



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**THE USE OF TRANSLATION TO FACILITATE THE LEARNING
OF LOW FREQUENCY AND ABSTRACT ENGLISH VOCABULARY**

ERLINA MELATI MAHPAR

FPP 2007 19



**THE USE OF TRANSLATION TO FACILITATE THE LEARNING
OF LOW FREQUENCY AND ABSTRACT ENGLISH VOCABULARY**

By

ERLINA MELATI MAHPAR

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

May 2007



DEDICATION

This thesis is a gift for Abah and Mak,
my first and best teachers.

Only Allah S.W.T

can

repay

all your

love and sacrifice.

**THE USE OF TRANSLATION TO FACILITATE THE
LEARNING OF LOW FREQUENCY AND ABSTRACT
ENGLISH VOCABULARY**

By

ERLINA MELATI MAHPAR

May 2007

Chairman: Arshad Abdul Samad, PhD

Faculty: Faculty of Educational Studies

The aim of this study is to analyse the facilitative effect of integrating selective translation in the teaching and learning of low frequency and abstract English vocabulary on below advanced proficiency students. Consequently, the objectives are to find out whether using translation and using only English are facilitative in learning English as a second language, and which of the two methods is more facilitative. Despite having been questioned and dismissed largely based on beliefs and opinions after the Grammar Translation Method era, the method has witnessed its revival in this era of Communicative Approach (Alias and Norasmadi, 2003).

In general, language teachers find translation to be an extremely valuable teaching device which is a great loss should it not be exploited, especially when tortuous explanations of lexical items in



the target language fail to secure students' comprehension (Fatimah, 2001). Thus, resorting to translation is inevitably an option to ensure or enhance students' learnability, which is the ultimate goal of this profession (Hammond, 1990). Incidentally, the long overestimated notion that the native or first language would hinder the learning of a second language should only be applied when translation is used en masse in class, not selectively and constructively. Giving honour to such extremity would only jeopardise our purpose as teachers and is, sadly, self-defeating (Wilss, 1981).

Although, the taboo of using translation in English classes has been widely put into practice in Malaysia, unfortunately, our students' proficiency is still inadequate (Abdul Hamid and Mohmadisa, 2003). The Ministry of Education could not fail to notice this. Thus, measures are taken to rectify the situation such as implementing English in the teaching of Mathematics and Science in January 2003. Several topics in Form one syllabus, prepared under the Bestari Programme, were even abolished to accommodate this implementation (Hasuria, 2003). However, what can we do for the English classes themselves? This is where translation is significant. Translation is a one of the teaching methods that is often applied on second language learners to facilitate learning. However, some resist it largely based on beliefs and opinions that translation would impede



the learning of a second language. Hence, this study was initiated to provide an insight as to whether such beliefs and opinions are well-founded or are misleading. This was done through a quantitative study which is more genuine and valid than mere beliefs and opinions.

The focus of this study is translation of lexical items (content words) rather than structural and grammatical words (function words). This is because the basis of learning a language is learning vocabulary (Wallace, 1982). Furthermore, a message which omits function words usually can remain comprehensible (Stubbs, 2001) while it is impossible to comprehend those which omits content words. The study concentrates on low frequency vocabulary (Thorndike and Lorge, 1959) and abstract vocabulary (Carroll, 1994) as it poses difficulty in learning. Thus, translation is applied on learners to facilitate the learning of these difficult words.

Consequently, the researcher had conducted an experiment on below advanced proficiency students of Sekolah Menengah Bandar Baru Seri Petaling, Kuala Lumpur to gauge the facilitative effect of using translation in class. Two sets of post-tests were taken by the students are compared against one another and analysed by applying T-test, means and *eta squared*. Firstly, the facilitative effect of using



translation in second language classrooms is measured. Then, the researcher evaluated whether using English solely in classrooms facilitates second language learning. Finally, both methods are compared and analysed to ascertain which method is more facilitative.

