For example, translating colloquialisms or idioms frequently leads to misunderstandings or confusion because the literal meaning seldom matches the intended purpose. It is crucial to strike a balance between translation-based exercises and strategies that fully immerse students in the target language in order to address these problems. Contextual vocabulary learning is one method where students come across new terms in relevant literature or discussions. This approach mimics how language is naturally learnt, enabling students to deduce meanings from context and see how words behave in various contexts. For instance, viewing a film or reading a short novel in the target language gives students a rich tapestry of vocabulary in use, which promotes greater retention and comprehension. Activities that promote active vocabulary use should also be



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given top priority by instructors. Through authentic language communication on the Internet, students experience real-world scenarios. Students learn to react appropriately and spontaneously to a variety of meaningful, realistic, engaging, and attainable activities as they work through them. This encourages the development of unique statements rather than the manipulation of language formulas from templates (Gulshan, K 2023). Students must use their knowledge in a constructive manner when completing writing assignments like essays or dialogues, which convert passive vocabulary into active language skills. Speaking activities that encourage fluency and spontaneity, such as role-plays or group debates, also help students overcome the constraints of translation. Using chunks rather than single words while teaching vocabulary is another successful tactic. For learners, phrase and collocation translations, like "make a decision" or "take responsibility," are more helpful than single words. Focussing on these lexical chunks helps students learn how words interact and integrate more naturally, which is essential for fluency.

In conclusion, while translation-based exercises are useful for language learning, using them excessively can impede the growth of a diverse and useful vocabulary. A more balanced approach that incorporates immersive, context-driven, and active learning methodologies with translation is necessary if educators are to genuinely improve students' language proficiency. By doing this, we may assist students in their understanding of new vocabulary as well as their confident and imaginative use in everyday conversation.

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