

A Contrastive Approach to Materials Adaptation for the Teaching of Grammar to ESL Students

Prof. Kausar Husain, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.
Sadaf Zarrin, M.A. (ELT), Senior Research Fellow

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Abstract

English is considered today as a pre-requisite for the success and advancement of learners as well as of nation. The rising importance of English has created an immense demand for the development of quality resource materials. As materials provide the very foundation for the teaching of the target language, their efficacy should be considered an important factor in influencing the success or failure of the learners. Various government and non-government bodies as NCERT, SCERT, and CBSE regularly produce materials for learners of each level and age group on the basis of their needs analysis. Still, for many situations teachers may have to adapt the materials to make them more suitable for particular groups of learners. Our paper suggests ways of adapting materials for Indian ESL students, utilizing the resources of L1 as Hindi/Urdu. The use of L1 can prove useful for the teaching of different aspects of language, as the learners' L1 comprises a part of the background knowledge that they bring to the learning task. In this paper certain ways have been suggested to demonstrate how L1 can be utilised for adapting materials for the teaching of tenses to ESL students.

Key words: contrastive analysis needs analysis, adaptation, and use of L1.

Introduction

Materials occupy a central position especially in the ELT curriculum. They serve as stimulus for effective learning by providing opportunities to learners to learn through interesting input such as stories, poems, articles as well as different types of activities. However, despite the current rich array of ELT materials which are commercially produced by various government and non-government bodies as NCERT, SCERT, and CBSE in the light of the needs analysis of learners, sometimes we find these materials as lacking as far as L1 medium or regional medium learners are concerned. These materials can be adapted for

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such students using a contrastive approach, that is, by using the resources of the mother tongue in designing the materials. The paper suggests a few ways of applying a contrastive approach to materials adaptation which can be beneficial for Indian ESL students whose mother tongue is Hindi. The researchers have picked up adaptation of materials for the teaching of a few tenses to learners to tertiary level learners of ESL for this purpose.

Literature Review

The use of L1 in L2 classrooms has long been a matter of debate among language teachers, researchers and material producers. With the advent of communicative language teaching (CLT), the assumption that languages are best taught and learned monolingually, without the involvement of learners' L1, has prevailed. But, recently this assumption has been increasingly questioned by language experts. A number of researchers justify the presence and optimal and judicious use of L1 in L2 classrooms for attaining higher proficiency. Piasecka (cited in Auerbach, 1993) states:

Teaching bilingually does not mean a return to the GT method, but rather a stand point which accepts that the thinking, feeling and artistic life of a person is very much rooted in their M.T....at the initial stage of learning a new language, students' repertoire is limited to those few utterances already learnt and they must constantly think before speaking. (p 20)

Coelho (2007) claims three reasons in favour of L1 use in L2 classrooms.

- i) A strong foundation in the L1 supports the acquisition of English.
- ii) Continued development of L1 contributes to academic success, and
- iii) Students' language supports their sense of identity and helps maintain effective communication within the family and community.

Husain (1996:15) remarks, "... the comparison between the learners' L1 and L2 can provide greater insight in the subtle distinctions between the two languages and can eliminate rather than cause interference." She also advocates the advantages of L1 model as translation activities in production task.

According to Konig & Gast (2009), direct comparison of learners' first language in the learning process of second language, can profit advanced learners. A number of researchers such as Atkinson (1993), Cook (2005), Grim (2010), James (2005), Macaro (2001, 2005), and Mair (2005) also justify the presence and optimal use of L1 in the teaching of an L2.

Thus, it is found that a large number of researchers and language teaching practitioners acknowledge the importance and beneficial results of using L1 in the teaching of a second or foreign language.

Materials Adaptation for the Teaching of Tenses

This section demonstrates how a contrastive approach to the teaching of grammar, specifically to the teaching of tenses, can be used for the adaptation of materials for Hindi speaking learners. It includes examples of materials making use of bilingual glossary in a given English lesson for helping the students in learning the meaning and use of target verbs in the given tenses. The use of partial translation and complete translation is also given as examples of ways of materials adaptation for Hindi speaking ESL learners.

The following extracts, **Text I** and **Text II** have been given respectively as examples to teach simple present and present perfect and; simple past and past perfect tenses. The verbs are underlined aiming to highlight their tenses. Bilingual glossaries have been given to make students more comfortable with these tenses. Along with explanation of grammatical rules in English, examples are given in English and also in L1. Students are then required to do the exercises which consist of a complete translation of the given English passage into L1, using the provided bilingual glossaries; and secondly, producing a short paragraph in L2 using the target tenses and translating it into L1.

Text I. Simple present and present perfect

A frail young woman is cooking the evening meal for the whole family. Through eyes filled with smoke she smiles. She is the wife of Mukesh's elder brother. Not much older in years, she has begun to command respect as the bahu, the daughter-in-law of the house already in charge of three men – her husband, Mukesh and their father. When the older man enters, she gently withdraws behind the broken wall and brings her veil closer to her face. As

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custom demands, daughters-in-law must veil their faces before male elders. In this case the elder is an impoverished bangle maker. Despite long years of hard labour, first as tailor, then a bangle maker, he has failed to renovate a house, send his two sons to school. All he has managed to do is teach them what he knows: the art of making bangles. (Class XII- textbook Flamingo p.15)

Bilingual Glossary

Smiles: muskurati hai

Has begun: hone laga hai

Enters: pravesch karta hai

Withdraws: hat jati hai

Brings: laati hai

Demands: agrah krta hai

Has failed: asafal ho gaya

Has managed: uplabdh kiya

Knows: jaanta hai

Explanation of rules:

Simple present

e.g. She smiles. (Woh muskurati hai.)

