Privileged Reading Strategy: Overcoming Comprehension Impediments

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Abstract

Reading is presented in this article as a privileged skill that takes place in both mono-coded, as well as dual-coded learning settings. In mono-coded reading, students are always asked to refer to monolingual dictionaries to help deciphering the semantic reference of words and expressions before attempting to look into the reading passage in order to find answers for the comprehension questions. Reading for comprehension is only a very initial step that is supposed to be enhanced by making the ordinary reading comprehension tasks similar to translators’ view of a ST; i.e. reading not only for the sake of comprehending the passage, but, to thoroughly understanding it, taking strategic decisions regarding it, and taking further decisions of details regarding problems of grammar, syntax and semantic denotations. Reading like translators, is the exact privileged reading skill that the present study attempts to propose to mitigate traditional difficulties associated with reading comprehension assignments. This paper’s aim is to consider aspects of reading being a passive skill for obtaining information of developing a mode, versus reading for translation purposes, namely privileged reading.

Keywords: Reading, Equivalence, Semantic associations, mono-coded reading.

Abbreviations: ST, TT, L1, L2


Introduction

Translators are privileged readers, in that they are practicing reading not for the sake of entertainment, neither for obtaining any sort of information; rather, they read, and try to thoroughly understand the whole aspects of a given text, in order that a TT is to be reproduced as an integrated equivalent for the SL text. Reading for translation purposes heightens the value of reading, from being a rather passive type of skills, into a privileged one that combines between mental faculties, as well as the analytical ones. Recognizing word relations in mono-coded reading settings might not be as stimulating as recalling L1 to immediately contribute in creating semantic ties between L2 words, terms and expressions with their L1 counterparts. And since culture is
deeply immersed in a language, it is better trying to decipher that culture along with that language by comparing and contrasting between such elements of L1 & L2.

Background

Reading Skill

Goodman (1996) cf(Banditvilai, C., 2020: 47) defines reading as, “an active process in which readers use effective strategies to extract meaning from a text.” Brookbank et. al (1999) cf(Banditvilai, 2020: 47), define reading as, “…a highly strategic process during which readers are constantly constructing meaning using a variety of strategies”.

With reference to the psycholinguistic processes associated with reading, Perfetti et. al (2001: 127) define reading as, “the conversion of written forms into linguistic messages”, where they assert that, “the study of reading is, in part, the study of language processes including comprehension”.

The three definitions above assert “meaning” that is the core in understanding, since the thing that readers are looking for through understanding is the meaning.

Meaning in Translation

Malmkjær (1998:8), cf(Vermes, Albert, 2010: 88), argues that since translation is impossible without reading, writing, speaking and listening, it is “in fact dependent on and inclusive of them…” Reading is an inseparable part of the translation process; yet, it’s a privileged type of reading that is sought in translation. Translation is able to provide more detailed explanation for the meaning of “meaning” that readers are overwhelmed to find out from their reading. Translation gives different perspectives of meaning of a given text. Meaning of a ST has various values that varies according to text typology. The meaning in translation is represented by the value of the text. Whatever the value of the text is, it transcends the literal sense of that text. The value of a theme song, is most probably the music, whereas the value of a legal text, such as that of the traffic department that deems it an offense to “use a vehicle without pneumatic tires on roads”, where the aim or purpose of this text makes it an offense to use anything that is liable to damage road surface, be it a vehicle or, say, a chicken coop! The dictionary definition of the word “vehicle” there stands still in its locus in the dictionary.

Reading Learning

Baier, Rebecca J (2005: 13) asserts that there are many different reading programs available to teach children to read, further clarifying that there is not “one” best program to use because individuals integrate information differently using each method. In the same vein, Baier, Rebecca J (2005:8) observes that, children learn to read in different ways and differ in the type of instruction they need to become proficient readers.

In the same vein, Pearson, P. David (1976:309), comments on the past language based models of the reading process (referring to those 1967; 1971; 1970 models), that they “have often been criticized because, it is argued, they provide little help for the teacher in the day-to-day process of making instructional decisions”. Pearson asserts semantic-
associational information that “includes our knowledge of what words refer to in the real world and how words are hierarchically related to one another”.

This brief introduction clearly states that there is no proper strategy assigned to reading. Every reader approaches reading differently. Proposing privileged reading (reading for translation purposes) as an active strategy to facilitate comprehension in context, is one of the main aims of this study.

**Reading Strategies**

Developing a reading strategy is indispensable in the efforts to understand a reading passage or any written text. By stating the reading goals, the value of the text, whether it is the literal sense or something that goes beyond the boundaries of language, the task will be better defined and easier to accomplish.

Reading strategies are key elements in developing students’ reading comprehension. According to Banditvilai, C. (2020: 46), Reading strategies “are believed to influence readers in adjusting their reading behaviours to work on text difficulty, task demands and other contextual variables”.

Without developing an appropriate strategy to trigger the value/s associated with the codes of a given reading text, the value of that text will remain far from being reached by that particular reader. According to Ovidi C. (1997: 60) the reader has always freedom of interpretation, that is why it is said that there exist as many interpretations of a text as readers, as many translations as translators, and what a culture considers a good translation may not be accepted by another culture.