The results of the study indicate that both methods (translation and English solely) facilitate second language learning. However, using translation is found to be more facilitative than using English only. Not only is it measured to be effective but largely effective in learning English as a second language. In brief, the results of this study reflect the facilitative effect of this once popular method. Thus, the resurgence of interest in the translation method nowadays may prove as a blessing.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**KESAN PENGGUNAAN TERJEMAHAN DALAM
MELANCARKAN PEMBELAJARAN KOSA KATA BAHASA**



INGGERIS YANG MEMPUNYAI KEKERAPAN RENDAH DAN ABSTRAK

Oleh

ERLINA MELATI HJ. MAHPAR

Mei 2007

Pengerusi: Arshad bin Abdul Samad, PhD

Fakulti: Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan

Tujuan kajian ini dijalankan adalah untuk menganalisa keberkesanan menerapkan terjemahan kosa kata bahasa Inggeris secara selektif bagi melancarkan pengajaran dan pembelajaran kosa kata yang mempunyai kekerapan rendah abstrak dan abstrak. Rentetan itu, objektif penyelidikan adalah untuk mengungkai keberkesanan mengaplikasi terjemahan dan mengaplikasi hanya Bahasa Inggeris dalam melancarkan pengajaran dan pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua, dan untuk mengetahui kaedah yang lebih berkesan antara dua kaedah tersebut. Walaupun terjemahan telah dipersoalkan dan diketepikan, kebanyakannya hanya atas dasar kepercayaan dan pendapat selepas Era Terjemahan Tatabahasa (Grammar Translation Method). Kaedah ini telah muncul semula kini pada era Kaedah Komunikatif (Alias dan Norasmadi, 2003).



Secara umum, guru-guru bahasa mendapati terjemahan sebagai satu kaedah pengajaran yang berharga dan, amat merugikan sekiranya tidak dieksploitasi, terutamanya ketika penerangan demi penerangan yang diberikan dalam bahasa Inggeris gagal difahami oleh pelajar (Fatimah, 2001). Oleh itu, kaedah terjemahan merupakan pilihan yang mampu memastikan keberkesanan pembelajaran, iaitu matlamat utama profesyen ini (Hammond, 1990). Kaedah yang telah lama disangkakan cuba menghindar daripada mempelajari bahasa kedua ini sewajarnya hanya ditujukan kepada penggunaan terjemahan secara keseluruhan, dan bukannya terjemahan secara selektif dan konstruktif. Tanggapan yang tidak tepat ini hanya akan menggugat matlamat sebenar kita selaku guru dan menikam diri sendiri (Wilss, 1981).

Walaupun masyarakat mempercayai bahawa kaedah terjemahan di dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris di Malaysia tidak wajar dipraktikkan, namun kefasihan berbahasa Inggeris dalam kalangan pelajar-pelajar kita masih di tahap lemah (Abdul Hamid and Mohmadisa, 2003). Malah Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia turut menyedari hal ini. Justeru, langkah-langkah telah diaturkan untuk membaiki keadaan seperti mewajibkan penggunaan bahasa Inggeris dalam pengajaran Matematik dan Sains pada Januari 2003. Selain itu, beberapa topik dalam sukatan pelajaran tingkatan satu yang disediakan di bawah

Program Bestari telah dihapuskan untuk memberi laluan kepada pelaksanaan program tersebut (Hasuria, 2003). Walau bagaimanapun, apakah pula yang boleh kita lakukan untuk kelas-kelas bahasa Inggeris itu sendiri? Di sinilah terjemahan memainkan peranan.

Terjemahan merupakan salah satu kaedah pengajaran yang boleh diaplikasikan ke atas pelajar bahasa kedua untuk melancarkan pembelajaran. Namun demikian, masih terdapat tentangan terhadapnya semata-mata berlandaskan kepercayaan dan pendapat bahawa terjemahan menghalang pembelajaran bahasa kedua. Sejurus itu, kajian ini diadakan untuk mengetahui sama ada kepercayaan dan pendapat tersebut adalah berasas atau menyesatkan. Ini telah diikhtiarkan melalui kajian berbentuk kuantitatif yang lebih telus dan boleh dipercayai daripada hanya bersandarkan kepercayaan dan pendapat.