Use: for expressing habitual action.

Present perfect

e.g. He has failed. (Woh asafal ho gaya hai.)

Use: to indicate completed activities in the immediate past.

Exercise:

- Translate the above passage completely into Hindi, using the provided bilingual glossary.
- Write a paragraph of 100 words describing your own daily routine in English. Translate it into Hindi.

Text II. Simple past and past perfect

But this eating by formula was not the hardest trial in that first day. Late in the morning, my friend Judewin gave me a terrible warning. Judewin knew few words of English; and she had overheard the paleface woman talk about cutting our long, heavy hair. Our mother had taught us that only unskilled warriors who were captured had their own hair shingled by the enemy. Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards. We

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discussed our fate some moments, and when Judewin said, “We have to submit, because they are strong.” I repelled. (Class XII- supplementary reader Vistas ,p.95)

Bilingual Glossary:

Gave: diya

Discussed: charcha ki

Knew: jaana

Said: kaha

Had overheard: sun liya tha

Rebelled: vidroh kiya

Had taught: samjhaya tha

Explanation of rules:

Simple Past

Example: Judewin gave me. (Judewin ne mujhe diya.)

Use: to indicate an action completed in the past.

Past Prefect

Example: Our mother had taught us. (Hamari maa ne hame samjhaya tha.)

Use: to describe an action completed before a certain moment in the past.

Exercise:

- Supply a complete translation of the above passage in Hindi.
- Narrate an interesting incident of your life in English underlining the verbs, and give their translation equivalents in Hindi.

Here, **Text III** and **Text IV**, two unseen passages have been given to facilitate students' learning of tenses through a partial translation exercise and a collocational cloze. Partial translation is a sort of exercise in which learners are expected to translate only the target parts of the text from L1 to L2 or vice versa, whereas in collocational cloze the target elements of the text are replaced by their L1 equivalents and the students are required to provide their L2 forms. Text III is a passage in Hindi using simple past and past perfect, and students are required to translate the verb form into English. Text IV highlights simple future tense focusing L1 and L2 contrast.

Text III. Simple past and past perfect

Gandhi ne apne aap ko kabhi bhi bade rajnitik aur arthik samadham se santust nahi kiya. Unhone Champaran ke gaon me sanskritik aur samajik pichhdapan dekha tha, aur woh is bare me jald hi kuch karna chahte the. Unhone apne do shishyon, Mahadev Desai aur **Language in India** www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:4 April 2016 Prof. Kausar Husain, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. and Sadaf Zarrin, M.A., Ph.D. A Contrastive Approach to Materials Adaptation for the Teaching of Grammar to ESL Students

Narhari Parikh, ko is kam me lagaya. Aur unki patniyon ne bhi is kam me apni khushi se hissa liya. Gandiji ke chote bête, Devdas aur shrimati Gandhi bhi ne bhi sahayta ki. Chhey (6) gaon me prathmic vidyalaya khole gaye.

Exercise:

- Translate all the underlined verb forms in the above Hindi passage into English.
- Give a complete translation of the above passage in English.

Text IV. Simple present and simple future

Now suppose you ____1____ a scientist that you ____2____ in certain superstition – let us say, that the howling of a dog is a sign of death. The scientist ____3____ evidence before he can accept your belief. He ____4____ figures to prove it. It ____5____ useless to quote two or three cases; he will need hundreds. He ____6____ to know (a) if it ever ____7____ that the howling of dogs is not followed by a death, (b) if ever a person's death is predicted by the howling of dogs.

Explanation of rules:

Simple present: as explained above.

Simple future

e.g. He will go. (Who jayega .)

Use: to indicate future actions.

Exercise:

- Supply the appropriate English equivalents for all the verbs underlined in the above text. The first one is done as an example.

Hindi verb	English equivalent
Kahte hain	say
Yaquin karte hain	
Mangega	
Zarurat hogi	
Hoga	
Jaanna chahega	
Hota hai	

- Give a complete translation of the above passage in Hindi.

Conclusion

To sum up, the paper presents some ideas for applying a contrastive approach to materials adaptation for ESL/EFL learners. Examples have been given here to show how L1 input can be introduced into regular monolingual English texts for the teaching of tenses for Hindi speaking students. The researchers are of the view that the resources of the mother tongue can be utilized not only for the teaching of tenses but for a number of other elements and skills of language. Such materials are specially recommended for students who come from L1 medium schools in India. Such adapted materials can be used in remedial courses, or they can be prepared in an ad-hoc manner by the teachers according to the needs of the learners, or this contrastive approach can be used for the production of regular materials by such bodies as NCERT, SCERT and, CBSE.

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Prof. Kausar Husain, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Department of English, Faculty of Arts

Aligarh Muslim University

Aligarh 202002

Uttar Pradesh

India

husain_kausar10@yahoo.com

Sadaf Zarrin, M.A. (ELT), Senior Research Fellow

Corresponding author

Department of English, Faculty of Arts

Aligarh 202002

Uttar Pradesh

India

sadaf.amul1@gmail.com