

The Usefulness of Translation in Foreign Language Teaching: Teachers' Attitudes and Perceptions

Dalila Benelhadj Djelloul

Department of English, Faculty of Letters and Arts
University of Mostaganem, Algeria

Bel Abbas Neddar

Department of English, Faculty of Letters and Arts
University of Mostaganem, Algeria

Abstract

Translation has long been viewed as an ineffective pedagogical tool due to its unjustifiable association to old methods of teaching, particularly the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and its practices. The overuse and the misuse of translation in the heydays of these methods paved the way to the monolingual assumption that English should be taught without the inclusion of translation activities in the classroom. However, in the last few decades, there has been ongoing research re-evaluating the use of translation in the EFL context. Drawing upon several studies conducted in this respect, researchers discussed the main objections raised against the use of translation and set the benefits of this teaching tool in facilitating the students' language learning process. On the basis of the findings of these studies, the present article aims at exploring teachers' attitudes towards the use and usefulness of translation in English classes in the Algerian EFL context. Due to the huge gap between the literature on the importance of translation and its practice on the ground, this article attempts to confirm the validity of this pedagogical tool and suggest some guidelines as to how and when to integrate translation activities within the teaching of English as a foreign language. The data were collected through a questionnaire addressed to secondary school teachers working in different cities in Algeria. Though it has never been practised in a principled and purposeful way, translation, has gained a wide recognition from secondary school teachers who reported that this pedagogical tool played a considerable role in facilitating foreign language learning and improving language skills. The findings confirmed the effectiveness of translation in explaining new vocabulary, developing students' cognitive skills and extending students' background knowledge as well as their linguistic competence.

Key words: EFL, Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), pedagogical translation, teachers' attitudes and perceptions, translation

Cite as: Benelhadj Djelloul, D., & Neddar, B. A. (2017). The Usefulness of Translation in Foreign Language Teaching: Teachers' Attitudes and Perceptions. *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies*, 1(3).

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol1no3.11>

Introduction:

Translation practice has always been present and dates back to the birth of languages where it was the only method used to facilitate the process of communication. Whether as a vocational activity or as part of the field of language teaching and learning, translation has been the subject of heated debate and controversies. The objections raised against the use of translation in foreign language classrooms are associated with the shortcomings of GTM, the dominant methodology in the field of language teaching until the 20th century. Subsequent research in the field of translation and foreign language teaching has been conducted to explore the benefits of this tool in fostering foreign language learning. However, despite researchers' increasing interest in the reconsideration of the usefulness of translation in the foreign language classroom, there is still little literature on how and when to use this pedagogical aid in foreign language regular courses. The present paper aims at discussing the arguments for and against translation use in the EFL context and investigating secondary school teachers' perceptions towards it, and suggesting some useful guidelines that teachers should consider to achieve their expected learning outcomes.

Theorizing about the Use of Translation in EFL Classroom

Most of the researchers' arguments against the use of translation in language teaching are, in fact, associated with the classical method of GTM as previously indicated. This teaching methodology came into existence at the end of the nineteenth century and was mainly used to teach classical languages such as Latin and Greek and was employed later to teach modern languages. It was popular in Europe and China until the late twentieth century (Adamson, 2004, in Hall & Cook, 2013). GTM gave much importance to grammar rules that have been taught through translation into the learners' own language at the expense of communication skills and fluency. Furthermore, the proponents of this method considered translation as a testing tool to assess the comprehension of the grammatical aspects introduced in the classroom. Decontextualized sentences that had to be translated were meant to illustrate grammar rules rather than to improve learners' communicative skills in the foreign language.

The advocates of the audiovisual and communicative methods believed that the use of translation was counter-productive in acquiring a new language as it could be more harmful than beneficial in the classroom. Today, a number of researchers such as Carreres (2006) and Malmkjaer (2010) report negative attitudes towards the integration of translation in ELT because they view it as an unrealistic exercise that should be prohibited from language curricula in both secondary schools and private language schools. Translation, according to them, is not a beneficial tool in foreign language learning because it instilled in the learners' minds that there was a one-to-one relationship between the native and the target language.

Whether convincing or not, these arguments have been seriously espoused for a long time by teachers and practitioners in the field of education. Malmkjaer (1998) asserts that the question whether or not these arguments are valid is conditioned by when and how translation is being practised in the classroom. Besides, some current approaches that favour a monolingual approach in foreign language teaching have considered a number of factors in disfavour of the use of translation such as the multiplicity of mother tongues in some foreign language classes, the native teacher's non-mastery of the student's mother tongue, and the monolingual course books published and marketed all over the world. Moreover, there has been a shift from focusing on

the aim of enhancing the learners' abilities to appreciate literature in its original language as well as to translate written texts to the aim of developing learners' communicative competence in monolingual contexts and speaking in a native-like manner.

Bowen, D & M. (1987) argue that translation was viewed negatively in the 1970's because foreign language teaching focused on exposing the learners only to the foreign language to improve their linguistic as well as their communicative competences. Moreover, some researchers think that translation is a time-consuming activity that lacks the appropriate materials to be practised. In this respect, Duff claims that "translation was traditionally accused of being uncommunicative, boring, pointless, difficult and irrelevant" (Duff, 1989, p. 3).

Because of language interference, translation can produce a compound bilingual (an individual who learns two languages in the same environment, thus acquiring one notion with two verbal expressions) rather than a coordinate bilingual (a learner who acquires two languages in different contexts, such as home and school, in which words of the two languages form part of different independent systems). This can cause or contribute to developing lasting habits. It does not only make learners think that there is a one-to-one correspondence of meaning between native and foreign language, but it draws their attention to the formal aspects of language rather than their communicative functions.

