

Lesson From Pedagogical Translation: Translation as a Learning Strategy in English Education Program

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Abstract

This study examined the function of translation as a pedagogical instrument in English language education programs, highlighting its possible advantages and drawbacks as a learning technique. This study used a qualitative approach to gain data through documentation and interviews with EFL learners at the university. The findings indicate that translation can significantly aid language acquisition when employed in conjunction with communicative approaches, particularly by improving vocabulary acquisition, grammatical comprehension, and cultural awareness among learners. Equilibrating translation with alternative interactive language learning methods is crucial to prevent overreliance on the first language (L1), which could impede natural language processing in the target language (L2). It can be concluded that Translation, when combined with communicative methods, greatly supports language learning by boosting vocabulary, grammar, and cultural understanding.

Keywords: *Pedagogical Translation, Learning Strategy, English Education Program*

INTRODUCTION

Benefits of Technology in Pedagogical Translation Increases student engagement through interactive and collaborative tools. Encourages self-directed learning and critical evaluation of language. Enhances accessibility to diverse learning resources (Nurhikmah et al., 2024). There has been a long discussion in language education about the function of translation in language acquisition. Translation was once a popular teaching strategy (Zhang et al., 2021), but communicative approaches that prioritized immersion and genuine language use increasingly pushed it to the side. Nonetheless, new research has rekindled interest in translation as a teaching tool, particularly in the context of teaching foreign languages (Yao, 2017). Translation can be a useful teaching tool in English language programs, promoting linguistic awareness and strengthening students' comprehension abilities (Dols & Calafat, 2020).

In English education, translation transcends its conventional function of mere language conversion to become a powerful learning strategy, particularly in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) settings (Surgawi et al., 2019). It offers students a practical, hands-on approach to deepen language comprehension and enhance productive skills by engaging directly with both their native (source) and the target language. Through translation, learners can explore language structures, develop cultural awareness, and gain insight into vocabulary and grammar, making it a multifaceted tool that enriches language learning beyond rote memorization (Sarmila et al., 2023).

By using students' native language (L1) to enhance comprehension of the target language (L2), translation provides special benefits in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting. According to research, learners can make meaningful connections between languages by using translations sparingly to enhance vocabulary learning, grammatical accuracy, and cultural awareness (Adil, 2020). Additionally, as students compare, analyze, and solve problems—all of which strengthen their understanding of L2 structures and expressions—translation can help them build critical language abilities.

Modern pedagogical techniques that consider learners' L1 as a resource rather than a barrier are in line with the use of translation as a learning strategy in English education. Teachers can support students' linguistic and cognitive development by incorporating translation exercises into the curriculum and assisting them in becoming more proficient language users (Jubhari et al., 2022). Considering this potential, this study investigates how well translation works as a teaching method in an English-language curriculum, aiming to ascertain how it affects students' engagement and language skills.

One of the most important goals is still to find efficient ways to improve student engagement and language competency. Translation was

frequently used as the main teaching instrument in traditional language learning methods like grammar-translation (Salter, 2018). However, as task-based learning and communicative language teaching (CLT) emerged in the 1970s, translation rapidly lost ground to systems that prioritized face-to-face communication in the target language (Jubhari, et al., 2022). Notwithstanding this change, translation has lately attracted more attention as a useful teaching technique that can enhance students' involvement and support contemporary teaching approaches (Panessai et al., 2021).

By enabling students to use their native language (L1) to improve their proficiency in the target language (L2), translation as a teaching method provides special benefits. According to studies, learners can better grasp cultural variations in language use, increase grammatical accuracy, and acquire vocabulary more easily when translation is used sparingly (Sujarwo et al., 2024). To promote a more analytical approach to language acquisition that can improve cognitive processing and language memory, translation enables students to compare and contrast different languages (Sujarwo, 2020).

Maintaining student involvement is another issue that translation can help with in English education programs (Aeni et al., 2024). Teachers can create a more engaging and relatable learning environment by incorporating translation exercises pertinent to their students' settings. According to research, translation assignments can be interactive exercises that promote creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, which will boost students' interest and involvement in language lessons (Qassem & Gurindapalli, 2019).

This study aims to describe the implementation of translation as a learning strategy in English Education programs, given its potential to enhance language proficiency and engagement of students in language learning. Looking at the issue, the study advances knowledge about translation as a useful instrument in modern language instruction and offers insights into how it is used in English language education initiatives.

