The Role of Translation in Teaching English for Speakers of Arabic

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Abstract

The present study aims at investigating and studying the role of translation in teaching certain English language skills: reading comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar for speakers of Arabic.

The researcher has designed a test and two questionnaires to measure students’ performance before and after using the translation technique. A pretest was given to the students at the beginning of the first semester of the academic year 2000/2001 to measure students’ previous knowledge of English. Two months later, a post-test was given to measure if there are any significant differences in students’ performance after using that technique. Moreover, two questionnaires were presented to elicit students’ responses and attitudes on certain socio-environmental and linguistic variables that could influence students’ performance in English. A jury of specialists has judged the validity of the test and the two questionnaires which are considered as data collection instruments in this study.

The results of the study show that the translation technique is functional in teaching some English language skills. The results also show that the translation technique is most effective in teaching
reading comprehension skill and vocabulary. In particular, abstract concepts are best taught by using the translation technique. The grammar component may benefit from using this technique but to much lesser degree. In addition, the results of the two questionnaires show that certain socio-environmental and linguistic variables could affect students' performance in learning these skills.