According to Stibbard (1994), the use of the native language, which is the translation from the foreign language into one's own language in the classroom, reduces the amount of exposure to English or the use of it. In the same vein, Atkinson (1987) proposes a rate of 95% English to 5% mother tongue for teachers to take into consideration in the foreign language classroom as a judicious and appropriate use of languages.

Translation has been strongly criticised for not making a balance in the development of the four skills because it is concerned with reading and writing only and does not count for listening and speaking skills. According to Cunningham (2000), the lack of positive literature on the use of translation in the language classroom and the negative reputation it receives from the experts in the field of language teaching has undoubtedly deprived teachers of utilizing it or making research on it, though many learners report positive attitudes towards it as they feel self-confident when moderately using their own-language to understand the foreign language course.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Maximilian Delphinus Berlitz had criticized translation as a learning-teaching tool. He rather favoured "the direct association of thought with the foreign speech and sound in addition to the constant exclusive use of the foreign language" (Kerr, 2014, p. 2). Berlitz rejected translation for three major reasons. First, He thought that own-language use in English language teaching is a time-consuming activity that leaves no time for using the target language. Then, studying with translation, he stated, would never enable learners get used to the "spirit of a foreign language and the learner has a tendency to base all he says upon what he would in his mother tongue" (Berlitz, 1916, p. 3-4 in Kerr, 2014, p.4). He also noted that "knowledge of a foreign tongue, acquired by means of translation, is necessarily defective and incomplete; for there is by no means for every word of one language, the exact equivalent in the other" (Berlitz, 1916, p. 4 in Kerr, 2014, p. 3).

Despite all the strong criticism against the use of translation in language teaching, there has been a shift in the views of scholars who believe that translation is a valuable pedagogical resource in EFL classroom after being considered, for a long time, as an inadequate tool that hinders the acquisition of a new language. Until the late 1970's, students were provided with texts that are incomplete to be translated. Students were not also aware of the kind of texts they were exposed to or why they were asked to translate. In this respect, translation was seen as a testing tool for checking learners' understanding as well as for improving their translation competence later. Due to the way the Grammar-Translation Method made use of translation, this method was proved, to a certain degree, inadequate. The emergence, in the mid-nineteenth century, of the "new brave world" where technology and commerce were the two main governing forces strengthened the need for a language to communicate and mediate between the different cultures and social groups and paved the way for a new view of translation to emerge.

Starting from the late 1970's, translation has widely begun to be viewed as a complex process that involves a variety of cognitive skills and abilities. Consequently, translation has come to regain ground after a long rejection and marginalization by researchers, educationalists and practitioners in the field of foreign language teaching. As a matter of fact, the skills that make up the translation process are linguistically and methodologically related to language teaching. As a consequence, translation has never been independent of the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Along the same lines, Vienne (1998) supports the functionalists' point of view about the effectiveness of parameters such as anticipation, resource exploitation, cooperation, and revision involved in the contextual analysis of texts and their exploitation by learners when he asserts that:

they provide life-like focus for meaningful spoken and written language production and reception, requiring students to use both their languages for particular, easily identifiable purposes, both transactionally (to obtain and provide information) and interactively (to get along with others involved in the activity)" (Vienne, 1998, p. 116, as cited in Malmkjaer et al, 1998) (see Brown & Yule, 1983, Ch1)

In the same vein, he adds that even first language activities could be useful if they involve aspects related to the foreign language or culture. Translation, Vienne believes, cannot be harmful if it is well planned and purposefully applied in EFL classroom. Though many EFL teachers disagree with Vienne thinking that interference between languages deprives students of developing the linguistic competence; it similarly raises their awareness of the different linguistic systems they are exposed to as well as helps them control both, especially if the learning environment is a bilingual classroom.

Gatenby (1967), one of the proponents of the Direct Method, states that our aim must be "to get our pupils (...) to the stage where they can use English without having to think" (p.70, in Kerr, 2014, p. 4). Gatenby means that learners should learn "how to dissociate the two languages". Due to this belief, own language use had been rejected in the EFL classroom for a long time. Separating the two languages seems impossible because of the structure of the human brain. Spivey and Hirsch (2003) in Kerr (2014) have conducted a study on word associations.

Based on scientific evidence, they claim that the human brain can process knowledge of two or more languages in parallel. They attest that the brain is not divided into regions where each region is responsible for the storage of one language only.

Atkinson (1987) points out that translation is one of the most preferred learning strategies for most learners in most places. Additionally, studies in cognitive linguistics and neuroscience prove the effectiveness of learners own language in the foreign language classroom. Widdowson (2003 in Kerr, 2014) is one of the scholars who noted that the rejection of translation was not based on scientific research or pedagogical principles. Interestingly, Vygotsky (1986) believes that learning a new language involves the use of one's own-language as a mediator between the world of objects and the new language. Neuroscience confirms that the initial acquisition of new words in a foreign language depends on the association of these words with corresponding own-language items in the learner's memory (Sousa, 2011, p. 24-7 in Kerr, 2014).

The use of translation from and into one's first language in the EFL classroom leads to what is known as "negative transfer". This process, the cross linguistic influence that plays a considerable role in learning a target language, may occur at the lexical level, sentential, and discourse level. According to Odlin (2003), transfer is "the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired" (p.13). In this case, the teacher should know how to deal with this negative language transfer wisely by comparing the two languages explicitly with his students. This process is very effective for studying grammatical structures as well as for detecting the students' common errors. Thus, a good piece of writing in a foreign language can be achieved if those errors are adequately dealt with in the language classroom.