METHOD

The study uses the descriptive qualitative method. The descriptive technique is a means of investigating and comprehending experiences, actions, events, or social situations in qualitative research. To comprehend participants' viewpoints, emotions, and lived experiences (Creswell, 2014), it entails getting in-depth explanations from them. The goal of the study is to describe the implementation of translation as a learning strategy in English Education programs. The participants of the research are students of the English Education program at Universitas Islam Makassar and Universitas Megarezky. Purposive sampling was employed in this study since the intended respondents accurately reflect the issue under investigation, ten students participated from both universities.

According to Cohen et al., (2022) states that purposive sampling is the method of choosing a sample by selecting subjects based on a specific objective rather than level or location. Gathering the data, researchers employed deep interview, it was designed to gather information or assertions and facilitate the flow of ideas for research through direct questioning and replying between the interviewer and the interviewee Cohen (2022).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result of the study can be seen from a sample of the extract below:

Interviewer: *I appreciate you coming today. I would like to know how you have used translating to study English. Could you first let me know how frequently you apply translation to further your education?*

Participant: *Indeed! I would say I translate somewhat often, particularly when I come across complicated sentences or fresh vocabulary. I translate entire paragraphs occasionally, but usually only phrases or challenging words.*

Interviewer: *intriguing. And how may knowing these words or sentences improve your grasp of the content?*

Participant: *For me, it serves as a means of ensuring actual understanding. Translating something into my mother tongue helps me to determine whether I have really understood the meaning rather than only committed the words test. I am more sure I grasp anything if I can translate it and it makes sense in my own tongue.*

Interviewer: *It thus resembles virtually a kind of self-evaluation. Has using translation specifically affected your vocabulary or grammar understanding in any particular manner?*

Participant: *Indeed. Translating helps me recall new words as I have really considered their meaning. Finding an English counterpart is only one aspect; another is knowing how it would be utilized in context. Grammar also aids greatly, especially with sentence construction. Translating helps me understand English patterns and rules since it makes me consider why particular words are arranged in particular sequences.*

Interviewer: *That's quite perceptive. Translation, according to some, might slow down English language mental development. Has your own learning revealed this?*

Participant: *That's a valid point, and occasionally I have observed it. If I rely too much on translating, I find myself thinking in my native tongue first, then translating to English, instead than simply thinking straight in English. Speaking slows me a little, but I've been working to get better by increasing English-only practice in tandem with translation.*

Interviewer: *In English lessons, how do you see translation incorporated successfully? Do you believe lecturers should apply it more deliberately?*

Participant: *Though not the major emphasis, I believe it would be beneficial if lecturers included translating as a support tool. Perhaps they could use it to introduce complicated language or clarify difficult ideas. But then, they may*

have us practice without depending on translating, like having conversations or writing assignments in English to reinforce what we learned.

Interviewer: *That's a nice concept. Do you also think that translating facilitates comprehension of cultural variations?*

Participant: *Indeed, sure. Translating idioms or cultural references sometimes reveals to me how culture shapes language since I sometimes find no exact translation in my tongue. For me, among the more fascinating aspects of translating is this one.*

Interviewer: *I appreciate you considering this. Finally, if you could only change one aspect of how language instruction uses translations, what would it be?*

Participant: *Lecturers could advise us to translate just when we need it and perhaps later on try to apply what we acquired in English without returning to our mother tongue. It would help us cut our reliance on translating and become more natural.*

Interviewer: *That makes rational. I very much appreciate you sharing your experiences. This has been quite useful in clarifying how translation may be a learning tool in language instruction.*

Respondent 3

This study examined the function of translation as a pedagogical instrument in English language education programs, highlighting its possible advantages and drawbacks as a learning technique. The findings indicate that translation can significantly aid language acquisition when combined with communicative methods, particularly by improving learners' vocabulary acquisition, grammatical comprehension, and cultural awareness. It is crucial to equilibrate translation with other interactive language learning methods to prevent overreliance on the first language (L1), which could impede natural language processing in the target language (L2).

Improved Vocabulary and Grammar Acquisition

The obtained data indicate that translation exercises enhance learners' retention of new vocabulary and comprehension of intricate grammar structures. Students said that translating English passages into their home language, and vice versa, facilitated their analysis of sentence patterns and contextual word usage. This technique facilitates the recognition of linguistic features, which is recognized to enhance language retention and proficiency. It was observed that translation is most effective when it promotes critical thinking about language use, rather than simply substituting words between L1 and L2 devoid of context.

Fostering Cultural Awareness

A notable discovery is that translation promotes cross-cultural comprehension, as it frequently necessitates students to contemplate cultural subtleties in both languages. Students frequently need to determine the most effective means of expressing idioms, phrases, and cultural references, so fostering cultural sensitivity and a more profound comprehension of both the L1 and L2. This corresponds with contemporary educational viewpoints that promote translation to achieve intercultural competency, vital for students aiming to participate in global contexts.

