

IV. Play and Learn

A new trend in education and learning has been concerned with play. In the very early years of man's life, play is seen of crucial importance. For Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, play makes an essential part of both language development and of a child's understanding of the external world. In one way or another, this 'theory' of learning resembles the old Islamic saying "play with your child for seven years, educate him for seven years and be a brother to him for seven years" which emphasizes a special education strategy for each stage in children development.

As such, play in the early formative years of the child development, and by analogy the 'baby' translator, should be addressed thoughtfully and allocated good time in the learning programmes. 'Baby' translators should be encouraged to find play opportunities both individually and collectively because of the insufficiency of these opportunities in the learning programmes. "Baby" translators should be encouraged to start asking themselves and others about the meanings and translations of idioms like "I smell a rat", "something's fishy", "white elephant", "blue moon" and "black sheep". These idiomatic expressions have the benefit of stimulating and motivating beginning translators to learn new items and to think far beyond the common and known.

A second area which can be used as a playing tool for learning translators is the area of idiomatic verbs with

different contexts such as the verb 'run' in the following contexts where translators can ask other translators to guess the meaning and translation of the sentences:

1. Sam can run faster than Tom.
2. Mona runs a successful TV show.
3. The meeting has run long.
4. The river ran dry last year.
5. The market had a good run today.

A third aspect of language which can be used as a learning tool is the aspect of lexical and structural ambiguity. Lexical ambiguity is the case of the word having more than one meaning and can only be resolved by providing context. An example is "I went to the bank", where the word bank could mean the bank of a river, or the economic institution where money are deposited and withdrawn. Structural ambiguity, however, is more intricate and complex. It is the case of a surface structure having more than one deep structure. Good examples are many:

1. The chicken is ready to eat.
2. The police were ordered to stop drinking after midnight.
3. Mary is easy / eager to please.
4. I am glad I'm a man, and so is Lola.
5. John saw the man on the mountain with a telescope.

These ambiguous sentences can be crucial to the work of the translator since translators are often encouraged to dive in and reach the meaning, sense and spirit of the original.

Structurally-ambiguous sentences are greatly helpful in urging translators to think of more than one possible choice.

Text by Kadhim Al-Ali

Reading Guidelines:

Read for fun and enjoyment. In the beginning, do not take reading very seriously and avoid stressing your brain with all bits and pieces. Relaxed reading is more beneficial to you at this early stage. Make serious reading your final aim and as you grow into a mature reader.

Q.I Give the exact meaning of the following words first in English and second in Arabic: trend, crucial, resembles, strategy, formative, analogy, insufficiency, stimulating, guess, intricate, dive.

Q.II Derive as many words as you can from the following words: play, psychologist, resembles, strategy, analogy, opportunities, stimulating, motivating, greatly, possible, choice, relaxed, mature.

Q.III Give the opposites of the words below and use them in good English sentences of your own: early, crucial, external,

resembles, formative, insufficiency, deposited, encouraged, possible, seriously, relaxed.

Q.IV Answer the following questions briefly:

1. Do you agree with Vygotsky that play makes an essential part of both language development and of a child's understanding of the external world?

2. Is the Islamic saying referred to in the text correct, suitable and or applicable in our present time?

3. Should we encourage "baby" translators to find learning opportunities on both individual and collective levels? Why?

4. Can we make the correct meaning of idiomatic expressions by literal interpretation?

5. The verb 'run' can have more and more different uses and meanings, can you suggest other contexts in which it can be used?

6. Which do you find more challenging lexical or structural ambiguity? Why?

Q.V Reread the text again and suggest suitable plain Arabic equivalents for all the examples given.

Research Activity:

Read the text and suggest other aspects of language which can be used as a playing tool for the development of our translation competence.

Quote of the Day:

Language is a process of free creation; its laws and principles are fixed, but the manner in which the principles of generation are used is free and infinitely varied.

Noam Chomsky