Research confirms that grammatical aspects differ from one language to another, which makes some of them difficult to easily understand. In this respect, translation is a beneficial tool that helps EFL learners be aware of this diversity. Therefore, they can achieve better results as well as develop an awareness of the similarities and differences between their mother tongue and the foreign language. In fact, the process of contrasting particular features of the foreign language and the students' native language can help them foster their cognitive skills and enable them to better improve the foreign language learning.

Though Halliday (2007) strongly disagrees with the fact that some tasks require translating decontextualized, isolated stretches of language and memorizing word lists in one language along with their word-for-word equivalents in another, he points out that "one can make positive use of the students' mother tongue; and in such cases to neglect it may be to throw away one of the tools best adapted to the task in hand" (Halliday, 2007, p. 161).

Widdowson (2003) highlights the importance of the learners' own language in improving bilingual skills when he states that learners "cannot be immunized against the influence of their own language, (...). There is bound to be contact and (...) language learning is indeed of its nature, in the same degree, a compound bilingual experience" (p. 151). In addition, Edstrom (2006) notes that current debates shift their focus from the simple use of translation in the EFL classroom to a more serious discussion about the fact that the teacher has a kind of moral

obligation to make use of the learners' own language appropriately and judiciously. The teacher does it in order to create an effective learning environment based on a good relationship between the teacher and his students. Widdowson points out that learning is a compound bilingual experience as he believes in the interrelation of both languages in the learners' mind. Similarly, Harris and Sherwood (1978), who note that the two languages are compounded and learners are unable to avoid the first language interference in the foreign language classroom, also consider code-switching while learning as natural translation. Furthermore, if the role of L1 use is to be assessed, it should be noted that it plays a functional role in facilitating access to explanations, thus enabling contrasts between languages, and most importantly, it raises the students' awareness of cultural diversity and linguistic knowledge.

Nation (1997, in Kerr, 2014, p. 122) reports that translation from and into the target language is beneficial for vocabulary acquisition in the sense that bilingual word lists may undoubtedly help learners learn new words and phrases, especially in the early stages of learning vocabulary. Interestingly, translation is the only teaching tool that deals with some aspects of vocabulary such as "false friends". Moreover, there are some grammatical aspects that cannot be easily taught without referring back to translation, i.e., grammatical structures that are influenced by interference between the learners' own language and the foreign language.

Petrocchi (2006) believes in the usefulness of translation in developing language systems such as grammar, syntax and lexis in both the source language and the target language. According to Shiyab and Abdullattef (2001), grammar is the basis of learning any language. A word –for –word back translation enables students to be aware of the relationship between the two languages though they have different structures. Based on three steps, analysis, transfer and reconstructing, translation helps students not only discover and learn new vocabulary but also new styles that enable them to be active participants in the learning process when they are exposed to purposefully designed translation activities. Moreover, several researchers consider translation as a cultural mediation in the sense that learners will be familiarized with the linguistic elements that are connected to their cultures by comparing the native and the target culture. Barhoudarov (1983) introduces another argument in favour of the use of translation. He claims that translation into the learners' native language is after all one of the effective means that develop skills of understanding and perception of both foreign speech and writing.

A study conducted at Poznan University, Poland, confirmed that students who were taught and practiced translation techniques at the English department achieved better results in developing both speaking and writing skills than students who have not been trained in them. According to Newmark (1991), translation is "an exercise in accuracy, economy and elegance in manipulating a variety of L2 registers in a first degree" (p. 62). In fact, translation enables learners to overcome the linguistic barriers in which their own-language confines them. More importantly, it can develop communicative and intercultural communicative competence through engaging learners in interactions between different social and ethnic groups that have different cultures, even skills, and as such, negotiation and expression of meaning and interpretations can be improved.

Other scholars such as Carreres (2006) and Fernandez-Guerra (2014), consider translation as a real-life activity that prepares students for real-life situations and encourages them to take risks in communication and learn through their own mistakes. Vienne (1998, as cited in Malmkjaer et al, 1998) also argues that translation activities will raise awareness not only of the native language and the foreign language, but also of the two cultures. Learning new vocabulary through translation helps the learner use figurative language correctly and develops the skill to interpret and produce good pieces of writing. Duff (1989) is one of the proponents of translation as a useful pedagogical tool that helps teachers and practitioners in the field of foreign language teaching to understand better the influence of one language on another and overcome errors of habits. It should be noted that when a teacher translates a word or an expression from English to the native language during the foreign language class, students will understand quickly and will be active participants, even the low-level students, and contribute positively in achieving the learning objectives expected by the teacher.

Translation may be beneficial for language learners in their professional life as many language specialists and pedagogues may “enter professions in which a basic understanding of the processes involved in professional translation may be involved” (Malmkjaer, 1998, p. 9). Malmkjaer (1998) seriously encourages teachers to vary their teaching methods and activities with the integration of translation. For malmkjaer, “translation might profitably be used as one among several methods of actually teaching language, rather than as a mere preparation for an examination” (p. 9).