Fokus kajian ini adalah terjemahan perkataan (isi perkataan) dan bukannya struktur dan tatabahasa (perkataan fungsi). Ini adalah kerana asas pembelajaran sesuatu bahasa ialah pembelajaran kosa kata (Wallace, 1982). Tambah lagi, walaupun disingkirkan perkataan fungsi dari sesuatu mesej, ia masih mampu difahami (Stubbs, 2001) sementara mustahil untuk memahami mesej yang disingkirkan isi

perkataan. Kajian ini bertumpukan kosa kata yang mempunyai kekerapan rendah (Thorndike and Lorge, 1959) dan kosa kata abstrak (Carroll, 1994) kerana ia menimbulkan kesukaran dalam pembelajaran. Oleh itu, terjemahan digunakan bagi melancarkan pembelajaran yang menyukarkan.

Penyelidik telah menjalankan kajian terhadap pelajar-pelajar tingkatan dua yang bertahap bawah cemerlang di Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Bandar Baru Seri Petaling, Kuala Lumpur untuk mengetahui keberkesanan penggunaan terjemahan di dalam kelas. Dua set soalan ujian pasca telah diberikan kepada pelajar-pelajar berkenaan dan ujian tersebut dianalisa menggunakan ujian-T, min dan *eta* kuasa dua. Pertama, keberkesanan terjemahan untuk melancarkan pembelajaran dalam kelas bahasa kedua dikaji. Kemudian, penyelidik mengkaji sekira menggunakan Bahasa Inggeris sahaja mampu melancarkan pembelajaran dalam kelas Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua. Akhir sekali, kedua-dua kaedah tersebut dibanding dan dianalisa untuk menentukan kaedah mana yang lebih berkesan untuk melancarkan pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua kaedah (terjemahan dan Bahasa Inggeris sahaja) melancarkan pembelajaran bahasa kedua.



Walaupun bagaimanapun kaedah terjemahan didapati lebih melancarkan pembelajaran daripada kaedah Bahasa Inggeris sahaja. Ia bukan sahaja berkesan, malah sangat berkesan dalam melancarkan pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua. Secara umum, keputusan kajian jelas menunjukkan keberkesanan pelaksanaan kaedah yang pernah terkenal satu ketika dahulu. Oleh demikian, kemunculan semula minat terhadap kaedah terjemahan kini berkemungkinan besar mendatangkan banyak kebaikan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



In the Name of Allah

The Most Gracious and The Most Merciful

May peace be upon the holy prophet Muhammad S.A.W., and his family

This thesis would not be completed without the contribution and cooperation from very special people. My heartfelt gratitude goes to all of them.

First of all, I would like to thank my parents for the inspiration and encouragement to further my studies in the field of education.

Secondly, words could not express my appreciation towards the members of my Supervisory Committee, especially towards the main supervisor, Dr. Arshad Abdul Samad for his ceaseless dedication in guiding me constructively throughout the years spent on this thesis. I am also blessed to have Associate Professor Dr. Jegak Uli as my co-supervisor. His endless support and understanding owed to the process of making this thesis less stressful and possible. I would also like to thank my co-supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Jayakaran Mukundan, for his feedback and support.

Next, I would like to extend my gratitude to the administrators, teachers and students of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Bandar Baru Seri Petaling whose cooperation had made this study possible.



Also, thank you my dearest husband for allowing me to do my thesis even on our honeymoon and throughout the years.