3. Closing the Divide Between Theory and Practice

The research indicated that translation functions as a pragmatic implementation of theoretical information, connecting taught principles with their practical application. Numerous students observed that translation exercises elucidated abstract grammatical rules and language characteristics that they previously found challenging to comprehend independently. This research substantiates the assertion that translation, as a practical endeavor, reinforces theoretical language knowledge, rendering it more accessible and comprehensible for students.

Dangers of Excessive Dependence on Translation

Although translation can be an effective learning tool, the findings underscore the dangers of over-dependence on it. Students who extensively utilized L1 translations in language acquisition indicated a lag in developing automatic language processing in L2. This tendency, termed language interference, indicates that translation should be employed strategically rather than as a primary learning method. Educators might employ translation judiciously, particularly for elucidating intricate topics, while promoting students' eventual dependence on L2 for basic language functions to enhance fluency.

Incorporating Translation in Contemporary Language Instruction

The study's findings indicate that translation can be effectively incorporated into contemporary language instruction when implemented balanced. Translation should not be perceived as a standalone ability; it can be integrated with communicative and task-based approaches to promote comprehensive language development. This approach suggests that translation activities, when followed by conversation in the target language (L2), help learners transition from structured language work to spontaneous self-expression.

By encouraging students to convey their thoughts in L2 independently, they strengthen their communicative skills in real-time interactions. This method reflects a broader shift in language education toward blended approaches, where direct instruction provides foundational knowledge, and interactive, context-based activities solidify practical application (Rowe, 2022). Such mixed methodologies are believed to foster more natural language processing and improve learners' ability to navigate diverse communicative scenarios effectively (Dols & Calafat, 2020).

Translation allows students to examine structural and lexical differences and similarities between their native language and English, which can heighten language awareness and improve accuracy. Translating back and forth can help students identify common errors related to interference from their native language and work towards minimizing these through consistent practice. Students learn new words and expressions in context, making them easier to remember and apply in appropriate situations.

Translation exercises compel learners to apply grammar rules correctly, making them more aware of tense, aspect, and sentence structure, which is beneficial for both writing and speaking skills. Translating text requires learners to understand the original message thoroughly before rendering it into another

language. This process fosters deeper comprehension skills, especially with complex texts. Learners must make choices about how best to convey meaning, tone, and style, which involves critical thinking and an understanding of context, culture, and pragmatics.

limitations in studying the role of translation as a learning strategy in EFL contexts include Variability in Language Proficiency: Differences in students' initial language proficiency levels may impact how effectively they engage with translation activities. Lower-proficiency students may struggle with complex translation tasks, potentially skewing results related to communicative competence development. Overreliance on L1: Translation activities risk encouraging dependence on the native language (L1), which can limit students' natural language processing in L2. This could result in difficulties for learners when transitioning to spontaneous L2 use without translation scaffolding. Limited Transfer to Spontaneous Communication: Translation tasks, while beneficial for structured language understanding, may not fully prepare students for spontaneous, real-world communication in L2. Studies might, therefore, overestimate gains in practical communication skills.

By harmonizing translation with these interactive methodologies, educators can create a student-centered environment that fosters not only language precision but also the confidence to apply language skills flexibly in varied contexts. This balance ensures that translation supports, rather than limits, the goal of communicative competence, equipping learners with the proficiency and self-assurance needed to navigate both written and spoken language fluently and authentically

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Translation, when thoughtfully integrated into English language education, offers students a structured way to deepen their understanding of vocabulary, grammar, and cultural nuances. By actively engaging in translation, learners can explore how meanings, expressions, and structures differ between languages, which reinforces their awareness of language mechanics and broadens their lexical range. This process is particularly beneficial in EFL contexts, where opportunities to encounter and use the target language authentically may be limited. However, to avoid dependency on the native language (L1), it's essential that translation is paired with interactive, communicative activities that encourage students to use the second language (L2) more spontaneously. Techniques such as group discussions, role-playing, or language immersion exercises can follow translation tasks, prompting students to express ideas directly in L2 without reverting to L1. This blended approach nurtures both accuracy and fluency, as translation strengthens foundational skills while communicative practice enhances real-time processing and response abilities. Recommendation for further researchers to explore the effectiveness of combining translation activities with digital tools in a blended learning environment to improve ICT skills alongside language acquisition, focusing on learner engagement and self-efficacy.

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