Titford (1983) supports Atkinson’s point of view by stating that back translation as well as word-for-word translation help students activate their previous knowledge to find the appropriate substitutes when they translate by themselves. He further notes that translation can be very useful for advanced learners if it is purposefully, adequately and wisely implemented in foreign language classes. Titford views translation as a problem-solving activity, a cognitive activity, and a bridge that enables learners to relate form to function in their own language to form and function in the foreign language. Similarly, Stibbard (1994) explains the crucial importance of translation as a pedagogical aid by pointing to the fact that “translation is a natural, useful and essentially communicative activity” (p.9). He believes that translation is practised by all learners of language whether they are trained at it or not, formally or informally, in speaking or in writing.

Despite the varying attitudes towards translation across history, due particularly to the emergence of several EFL teaching methods that banned the use of translation in the EFL environment, there are still numerous voices that believe in the effectiveness of translation as a didactic tool as long as it is used purposefully and judiciously. Despite the fact that arguments against the use of translation may carry some sensible resonance for a number of scholars, teachers, and language practitioners, no convincing reason could be found to consider translation harmful to foreign language learning if it is interactive, communicative in nature, and properly applied.

Participants

The participants in the study were sixty five secondary school teachers working in different high schools in a number of Algerian provinces. These teachers were asked to fill out a questionnaire which aimed at exploring the secondary schools teachers' perceptions towards the use of translation in the EFL classroom in order to improve their students' writing skills and develop their level of English proficiency through time. These teachers adapted the Competency-based approach, taught the same syllabus and were exposed to approximately the same teachers' training.

Data Collection

The data used in this study were based on responses to the questionnaire addressed to secondary school teachers on their perceptions and attitudes towards the use of translation as a pedagogical aid in the EFL classroom in order to enhance third year foreign language students' writing performance. In addition to the information about the teachers' backgrounds (gender, position, teaching experience and location), teachers were asked to indicate whether translation was beneficial in developing the students' writing by ticking the appropriate box on a provided checklist. It consists of seven closed items ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. All the questionnaire sheets were filled out and returned.

Data Analysis

Teacher's General Profile

As far as secondary school teachers' general profile is concerned, the questionnaire showed that 60% of them were females and 40% were males. About 17 % of the respondents were part-time secondary school teachers and 83 % of them were full-time secondary school practicing teachers whose teaching experience ranged from 3 to 29 years. The author of this paper has not taken into account the teachers' place of work as they have all been working under the CBA approach in different secondary schools across Algeria.

1. Respondents' Perceptions on the Usefulness of Translation in the EFL Classroom

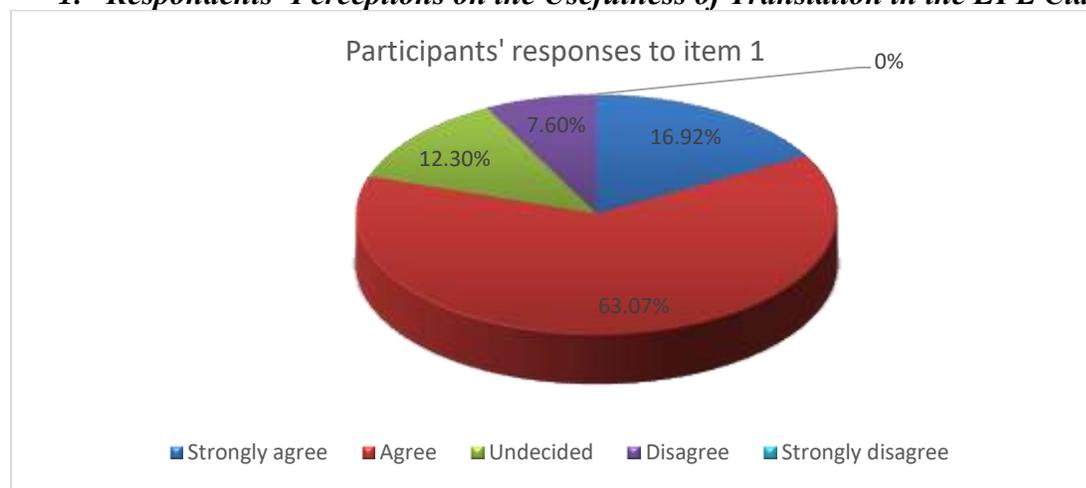


Figure 1. Participants' responses to item 1.

As figure 1 indicates, the results of the teachers' attitudes towards the usefulness of translation as a teaching aid in EFL show that 16.92 % of them strongly agreed that translation was a beneficial teaching tool. The majority of the informants (63.07 %) have agreed that translation is useful in teaching English as a foreign language. 12.30 % have chosen the option "undecided" to

express their lack of opinion on the subject. The last 7.60 % have expressed their disagreement about the usefulness of translation activities in the EFL context.

2. Teachers' Responses to the Role of Translation in Explaining and Teaching the New Vocabulary Related to the Teaching Unit