Last but not least, I am blessed to have my son as an inspiration since the day he sat in front of the computer with me inside my stomach and after birth, on my lap ... sometimes dejected when I could not come and spend time with him when he pulled my hand away from the keyboard. Although I could not bear to see him sad, this was also done for him. May this piece of writing be a memento of my love for him when he is old enough to understand, God-willing.

I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 22 MAY 2007 to conduct the final examination of Erlina Melati Mahpar on her Master Science thesis entitled “ The Facilitative Effect of Using Translation in Learning Low Frequency and Abstract Vocabulary ” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:



Datin Dr. Sharifah Md. Nor, PhD

Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Malachi Edwin N. Vethamani, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Dr. Ghazali Mustapha, PhD

Lecturer
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Abdul Rashid Mohamed, PhD

Associate Professor
Centre of Educational Studies
Universiti Sains Malaysia
(External Examiner)

HASANAH BTE. MOHD. GHAZALI

Professor/Deputy Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Arshad Abdul Samad, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)



Jegak Uli, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Jayakaran Mukundan, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

AINI IDERIS, PhD

Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 13 DECEMBER 2007

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.



ERLINA MELATI MAHPAR

Date: 14 SEPTEMBER 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xii
APPROVAL	iv
DECLARATION	xii
LIST OF TABLES	xx
LIST OF FIGURES	xxii



CHAPTER

I	INTRODUCTION	
1.1	Background of the Study	1
1.2	Statement of the Problem	6
1.3	Definition of Terms	13
	1.3.1 Second Language	13
	1.3.2 ESL	14
	1.3.3 Translation	15
	1.3.4 Target Language	16
	1.3.5 Source Language	17
	1.3.6 Infrequent Words or Infrequent Lexical Items	17
	1.3.7 Abstract Words or Abstract Lexical Items	17
	1.3.8 Below Advanced Proficiency Students	19
1.4	Research Objectives	19
1.5	Research Hypothesis	20
1.6	Research Questions	21
1.7	Limitations of the Study	23
1.8	Significance of the Study	24
II	LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1	Introduction	27
2.2	Low Frequency and Abstract Vocabulary Learning	28
2.3	The History and Controversy of Teaching Approaches	39
2.4	Comparison between Translation and Common Approaches Identified with It	43
2.5	Studies on Translation	46
2.6	The Role of Translation in Language Learning	51
2.7	Strategies Used by Second Language Learner	66
2.8	Translation as a Teaching Aid	70
III	METHODOLOGY	
3.1	Introduction	78
3.2	The Respondents	79
3.3	The Instrument	82
3.4	The Procedure	88



3.5	Scoring	95
3.6	Data Analysis of Post-test	95
IV	RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION	
4.1	Introduction	97
4.1.1	The Respondents	98
4.1.2	The Analysis of the Scores	100
4.1.3	Overall Performance of the Subjects in each Test	101
4.1.4	An analysis of the Vocabulary Selection Test	102
4.1.5	An analysis of the Post-test	110
4.2	Comparison and Analysis of Vocabulary Selection Tests and Post-tests	116
4.2.1	Comparison and Analysis of Respondents Distribution According to Score Range and Median	117
4.2.3	Comparison and Analysis of Respondents' Score According to Arithmetic Average or Means	118
4.2.1	Comparison and Analysis of Respondents Distribution According to Percentile Distribution	120
4.2.2	Comparison and Analysis of Respondents Distribution According to a Paired-Samples T-Test and <i>Eta Squared</i>	123
V	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	
5.1	Introduction	132
5.2	Summary of the Findings	134
5.2.1	Is Using English Only Facilitative in Learning Low Frequency and Abstract Vocabulary?	135
5.2.2	Is Using English-Bahasa Malaysia Translation Facilitative in Learning Low Frequency and Abstract Vocabulary	136
5.2.3	Comparison of Methods between Using English Only and Using Translation: Which Method is More Facilitative?	137