**Reading as an Active Skill: Privileged Reading in Translation**

SL text reading is an initial activity to produce the equivalent TL text. No TT can ever be reproduced without practicing reading in a more privileged mode. Reading for ordinary personal tasks might not request a great deal of efforts since reading will be an end in itself. In translation, reading is practiced as a process through which a higher goal is stated, namely the TT reproduction.

Cordero, Anne D. (1984: 350) proposes that, “as an educational activity, translation is considered a learning device or a convenient means of verifying comprehension and accuracy.” In the same respect, Cordero highlights the reading activity in the work of a professional translator, asserting that, a professional translator, “…no longer translates to understand, but to make others understand”. This, indeed, what makes reading as a privileged skill when it is combined with translation, namely, in dual-coded linguistic settings.

Cordero, Anne D. (1984: 352-353) clearly states that,

“Comprehension and transposition are two necessary and successive [successive] stages in the translation process. One must insist here on the word "successive," and each stage bears one dominant desired characteristic: a) precision for comprehension, b) quality for transposition. In order to arrive at these desired characteristics, the entire text needs to be read first.”

In the same respect, Vermes (2010: 84) states that “translation for foreign language learning” is, “reproducing the message of the ST while paying attention to different
linguistic structures”, referring to a sort of task in which an SL text is to be decoded by means of translation. Namely, a purpose is to be stated for the reading process.

As Vermes (2010: 91) asserts, “translation is not only structure manipulation; it is primarily a form of communication. And as such, it necessarily involves interaction and cooperation between people, which makes it a potentially very useful device in foreign language teaching”.

In this way, translation is emphasized to have this ability to present itself as an active strategy to facilitate the understanding of various text types through privileged reading. Vienne (1998), cf(Vermes, Albert (2010: 90), is in favour of using the mother tongue in the language classroom, provided it is focused on problems which are related to the foreign language and the culture, or on the relationship between the mother tongue and the foreign language, or the relationship between the two cultures in question. It is additionally pointed out that, “such activities will raise awareness not only of the two languages but also of the two cultures”.

**Mono-Coded vs Dual-Coded View of the Reading Skill**

Mono-Coded (M-C) reading refers to the reading task, in which FL learners are not allowed to utilize L1 in enhancing the comprehension of L2 texts; i.e. left solely with the attempt to decode L2 text based on mono-coded sources. That approach may be suitable for FL learners in tertiary level, but, it’s questionable in terms of being applied to intermediate and secondary school students. Mono-coded reading tasks are susceptible to impede rapid L2 texts’ comprehension.

On the other hand, dual-coded comprehension of texts allows the utilization of the stored images and signs to facilitate text processing by means of translation techniques, namely making use of the other language’s equivalent in strengthening the thematic associations.

Reading with cognition entails calling for more aware of the components of a text. This solely happens in translation. Dagilienė (2012: 125) emphasizes the fact that “translation heightens language awareness”, claiming that, “while translating students are focused on identifying differences in structure and vocabulary, they have to evolve strategies to deal with them and to negotiate the potential of both languages.”

“Translation is a complex cognitive activity aimed at decoding the ST, transferring both linguistic and cultural elements and meanings into the TL and encoding the text into the new language and context”, Leonardi (2011:21) asserts, adding that this mental process can be carried out either consciously or unconsciously by the learner and, as such, it cannot be avoided”. In the same respect, Cordero (1984: 350) states that, during the last three decades, translation has been a controversial element in the teaching of foreign languages”, further asserting that it is still associated with the learning and testing process of the grammar-translation approach.

**Cultural Equivalence in Dual-Coded Reading Strategy**

Shiyab & Abdullateef (2001: 1) identify the non-linguistic aspects of the text as including “thought, situation, (cultural) knowledge, intention, and use”. They assert that, “Any successful translation has to be based on the analysis of all these aspects of meaning within texts”, adding that translation, therefore, “should yield useful
information as it brings up the similarities and differences between one language and another”. In this way, translation is put in the midst of the reading process, or vice versa.

Reading is an indispensable step in the translation process. Without thoroughly reading a written text, no single TT can be reproduced based on that ST. Text aspects, text value and text continuum need to be put into consideration in any attempt to understand that particular text in relation to its context.

Translation, therefore, asserts the socio-cultural dimension of texts where texts’ value is determined by the purposes of those texts. It undervalues the sole psychological perspective of reading since it views texts as visible images that await being transferred into comprehensible forms, setting no particular strategy for that transference process.

**Conclusion**

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that mono-coded reading comprehension allows limited or no access to dual-coded sources, such as bilingual dictionaries and other translation-based reading comprehension techniques. On the other hand, dual-coded approach of reading comprehension follows a set of techniques that makes of translation a basis for guided comprehension of reading texts. Allowing the access to dual-coded translation sources, facilitates the reading text’s comprehension due to the fact that privileged reading of texts enables the FL learners to set a goal for their reading task that goes beyond the lines, to decipher the components that make the coherent whole of the reading text/s. Associating L2 reading comprehension goals with L1 linguistic and cultural aspects, establishes mental and sentimental bonds that makes reading an interesting challenge.

**Recommendations**

Translation for fun can be an interesting reading strategy at the school level. Curriculum designers need to consider privileged reading as a major strategy that improves comprehension of L2 texts. Future research may elaborate on Privileged Reading as a basic reading comprehension strategy.

**References**


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