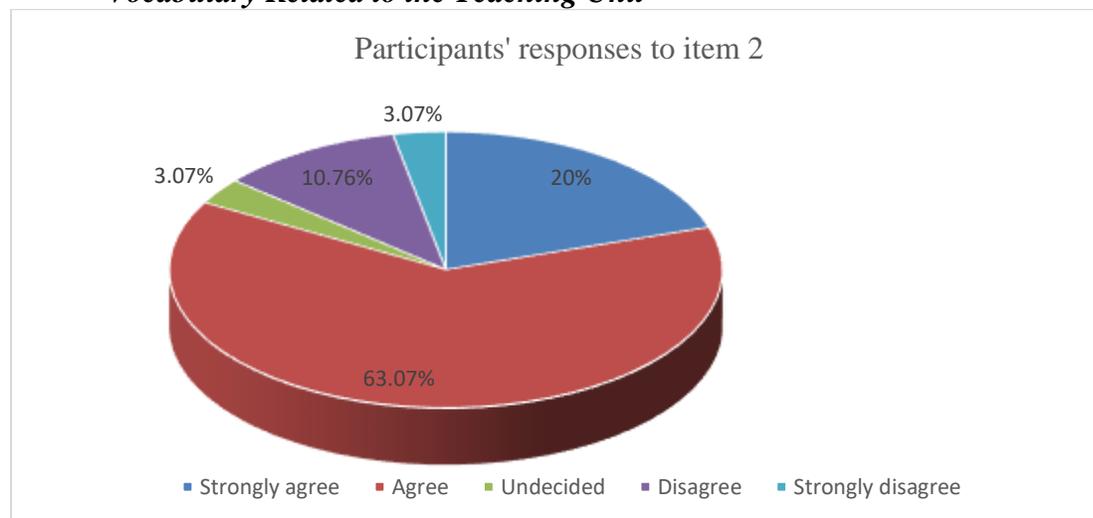


Figure2. Participants' responses to item 2

As to the second item, the vast majority of the questionnaire respondents reported positive attitudes towards using translation in teaching the new vocabulary related to the unit they were teaching, with 20% of them strongly agreeing with this view and 63.07% agreeing. In contrast, some participants did not believe that translation was adequate for teaching or explaining vocabulary in that 10.76% of them disagreed with this idea and 3.07 % strongly disagreed. About 3.07% of respondents did not have an opinion about this particular issue.

3. Teacher's responses to the role of translation in developing students' cognitive skills

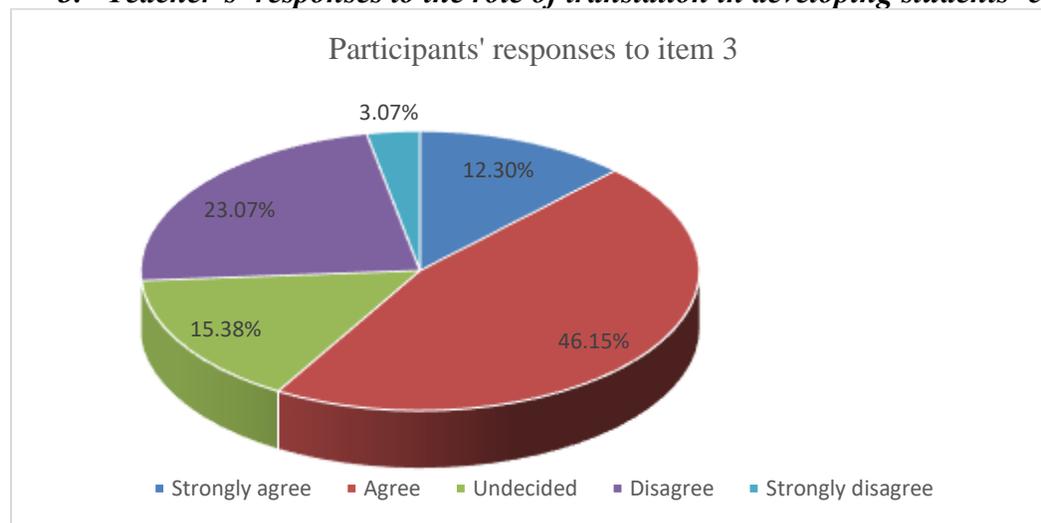


Figure3. Participants' responses to item 3

In this regard, the results show that more than half of them thought that translation was beneficial as far as this kind of skill were concerned (with 12.30 % who strongly agreed and 46.15 % who agreed with this view). 23.07% of the participants subscribed to the view that translation could not help students develop their cognitive skills. In fact, 3.07% of them

expressed strong disagreement with this view. About 15.38% were undecided about this statement.

4. Teachers' Responses to the Role of Translation Activities in Helping Students Plan, Reflect, Review and Edit their Written Work

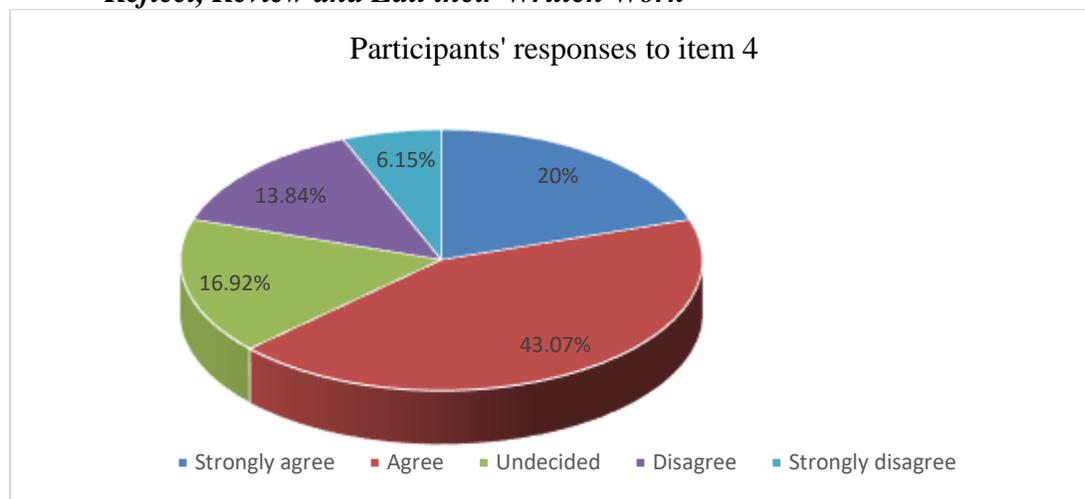


Figure 4. Participants' responses to item 4

According to the teachers' responses about whether or not translation activities give the learners the opportunity to plan, reflect, discuss, review and edit their written works, 43.07% of the informants agreed and 20 % of them strongly endorsed this idea. Furthermore, 13.84 % answered negatively and about 6.15 % strongly disagreed with the view. Some of them (16.92%) did not have an opinion about this statement.