5.2.4	The Magnitude of Effectiveness of a Method Proven as More Facilitative than its Counterpart	139
5.2.5	Implementation of Method or Methods of Teaching in Second Language Class	140
5.3	Implications of the Study to Classroom Teaching	142
5.3.1	Facilitates and Improves Students' Understanding of Vocabulary	143
5.3.2	Facilitates and Ensures Accurate Transfer of Knowledge	144
5.3.3	Ensures that a Lesson is Managed Smoothly Without Delay	145
5.3.4	Enlivens Classroom Atmosphere and Enhances Learning	146
5.3.5	Provides a Comprehension Check to Reinforce Learning	147
5.4	Implications in General	147
5.5	Recommendations for Further Studies	148
5.6	Conclusion	150
	REFERENCES	152
	APPENDICES	163
	BIODATA OF THE AUTHOR	171

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
2.1	Frequency of selected lexical items in the present study	32
4.1	The division of respondents	98
4.2	The results and division of respondents for vocabulary selection test prior to being taught in English only	105
4.3	The results and division of respondents for vocabulary selection test prior to being taught using English-	



	Bahasa Malaysia translation	107
4.4	Descriptive statistics for vocabulary selection test	109
4.5	The results and division of students during post-test after being taught using English alone	111
4.6	The results and division of students during post-test after being taught using English-Bahasa Malaysia translation	113
4.7	Descriptive statistics for post-test	114
4.8	The division of raw score and mean of post-tests	118
4.9	The division of mean for teaching using English only and using English-Bahasa Malaysia translation	120
4.10	The percentile ranks of students taking post-test after being taught using English only	121
4.11	The percentile ranks of students taking post-test after being taught using English-Bahasa Malaysia translation	122
4.12	The vocabulary selection and post-test scores of students on the day they were taught using English only	126
4.13	The vocabulary selection and post-test scores of students on the day they were taught using English-Bahasa Malaysia translation	127
4.14	Comparison between two teaching methods, which are, English only method and English-Bahasa Malaysia translation method	128

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
3.1	Procedures executed on two groups of below advanced proficiency L2 learners of English to gauge the facilitative effect of translation method on this level of learners	92





CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In recent years, we have observed many positive signs towards the emphasis on English, among which are the Cabinet's approval of ETeMS (Teaching of English in Mathematics and Science) in 2002, its implementation for standard one, form one and lower six students in January 2003 by the Ministry of Education (Hasuria, 2003); the Orientation Program for Science and Mathematics in English (OPSME) for form one students in January, 2006; the initiation of EST (English for Science and Technology) as a subject for form four and form five science stream students in 2004; and the requirement for undergraduates to sit for Malaysian University English Test (MUET) since 1999. One of the reasons for the last observation is that the English of many Malaysian undergraduates is not proficient irrespective of 10 to 13 years of schooling. According to Abdul Hamid and Mohmadisa (2003), eighty percent of the total candidates between June 2000 and December 2002 are categorized in band 3, in which bands 4, 5 and 6 are



regarded as proficient while bands 1,2 and 3 as not proficient and inadequate in reading comprehension (p.45). This was not commonly observed before Malaysia gained independence.

One critical feature of the education system before independence was that lessons in government schools were conducted in English as the medium of instruction (Penerbit Femina's Authors, 2003). The exposure towards English in school was therefore adequate and conducive for an English learning environment. However, the exposure gradually declines after independence with the implementation of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction in schools (Abdul Hamid and Mohmadisa, 2003).

Due to the prevalent use of English within and beyond the school boundaries before independence, students were geared towards learning English and had fewer difficulties learning English than students nowadays (Isma, 1997). Besides that, English as a subject in school did not receive as much emphasis as Bahasa Malaysia and Mathematics, which were compulsory to pass in examinations. However, hope for recovery remains as the government had noticed the predicament, especially with the developing age of information technology. Among the measures initiated to confront this problem are the implementation of ETeMS, EST and MUET (as previously explained). Thus, the education policy plays a significant role in second language education. This is stressed by Baker