5. Teachers' Responses to the Role of Translation in Extending Students' Background Knowledge and Enriching their Linguistic Competence

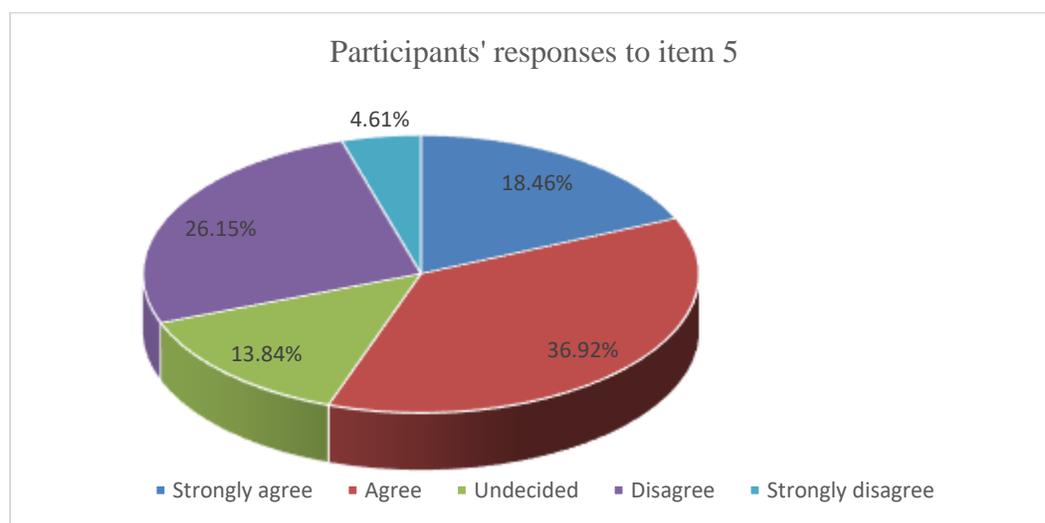


Figure5. Participants' responses to item 5

The results about the role of translation in extending students' background knowledge and enriching their linguistic competence show that 18, 46% of the respondents strongly agreed with this view while 36.92% of them have chosen to agree only. On the other hand, about 26.15 % of

them disagreed and only 4.61% strongly expressed disagreement with this idea. However, 13.84% of the respondents were undecided about the subject.

6. Teachers' Responses to the Usefulness of Translation in Transposing Students' Ideas from L1 into English during the Writing Process

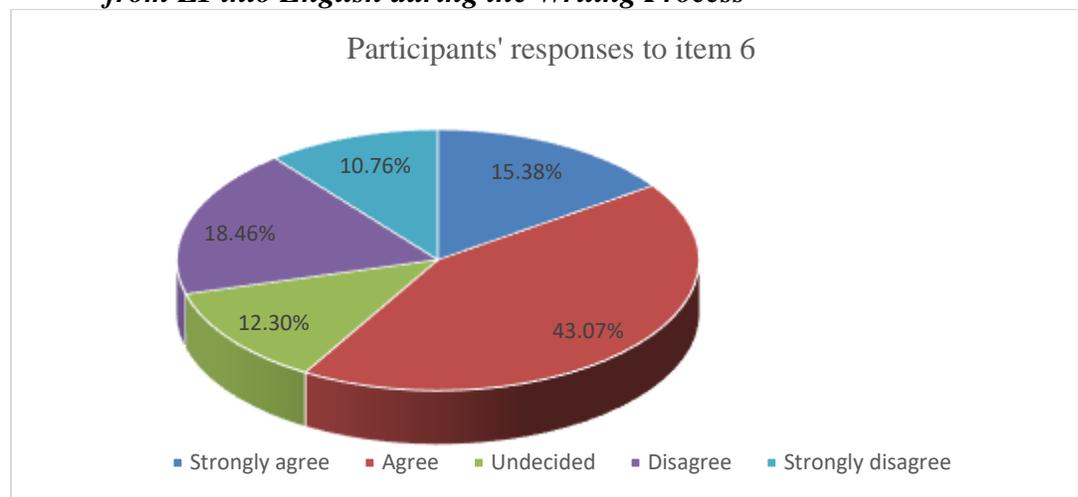


Figure 6. Participants' responses to item 6

The findings show that 15.38 % strongly agreed with the view that purports that students translated their thought using their first language when writing in English, a process that helps them transfer these ideas into the foreign language when producing a piece of writing. 43.07 % agreed with this idea. However, 18.46% of the informants disagreed with this view whereas others (10.76%) expressed their strong disagreement about it. 12.30% of them were undecided as far as the statement is concerned.

7. Teachers' Responses to the Usefulness of Translation in Helping Students Learn Comparatively Resulting in the Avoidance of Negative L1 Transfer Errors

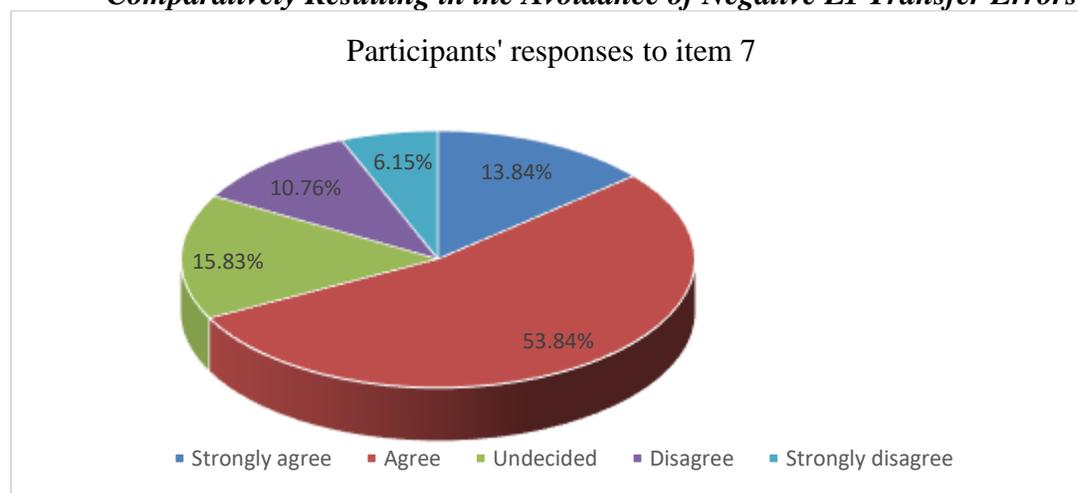


Figure 7. Participants' responses to item 7

The results indicate that 53.84% of the participants reported their agreement with the idea that if translation were used purposefully and judiciously, students would learn comparatively. Thus, common mistakes caused by negative first language transfer could be avoided. 13.84 % of the respondents strongly believed in the usefulness of translation in avoiding interference errors. In addition, 15.83% were undecided as far as the importance of translation in this respect is

concerned, whereas over 16.91% of the participants (9.22 % disagreed and 7.69 % strongly disagreed) reported negative attitudes towards this statement.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings show that the vast majority of secondary school teachers were quite positive about the usefulness of translation as a teaching aid in English classes, which indicates their awareness of the importance of varying new activities to facilitate the learning of English as well as to create a learning environment in which the foreign language can be effectively and appropriately taught.

The majority of participating teachers reported the effectiveness of translation in explaining new vocabulary related to the unit they were teaching, as stated by Carreres (2006, in Fernandez-Guerra, 2014, p. 157), which helped the students produce a rich piece of writing. Writing tasks introduced to third year students were all related to the different sequences of the teaching unit that revolved around one particular theme. Interestingly, the vocabulary taught in the different units covered during the school year would be tested in the Baccalaureate exam (Algeria's national exam that grants students admission to university undergraduate studies) in the form of two suggested writing topics. Consequently, any vocabulary section should be well covered and it would be part of the teachers' responsibility to explain and to ensure that students understand the new vocabulary introduced to them.

Unsurprisingly, there are clear variations in the teachers' attitudes towards the relevance of translation in developing students' cognitive skills such as analyzing, critical thinking, interpreting, understanding, sequencing and problem-solving skills. More than half of the respondents agreed that translation helped students develop their cognitive skills in the sense that it was a mental process that required an in-depth study of the source text. This study, based on interpreting, reflecting and contrasting the source text with the target text, involved high skills of analyzing and critical thinking that enable learners to choose an accurate translation from the wide range of possibilities existing in the target language. The teachers' possible explanation is consistent with the findings of many researchers (Duff, 1989; Stibbard, 1994; Leonardi, 2010; Hall & Cook, 2013; Fernandez-Guerra, 2014). Additionally, more than 60 % of the participants subscribed to the view that translation from and into students' own-language helped them plan, reflect, review and edit their written works using the different previously mentioned cognitive skills (as cited in Fernandez-Guerra, 2014).

More than half of the respondents subscribed to the view that thinking in the first language was a natural process that all students went through when writing regardless of their level of proficiency and whether the teacher allowed this practice or rejected it (Duff, 1989; Hall & Cook, 2013, Kerr, 2014). Considered as the most preferred language learning strategy (Atkinson, 1987), translation helped students transpose ideas based on their previous background knowledge from their own-language into English while writing. In other words, translation enabled students to direct their thinking about English during classroom tasks such as writing (Hall & Cook, 2013). Besides, the translation process can enrich students' schemata as well as their linguistic competence in both their native language and the target language.

While some teachers disagreed with the idea that translation allowed students to learn comparatively and that negative L1 transfer errors could be avoided, most believed that learners would “automatically” compare both languages as stated by Kavaliauskienė and kaminskienė (2007, in Fernandez-Guerra, 2014, p. 157). Thus, students’ language awareness, including the similarities and the differences between the source and the target language, would be raised (Widdowson, 2003) and many negative transfer errors could be avoided. These teachers seemed to support Kerr’s (2014) view on learning comparatively when he asserts that the most effective way to deal with negative transfer errors is to directly compare the source and the target language. The teachers who were against this idea supported a monolingual approach to teaching English as they believed that the use of two languages in the classroom would lead to negative transfer which, in turn, would cause a lot of writing errors.

Suggested Guidelines on How to Integrate Translation in the EFL Classroom

In the light of the findings obtained from the analysis of the questionnaire, some guidelines are suggested on how to integrate translation activities in English classes so as to overcome secondary school students’ weaknesses and, thus, improve their writing performance.

1. Teachers should make a careful selection of texts of different types and registers that are related to the themes under study.
2. The selected material should be interesting, clear and suits the students’ level of English proficiency.
3. The suggested material should cover the different aspects of language which help develop students’ writing performance.
4. The teacher should consider several factors before practising translation activities mainly students’ level of proficiency, the class size and the time devoted to such activities (Leonardi, 2010).
5. Teachers should encourage and plan for pair and team work which enable students engage in discussions by exchanging and comparing ideas with their classmates.
6. Teachers should participate in training programmes and workshops about the reassessment and current debates surrounding translation use in the EFL context.
7. Translation can be a very effective pedagogical tool in the EFL classroom if a course including basic knowledge of translation techniques and models as well as its importance in language teaching forms part of the future teachers’ academic syllabus.

Conclusion

Clearly, as it ensues from the majority of secondary school teachers’ reports, translation played a considerable role in improving foreign language learning and language skills in general, and the writing skill in particular. Their responses to the different statements suggested in the questionnaire indicate, to a large measure, the importance of translation in raising students’ awareness of the different aspects of the foreign language that helps foster the improvement of their language writing skill.

About the Authors

Dalila Benelhadj Djelloul is a PhD candidate and an English high school teacher. She received a B.A. degree in English Language, Literature and Anglo-Saxon Civilization and a Master's in Applied Linguistics from the University of Mostaganem, Algeria. She has been teaching English since 2012.

Dr. Bel Abbes Neddar is an associate professor in Applied Linguistics at the University of Mostaganem (Algeria). He postgraduated from the Institute of Education (University of London). His major interests are in Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis, Language pedagogy, Education and Systemic Functional linguistics, issues on which he published world-wide. Dr. Neddar is the editor-in-chief of ENGLISH LINGUA JOURNAL.

References:

- Atkinson, D., (1987). The Mother Tongue in the Classroom - a neglected resource?. *ELT Journal*, 41, (4), 241-247.
- Barhoudarov, L.S. (1983). The Role of Translation as a Means of Developing Oral and Written Speech Habits in the Senior Years of Instructional a Language Teaching College. In *Translation in Foreign Language Teaching*. Paris: Round Table FIT- UNESCO.
- Bowen, D. & M. (1987).The Interpreter as Consultant for International Communication in Kummer, K.(ed.). Across the Language gap. *Proceedings of the 28th Annual at a Conference. Medford, NJ: Learned Information*
- Brown, G. & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse Analysis*. Cambrige: Cambrige University Press.
- Cunningham, C. (2000). Translation in the Classroom-a useful tool for second language acquisition. Retrieved in November, 2016 from: <http://www.cels.bhm.ac.uk/resources/essays/cindyc2.pdf>
- Duff, A. (1989). *Translation in Language*. Oxford University Press.
- Edstrom, A. (2006). L1 use in the L2 classroom: One teacher's self-evaluation. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 63, 275-292.
- Fernández-Guerra, A. (2014).The Usefulness of Translation in Foreign Language Learning: Students' Attitudes. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, 2, (1), 153-170. Retrieved in January, 2016 from <http://www.eltjournal.org>
- Hall, G., & Cook, G. (2013).Own-language Use in ELT: Exploring Global Practices and Attitudes. British Council Global English
- Halliday, M.A.K. (2007). Language and Education. In Webster, J.J. (ed.).*The Collected Works of M.A. Halliday*. London/ New York: Continuum.
- Harris, B., & Sherwood, B. (1978).Translation as an Innate Skill. In Gerver, D. & Sinaiko, H.W. (eds.),*Language Interpretation and Communication*. (pp. 155-170). New York: Plenum Press.
- Kerr, P. (2014). *Translation and Own- language Activities*. Cambridge University Press.
- Leonardi, V. (2010). *The Role of Pedagogical Translation in Second Language Acquisition: From Theory to Practice*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Mackenzie, R. (1998). The Place of Language Teaching in a Quality Oriented Translators' Training Programme. In Malmkjaer, K. (ed.). *Translation & Language Teaching: Language Teaching & Translation*. Manchester, UK. St Jerome Publishing.
- Malmkjaer, K. et al. (1998). *Translation & Language Teaching: Language Teaching & Translation*.

- Manchester, UK. St. Jerome Publishing
- Malmkjaer, K. (2010). Language learning and translation. In Yves Gambier and Luc Van Doorslaer (eds.) *Handbook of Translation Studies*, 1. (pp. 185-190). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Newmark, P. (1991). *About Translation: Multilingual Matters*. Clevedon, Philadelphia, Adelaide: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Newson, D. (1988). Making the best of a bad job: The teaching and testing of translation. *Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Association for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language*. Edinburgh, Scotland.
- Odlin, T. (2003). Cross-linguistic influence. In Doughty, C., & Long, M. (eds.). *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*. (pp. 436-486). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Petrocchi, V. (2006). Translation as an aid in teaching English as a second language. *Translation Journal*, 10, (4), available at: <http://accurapid.com/Journal/38teaching.htm>.
- Shiyab, S., & Abdullateef, M. (2001). Translation and foreign language teaching. *Journal of King Saud University Language & Translation*. Riyadh: Saudi Arabia, 13, (1), Available at: <http://digital.library.ksu.edu.sa/>
- Stibbard, R. (1994). The Use of Translation in Foreign Language Teaching, Perspectives. *Studies in Translatology*, (1), 9-18.
- Titford, C. (1983). Translation for Advanced Learners. *ELT Journal*, 37, (1), 52-57
- Vygotsky, L. (1986). *Thought and Language* (2nd ed). Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press.